

Social justice and social work with asylum seekers and refugees in
times of crisis: Voices from the front line.

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Declaration

I hereby confirm that this thesis is originally composed by me for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree by the University of Essex. It is based on my own work, with acknowledgments of other sources and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Over the past decade, two major socio-political questions have emerged in Greece. The first one is related to the 2009 financial crisis, which resulted in a decade-long period of harsh austerity. The second one reflected the intensification of the so-called “refugee crisis” and the subsequent implementation of the brutal politics of “hostile environment”.

In different ways, both issues affected the way social work practice was engaged with communities and policy makers. Under these circumstances, social work’s declared commitment to social justice and ethical practice was put to the test.

This thesis, written during a period of “concentric crises”, explores how social work and social care practitioners who worked with refugees in Greece’s notorious hot spots, understand, and engage with the principles of ethical practice and social justice. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used alongside walking interviews and multi-sited participant observations of protest events and grassroots movements. Data analysis was informed by a thematic approach.

Findings demonstrate how discourses and practices are based on an exclusionary, hierarchical, “Us/ Them” understanding of the Other. The effects of capitalism and competing neoliberal interests appeared to be encroaching into the organization of social work, since managerialism and performance were identified as key demands that depoliticise practice. Results also suggest that practitioners prioritise social justice as a key concept in their work, despite day-to-day pressures and structural injustices. On a practice level, social justice-based work is deeply informed by

participants' biographies and includes mediation, advocacy and challenging unwarranted injustice and discrimination.

The current study also provides a critique to neoliberal interpretations of “self-reliance” and “resilience”, that tend to locate refugees and asylum seekers within a restrictive, deserving/ undeserving dichotomy, thus ignoring broader structural issues. Social workers who participated in this study provided significant, powerful examples of practice and activism that emphasised on social and economic rights. The findings do not imply a majority shift towards political practice in social work but demonstrate the dynamism and importance of alliances and ‘connectedness’ of diverse communities struggling against multiple oppressions.

The thesis aims at contributing to the need for social work to be able to analyse the impact of neoliberal paradigm of austerity on the welfare state and the most vulnerable, while acknowledging its political and social dimension to transform the economic structures and social relations that cause poverty, oppression and inequalities on the basis of social equality for inclusion and belonging.

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Dedicated to those we lost along their way to refuge.

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Quotation

“Love first really teaches man to believe in the objective world outside himself”.

The Holy Family, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AMIF		Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
ECB	EKT	European Central Bank.
EU-Turkey Agreement		Agreement ratified in 2016 between the EU and Turkey. According to this agreement is obliged prevent migrant boats leaving for Greece, and accepts to “take back” those deported from Europe.
EU	ΕΕ	European Union.
EC		European Commission
ECHR		European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR		European Court of Human Rights
ECRE		European Council on Refugees & Exiles
FRA		Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU
FRONTEX		European Border and Coast Guard Agency
FRS		Appeals Authority and the First Reception Service
GD	ΧΑ	Golden Dawn, colloquially Golden Dawn
FIDH		International Federation for Human Rights
IMF	ΔΝΤ	International Monetary Fund.
IOM	ΔΟΜ	International Organisation for Migration
IFSW	ΔΟΚΛ	International Federation of Social Workers
NGOs	ΜΚΟ	Non Governmental Organisations
GASW	ΣΚΛΕ	Greek Association of Social Workers
KEPI	ΚΕΠΥ	Screening Centres
RIC	ΚΥΤ	Reception and Identification Centre
UNHCR	Ύπατη Αρμοστέία	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Section 1

Introduction to the study and literature Review.

1. Social work and social justice: Conceptual Connections.

Introduction.

The aim of the chapter is to explain the meanings of social work and social justice and to offer an analysis of the relationship between them. The purpose of this is to develop a framework for elaborating the social and historical contexts in which the debate about the political and social values incorporated into social work developed and worked out.

This attempt is related to identify and resolve some of the difficulties that derive from the complex and pervasive nature of the two concepts. Both social work and social justice are interdisciplinary concepts that use a diverse series of social and human studies disciplines. The effort to resolving such difficulties and associate them is therefore particularly demanding.

In the following pages, I will seek to elaborate not only on the content of social work and social justice but also signpost the constituent element of the two concepts located within the Critical tradition of social work.

1.1. Social Work.

The term social work is used, rather confusingly, to refer to several different types of activity. In simple terms, social work in the West can be generally seen as being socially benign activity and advancing ‘humanity’ that tries to provide valid and useful help in people’s lives with immediate social needs (Gray and Webb, 2013a:1).

From this perspective, social work has problem-solving objectives emphasising that everyone's needs for health, autonomy and wellbeing are met (Payne, 2016). However, in much literature, including the IASSW and IFSW documentation², the term 'social work' is used in a broader sense, which encompasses various activities directly concerned with moral concepts of human rights, self-determination of the service user, equality, social justice and systemic social change (Hugman, 2003; Chu et. al., 2009; O'Brien, 2011; Higgs, 2015a; Banks, 2020).

Both Clark (2006) and Ife (2008, 2012) have suggested that social work should be defined as a moral activity, seeking social justice and good for all people, incorporating values and conceptions of right and wrong, that arise out of everyday life experience when meeting the welfare needs of the population.

Although social work retains unity around its core values and overall purpose which are used "to create a moral social order for social work" (Payne, 2006:101), it is a dynamic concept with multiple perspectives and functions that social workers occupy, and as such, it is extremely difficult to provide a clear definition of it. It is the result of the combination of different historical, economic, political, social, cultural and, of course, ideological developments, which together shape its multidimensional character. As Harris (2008:662) has argued social work "is a contingent activity".

Midgely (2001) describes three approaches to social work namely, remedial, activist and developmental social work. By remedial social work, he is referring to the practice of direct work with individuals and families with a focus on their personal problems, often drawing heavily on psychological, behavioural and treatment

² Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

approaches. Activist social work is primarily concerned with challenging structural oppressions and promoting liberation, while developmental social work is concerned with promoting the social and economic development of local populations, often using community work approaches (ibid:28-30).

Similar ways of viewing social work can also be seen in Payne's (2006, 2014) typology about its knowledge and discourse. According to Payne, social work incorporates at least three approaches: Empowerment or therapeutic helping approaches, social order or problem-solving approaches and transformational or social change views.

The important differences between these views of social work are connected with different political paradigms about how welfare should be provided (Payne,2006:12). These are based on a different range of ideological positions from conservative and social conformist, through democratic consensual and reformist, to more radical and conflict oriented.

Empowerment-therapeutic approaches generally adopt social democratic principles, reflecting a reformist position of justice by helping individuals, communities and societies to evolve along humane lines to achieve gradual social change (Payne, 2014:21). Social democratic principles are generally consensual and seek to guarantee mainly through appropriate legislation and constructive welfare policies equality of basic liberties and rights. This is done within the framework of the existing social and political structures to counter-balance the injustices of capitalism (Moth, 2019a:7-8). These views found expression in the efforts of social workers to improve the everyday experiences of service users, groups or communities by enabling them to overcome disadvantage, develop skills and personal relationships (Payne,

2014). In the post-war period from 1945, which Garrett (2013c) characterises as ‘embedded liberalism’ of Keynesian policies, social work, as a state activity within European welfare states (Dominelli, 1997:70), was seen at least as having some responsibility for helping the disadvantaged and those in need, while potentials for social justice could be realised by established rights to welfare and “decommodified” public services (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Ferguson et al., 2017). The humanistic and existential perspectives, psychodynamic as well as strengths-based practice, cognitive behavioural practice, narrative-based practice and solution-focused practice have been particularly important in promoting human development (Dominelli, 2009:51; Payne, 2014:33).

Social order or problem-solving approaches “express the liberal or rational economic political philosophy- that personal freedom in economic markets, unrestricted by governmental interventions, is the best way of organising societies”(Payne, 2014:22). This coheres with a perspective that is based on classical liberalism, where individuals need to be made responsible for their own welfare and the state should withdraw as far as possible from economic management and social provision (Cummins, 2019a). For over the past two decades, the market and big business have come to be seen as the most efficient means for the allocation of goods and services – including social goods that were previously seen as standing outside of it (Ferguson, 2008; Cummins, 2019b). Social work, for this type of view, could be approached as an expression of consensual social values committed to the present social order. Forms of social work practice attempt to defend the importance of responding to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable members of society during difficult times, so that they can recover their stability and improve the services offered to them (Payne, 2014:22). This view reflects the historical roots of social work as

incorporated in the work of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) where notions of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor were used to pathologize the poor and oppressed, while practice was characterised by mechanisms of control (Jones, 1983, 2002). The above mentioned approaches include practice theories such as social development and systems/ecological perspectives, cognitive-behavioural theories as well as crisis and task centred models (Payne, 2014:33).

Transformational views are based on socialist ideology and grounded in critical theory. The dominant view of socialist ideology sees social problems as organized around relations of domination and subordination which characterize the structure of an oppressive and unequal capitalist society (Moth, 2019a). Transformational views in which the focus is on empowering oppressed people and challenging structural inequalities refer to processes around the pursuit of broader social objectives to make societies more equal by transforming the systems that perpetuate oppression (Payne, 2014). Focusing on oppression as the root cause of social problems, practice aims at identifying the linkages between individual problems and socio-economic causes, and challenge, especially through solidarity and collective action, existing inequitable social, political and economic arrangements (Ferguson and Woodward, 2009c). Accordingly, these views do not blame individuals for their predicaments; instead they refer to the bigger picture in which social work and the lives of people whom social workers support are shaped by party politics, political ideology, social and economic factors (Parkinson, 2020). Drawing upon critical theories and their practice applications, they emphasise the importance of working towards social, not just personal, change and advocate the promotion of egalitarian and democratic social processes at the local, national and international levels (Dominelli, 2002a, 2009). Particularly, Radical approaches to social work are very sceptical of social workers'

supposed autonomy and their benign function in society, since they are carrying out policies that serve the interests of the economically dominant class and simply manage the consequences of capitalism (Vickers, 2015, 2019b). As such, transformational views criticise therapeutic and social order views aiming at enabling service users to ‘cope’ with their circumstances for individualising responses to social problems without addressing structural inequalities (Payne, 2006). This paradigm informs empowerment, anti-oppressive perspectives, feminist theories and critical reflective approaches to social work (Dominelli, 2009; Payne, 2014:33). The central value behind transformational perspectives is engaging in political issues, particularly those that pursuing social justice and solidarity, influencing, thus social work in the direction of “ethico-political” practice (Banks, 2014).

Payne (2006) concludes that the three views are consistently present on the actions of the social workers concerned which interact and sometimes conflict with each other.

Under these circumstances, Reisch (2016) and Thompson (2016:9) maintain that there can be no simple compromise, since social workers cannot be detached from the political due to the pivotal position they hold as mediators between the wider state apparatus, its citizens and social order (ibid, 2016:9). On the one hand social work espouses professional norms of emancipation, liberation, social justice, and empowerment, and thus bears a responsibility to transform capitalist relations of domination, oppression, marginalization and exclusion that lead to injustice (Thompson, 2002; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009b; Thompson, 2016; Moth, 2019a). This tradition has supported the expansion of social and political rights and a more equitable distribution of societal ‘goods’ (Reisch, 2016:41). On the other hand, and due to the profession’s individually oriented emphasis on self-determination and

empowerment social work has promoted market- oriented values which deny collective responsibility for people's problems (Reisch, 2016:41-42). This tradition serves thus as the foundation for social work's elements of social control and individual regulation, reinforcing oppression and the values of capitalist class and its neoliberal economic order (Thompson, 2002; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009b; Thompson, 2016; Moth, 2019a).

In many respects, such conflicting 'dual loyalty' (Briskman, 2019:) can be seen as reflecting what Simpkin (1983:41-44) termed the 'in and against the state' dilemma, exploring how social workers might reconcile working in the public sector that employs them with the possibilities for social change alongside with the vulnerable people they work with (Briskman, 2019).

These developments around social work's distinct philosophical traditions find expression in Bank's (2020) description about social work as occupying a 'dilemmatic space' where practitioners committed to social justice are at risk of being coopted by contextual injustices, exclusionary processes and oppressive practices in the field. Contradictory ideologies and values are played out in ethical challenges in practice in the sense that dilemmas remain a defining characteristic of the profession at large. In short, dilemmas raise questions about the concrete actions or outcomes practitioners should aspire and attain about particular injustices which can inflict moral discomfort or guilt about the actions taken (Hölscher, 2016; Banks, 2020).

By extension, about how social work is practised in different countries is intrinsically linked to the nature of national and regional welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Changes in the wider political and social context in which social work takes place have led to changes in ideas about the roles social workers should perform

and the tasks they should undertake, and what kinds of knowledge social workers require, and how this should be applied to practice.

So, it is important to examine the social and political context in which social work develops.

1.2. Neoliberalism: social justice and the impact on social work.

Since 1979, neoliberalism has become the dominant political ideology and political reformers have adopted a laissez-faire stance against Keynesian welfare models, seeking to reduce the state's influence on markets through policies of privatisation, deregulation and financialisation (Harvey, 2005). Today, neoliberalism, rather than shrinking the state, has sought through ideological control of consciousness to eliminate the concept of public good and reorganize social welfare according to principles of market rationality, protection of private property and competitiveness for the expansion and accumulation of capital (Penna and O'Brien, 2013; Sewpaul, 2014; Cummins, 2019b).

In this context, with reference to political economy perspectives, the state employs strategies of consent and compliance with corporations and ruling classes, while it is much more coercive and controlling in its approach to the lower social classes, including the poor, securing for employers a more consistent labour supply to undertake insecure work at the low end of the labour market (Ferguson, Lavalette and Mooney, 2002).

Reflecting some of the contradictions inherent in capitalism, Bhattacharya (2017) maintains that the capitalist production as a social relation requires the reproduction of the working class which by unpaid care in the domestic sphere and welfare institutions facilitates the further expansion of the forces of production. As a

consequence, an indispensable background condition for the possibility of economic production in a capitalist society is processes of social reproduction which involve; the demand for social reproduction and maintenance of work force; the care and regeneration of those outside the labour force – including children, the aged, the sick, and other dependants; and the renewal of a new generation of workers to replace those who leave through illness, old age and death (ibid, 2017). However, beyond the above-mentioned necessity, there is a contradiction, since capitalists must – to remain competitive – create conditions whereby meeting human needs is subordinated to accumulation. Thus, they must constrain and control the wages and social spending that pay for the renewal of the workforce, and of life itself (ibid, 2017).

Sewpaul (2014:223-224) notes that the most dominant neoliberal discourse in welfare which has emerged as a result of liberal ideology and capitalist social relations is financial self-reliance. More specifically, neoliberal reason is oblivious to or denies the role of structural forces for widespread social ills like poverty, deprivation and mass alienation on individuals. Notably, the responsibility for structural problems or wellbeing is delegated from the state to individuals and local communities (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). The welfare state has been reshaped from job creation and social assistance to social-workfare schemes to better serve the demands of capital in an open economy (Garrett, 2018b). The turn to “workfare” policies is linked with the decline in the discourse on social rights and devolves on a belief that people must increasingly rely on wage labour and the market to meet their material and social needs (Leskošek, 2014). Compulsory participation in paid work, as much as the income it generates, has been considered a key factor to social integration for individuals, without however reference to issues of rights, equality and participation let alone attempts to address structural barriers (Judd et al., 2015; Lorenz, 2016; Stark, 2018). European welfare

states and the whole Western world have sought to tackle poverty and social exclusion by supporting a mixture of self-reliance, social investment, and activation policies, so-called 'active proletarianisation' (Garrett, 2021:16) to bring persons closer to employment with the assistance of vocational training, job searching and employment support.

The past few decades have seen the neoliberal reconstitution of the welfare state societies from generous and caring to goal-oriented workfare giving greater emphasis on oppression, punishment, and coercion (Wahl, 2011). Welfare state reforms introduced in order to reduce inflation and taxation have resulted in retrenchment in public spending followed by large-scale job losses, greater in- work poverty and intensified exploitation in the workplace. In the wake of the global economic crisis, privatisation, deregulation and austerity measures imposed as structural adjustment policies have contributed to high rates of poverty, hunger and inequality both the Global North and Global South (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Sewpaul, 2014) It is ironic that social protections such as housing, education and health care are viewed as are excessive, unaffordable or unreasonable and not necessarily achieving good outcomes (Ferguson, Ioakimidis and Lavalette, 2018; Hart, Greener and Moth, 2019:5; Moth, 2022).

Contempt for and disdain towards the poor and working- class, blaming the victims of poverty, are part- and- parcel of neoliberal thinking (Schram, 2006; Harms Smith, 2017). that divide the poor into deserving and undeserving. As work is seen as the route out of poverty, workfare moves assistance away from eligibility based on violation of rights or need, towards providing welfare entitlements only to those who prove their deservedness to become self-reliant by means of improving their skills and intrinsic motivation. As such, workfare would seem to challenge the principle of

equality as a pillar of citizenship rights (Stark, 2018). In the neoliberal view, welfare capitalist countries should offer little prospect of anything more than a bare subsistence on those in greatest need when these cannot be met by the family and the market. Breaking with the universalist nature of welfare system this safety net is provided by Victorian- like residual welfare system of last resort that uses means-testing of benefits and eligibility criteria for social protection (Dominelli, 2002a:27; Reisch and Garvin, 2016)

In this context, the penalisation of poverty via welfare surveillance has entered into custom to contain or criminalize dissent and opposition of poorer citizens who require state welfare (see Wacquant, 2001, 2009b, 2009a), speeding up precarization of a flexible workforce capable of fulling the low-paid casual jobs. Jobs are now considered to be precarious, meaning that permanent jobs are increasingly being replaced by temporary jobs and full-time jobs by part-time jobs interspersed with periods of unemployment (Ferguson and Woodward, 2009b; Garrett, 2010a). Under the cultural trope of individual responsibility unemployed people who were deemed to be less than full members of society have become “non-active” or “passive”, while social benefit recipients have been turned into dependants (Leskošek, 2014:59-60).

Since the gradual adoption of neoliberalism as the basis of a comprehensive policy programme in institutions of global governance, states have intervened actively to reorganise the social democratic structures in the postwar era, including social work, to meet some contemporary demands of the increasingly marketized nation states.

We now turn our attention to how this unfolds in social work.

Over the past few decades, it has been argued that social work is replete with managerial and market discourses and has been trapped within a technocratic practice

focused on 'risk' which comes from a faith in positivist scientific framework (Webb, 2001; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009a; Briskman, 2019). Such ideologies are manifest in tasks such as growth in performance audits, rules, regulations and procedures which come to represent a bureaucratic approach to public problems and inclusive of notions of citizenship. In many ways, such changes have challenged aspirations of care and face-to-face work with service users since case management and administration take precedence over autonomy, critical reflection, care, equality, solidarity, interdependence and reciprocity evident in radical and participatory approaches to social work (Ferguson, 2008; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009b; Lavalette, 2011:7; Banks, 2014; Sewpaul, 2014:222-224). All of the above constitute elements of neoliberal processes of managerialism and marketisation which hold that human services must run as business, outside the state, shaped by market forces and driven by competition (Harris, 2014; Wallace and Pease, 2019). Managerialism introduced greater control over the work of employees, intensified by instrumental rationality, over-reliance on performance indicators and measurement of 'outcomes'³ as determined by agency rules and procedures (Lavalette, 2011; Lawler, 2013; Harris, 2014; Banks, 2020) Marketisation, where previously state-provided service delivery is now contracted out to third sector or commercial organisations with the intention to offer 'customer choice', alongside efficiency and competitiveness in service delivery (Harris, 2014; Banks, 2020)

The overall result is that social workers become demoralized and alienated (Jones, 2001; Lavalette, 2011; Yuill, 2018) feeling that they must focus on individual deficits and pathologies while getting the job done, following rules and

³ These developments are often discussed under the label of the 'new public management' (NPM) that concerns with measurement of performance, particularly linked to cost-effectiveness and value for money.

procedures. Their professional autonomy has been consistently compromised and are being expected to do more with less, let alone focus on issues of surveillance and collecting evidence (Harris, 2003; Lawler, 2013; Cummins, 2018:83; Yuill, 2018; Banks, 2020). Public-blame for unwanted outcomes and feelings of helplessness by unjustified media attacks have been common in social work (Banks, 2020).

In the backdraft of the 2008 recession and pernicious austerity measures, there is a perceived growing concern about the rise of authoritarianism and the election of populist right-wing governments. Right-wing nationalism is being invoked to justify privileges for the “indigenous” population and the exclusion of non-natives from civil rights and social protection (Ife, 2021). The distributional failures of capitalism’s inability to prevent growing inequality has been marked by an emphasis on and the mobilisation of discourses of demonisation, threat and exclusion of ‘the other’ alongside growing stigmatisation of the ‘poor’ (Ferguson, 2008, 2017; Jones and Novak, 2013; Ferguson and Lavalette, 2014). In response to engaging with low-income citizens as moral and behavioural deviants, governments have increased surveillance, border control and other measures of exclusion. Hidden behind the façade of promoting ‘social stability’, the present political and social order has asserted the rise of essentializing tendencies of ethnocentrism, racism and xenophobia which define equality in ethnic and racist terms (Vickers, 2019a; Trimikliniotis, 2020).

How social justice is realized under such circumstances continues to generate a creative tension and lively debate within the profession of social work.

1.3. Social work and the question of social justice.

1.3.1. Perspectives on social justice.

As we discuss above the concept of social justice is also one of the key principles of social work. It can be theorised in many ways, but commonly prescribes societal responses for the distribution of scarce resources and social goods among the members of a human society (Reisch, 2002; Reisch and Garvin, 2016).

The history of social justice in social work has deep roots in Western Judeo-Christian and draws on a number of different approaches developed by political theorists and philosophers that fuelled social workers' activities (Cox and Maschi, 2023).

At its core, social justice is integral to three differing philosophical approaches, namely, utilitarian, libertarian, and egalitarian.

According to utilitarian approaches the most important thing is to seek the greatest good for the largest number of persons, treating individuals as means to ends. Utilitarianism is referred to, and conceptualized, in the social work profession's international ethical codes (Solas, 2008). It does not discern among specific needs of marginalised and deprived people, the complexity of intersectional identities, such as combined race and gender and the value conflicts that have surfaced in an increasingly diverse society (Dracopoulou, 2015; Reisch, 2016a). Utilitarianism is also criticised privileging the majority over minorities by denying them equal opportunities and rights (Kamali, 2015:18).

Libertarian perspectives indebted to Robert Nozick (1974) excuse social inequalities by defending a minimal state which acts as a "nightwatchman", a free-market economy and private property rights since demands for equality leads to the

suppression of freedom (Blackledge, 2012:32;154). Simply stated, this idea rejects obligations (such as taxation) for equal or equitable distribution of resources, contending instead that people look after their own needs, and distribution should be based on merit and effort. Nozick's conception of justice emphasises the process by which material goods and other benefits are acquired (Reisch, 2002). 'Whether a distribution is just depends upon how it came about' (Nozick, 1974: 153).

By contrast, egalitarian theories contend that every member of society should be guaranteed equal basic liberties, fair equality of opportunity, and the elimination of unjustified inequalities of outcomes. From this perspective the redistribution of societal resources includes a fairer distribution of society's benefits and burdens. Rawls's (1971) work is the most important contribution to contemporary political philosophy of justice. A corollary of this approach is that decisions concerning liberties, opportunities, income and wealth should be to the greatest benefit of the neediest and most vulnerable groups of society in order to obtain their "fair share" and "fair opportunities".

The 'capabilities approach' developed by Sen (2009) and Nussbaum (2011) seeks to move beyond the distribution of primary goods to focus on a combination of internal capacities and external environmental, economic, and political conditions that are required for human being to develop their human nature, and not to be constrained into a particular form of life (Kim and Sherraden, 2014).

The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States posed fundamental challenges to discriminatory particularisms of existing social and institutional structures by highlighting systemic privileges or disadvantages based on social group memberships. The term of social justice became identified with the

struggles of marginalized and disadvantaged social identity groups for public recognition of their cultural, cognitive, and physiological group differences (Adams, 2014). Situations which fall into this category between redistribution as a feature of economic structures that deny [people] resources and the recognition theories about the effects of difference/otherness are described in detail the work of Fraser and Honneth (see Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Both make the argument that social justice cannot be adequately advanced in any given society without tackling both recognition (cultural justice) and redistribution (material justice) together (Webb, 2010; Rossiter, 2014; Krumer-Nevo, 2020). Importantly, Fraser (2003) proposed the principle of participatory parity, justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social interactions. Both redistribution for economic maldistributions and recognition against status inequality that devalues and disrespects some groups while elevating others are required for participatory parity, with neither being reducible to the other (see Fraser, 2000, 2003:9). However, Garrett (2010b) warns that recognition theory, tending to focus on 'face-to-face' interactions, provided inadequate attention to the politics of equality grounded in class politics and the role of the neo-liberal state. Equally, the politics of recognition has focused on oppression as identity, rooted in difference, privileging issues of culture over issues of material redistribution (Williams, 2011).

Young (1990) even though defends the concept of justice by rights to just conditions for self-determination of each individual, she argues that opportunities can only be ensured by acknowledging the disadvantaged groups of which individuals are members. She objected Rawls for overlooking the institutional context in which specific patterns of distribution are realised. On the contrary, Young (1990) pinpointed the relational and processual societal dynamics that underlie social justice or injustice.

According to Young (1990) “social justice means the elimination of institutionalized domination and oppression” (Ibid:15) rooted in the structures of global capitalism. Young’s (1990: 42–48;48–65) interest in justice is articulated specifically through a critique of injustice classifying five types of oppression, understood as social processes: powerlessness, marginalization, exploitation, cultural hegemony, and violence.

Within social work discourses, the principle of social justice is both complex and contested (Watts and Hodgson, 2019). Ferguson, Ioakimidis and Lavalette (2018) illustrate the complexities and the need for ongoing dialogue on its universal acceptance and applicability to promote a genuinely anti-oppressive and emancipatory practice. Equally, Reisch (2016:33-34) stresses that the meaning of social justice not only lacks consensus and is poorly articulated but also continues to be defined ambiguously and applied inconsistently’.

According to Lavalette (2011:xi)“in a world of growing inequality, welfare cuts, war and racism there has to be a space for a social work that has, at its heart, a commitment to social justice, meeting human need and equality”. In other words, practitioners’ responsibilities for justice arise precisely because structural processes of injustice have resulted in oppressive relationships and outcomes.

This still leaves unresolved questions of how social workers are to work out what to do about a particular injustice, to what end, and what is required for them to be able to do it.

To this end, I discuss some concepts from this cluster of theories framed broadly as critical social work perspectives which are key to informing the practice of social justice. While there are differences among these perspectives and practice theories, they share reflect a vision of a society comprised of fairness, equality, and justice for all

individuals juxtaposed against the effects of social structures and institutions which perpetuate unfairness, inequality, and injustice.

1.4. Social work and social justice.

A range of labour and social movements emerged to challenge power relations and inequalities within the welfare system and wider society. These influenced more radical and critical forms of social work professional practice, including anti-oppressive, anti-discriminatory perspectives.

These perspectives involved, in diverse ways, to recognising the role of harms associated with class inequalities, exploitation and various forms of cultural assumptions, and to challenging these (Payne, 2016:319).

They are broadly referred as “Critical social work” based on the idea that universal justice is not possible without the abolition of capitalism on the grounds of equality and justice (Gray and Webb, 2013a)

1.4.1. Radical social work.

In social work, social justice has largely been conceptualised in modernist emancipatory terms to include a focus on the sociopolitical organisation of society, including a critique of the limits of market mechanisms to meet human need, and the role that capitalism as a socio-economic system plays in creating injustice.

The growth of theoretical and political resources to deal with social justice concerns has its roots in the lasting influence of radical social work movement which emerged during the 1970's. (Bailey and Brake, 1975; Corrigan and Leonard, 1978; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009b).

In recognising the oppressive variants of individualistic approaches to social work such as casework, this position rejected interventions that pathologised clients and ignored the structural factors contributing to their problems and saw instead its major aim (in a socialist- Marxian sense) as political consciousness raising (Leonard, 1984; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009b) by ‘essentially understanding the position of the oppressed in the context of the social and economic structure they live in’ (Bailey and Brake, 1975:9). The aim of social work which emerged from this analysis was to encourage social workers to recognize the structural origins of social oppression, to link with other groups, and the organised labour movement and to engage in activist practices for affecting wider social political and economic change (Bailey and Brake, 1975).

Lavalette (2011), Ferguson (2008) Ferguson and Woodward (2009b) argue for a renewed commitment to radical social work as a response to the levels and effects of inequality in society arising from the neo- liberal forms of capitalism (see Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010).

Radical approach to social work is intrinsically bound together in dialogical praxis and mutual consciousness-raising for generating solidarity and resistance (Banks, 2012). Having defined praxis as the inseparability of theory and practice tied to critical reflection and reflexivity (ibid:2012), Banks (2014:2-3) points out that: “ethics within radical politics is deeply embedded in the political analysis of the nature of society corresponding to a political commitment to striving for a better world”.

Based on a Marxist perspective, Mullaly (2007) views structural social work as built upon socialist principles; By rejecting social order via collective struggles that

address the larger, structural causes of individual oppression and espousing dialogical relationships links ‘the personal is political’ making it possible for people to consider their personal experience of oppression from a more global perspective.

Ferguson and Woodward (2009b:151-163) have given clear evidence of this in his conception of radical social work for the 21st century. This account is linked to “collective activity and political campaign” meaning “working to alongside service users and carers” based on non-judgmental and respectful relationships with reference to human rights. As a committed good practice not only “encourages flexibility, criticality and creativity” but is grounded on “resistance” against managerialism, marketisation and regulatory practices distilled in the front-line practice. Equally, Reisch (2005) argues that in order to achieve social justice social workers must confront the inequities of capitalism. Reisch views this as: “The role of radical social workers, however limited, has been to contain the anti-egalitarian tendencies of the market economy, raise the level of political awareness among clients, colleagues, and constituents, and develop new methods to fight the abuses of the socio-economic system” (ibid:168).

1.4.2. Anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory social work.

Since their emergence in the 1980s, anti-oppressive practice (Dominelli, 2002b; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006) and anti-discriminatory perspectives (Thompson, 2016) bring together multiple theories and perspectives regarding issues of power, privilege and identity (Lorraine and Clarke, 2016:99) and, as such, are shifted conceptually from radical class analysis that privilege materialist understandings of oppression and change (Ferguson and Lavalette, 2004).

In a nutshell, anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory perspectives extended radical approach beyond mere economic factors to include all overlapping and mutually reinforcing dimensions of oppressions, affirming the diversity of people's experiences within and across cultures (Allan, 2009; Thompson, 2016).

According to Dominelli (2002) anti-oppression focuses holistically on each individual and addresses the multiple oppressions to which he or she is subject with the aim to aim to 'empower individuals by linking their personal predicament to structural inequalities and seeking to rectify both of these' (ibid:61). Dominelli (2002) criticized the 'one size fits all' model with the argument for services that are responsive to an increasingly culturally plural service user group with discrete needs and no fixed characteristics. It specifies that social workers should understand and respect difference in self and others and effect change at the personal, institutional, and cultural levels toward realizing human well-being, social justice and human rights rather than profit-making for the few (Dominelli 2002).

Anti-discriminatory practice is rooted in multiculturalism (Powell, 2001:155). Thompson (2003:226) defines anti-discriminatory practice as the forms of practice that contribute more broadly to the promotion of equality and are against discrimination understood as the process by which people are allocated to particular social categories with an unequal distribution of rights, resources, opportunities and power (ibid:82).

1.4.3. Critical social work.

The Critical theory and postmodern influence on social work asserts that the social world is not a totality (Ferguson, 2008) but dominant relations of power are open to interpretation and that meaning is created through the use of language, discourse and symbolism. Instead of working according to conventional formulations of right and

wrong postmodern practice may employ a critical, self-reflexive and deconstructive approaches (Healy, 2014).

Pease and Fook (1999:12) value an engagement with critical postmodern theories that envision social work as an emancipatory project that values diversity, legitimates difference and plays with uncertainty previously blocked by modernist dogmas of universal or grand theorising.

In an attempt to formulate the basic tenets of this tradition and be able to count on a commitment to principles generally associated with social justice Fook (2012, 2014) following Agger (1998) has summarised it as follows.

- i) Compared to positivism and objectivism, critical theorising offers a criticism to scientific knowledge which reflects the world as it “really” exists and giving undue weight to “value free” position. Given that knowledge itself is obviously a form of social construction, all interpretations are historically and culturally situated and affected. In this way, and by rejecting determinism and universal social laws, the importance of change emerges.
- ii) Critical theory with its normative foundation provides a politically transformative program of action that contributes to an emancipatory democracy. In doing so, such a position commits to inspiring to bring about social change as a response to social structures, such as class, gender, race, and discourse, largely characterized by domination, exploitation, and oppression.
- iii) False consciousness provides the economic-political system with ideological resources for the legitimisation of social structures of power

and inequality. The demand for social change, they argue, calls for a critique of the uncritical embracement of discourses and beliefs in ideas that undermine political and collective demands for self-development and well-being.

- iv) From this they invite us to explore the ways in which conditions external to social actors are implicated in everyday relations. The operation of domination is both personally experienced and structurally created. Therefore, the goal of this is to conceptualize the bridge between the subjective and objective dimensions of social life as interconnected and dialectical. In this sense, broader social changes are linked to personal changes.

Modern grand narratives about the necessity of widespread structural change have been coming under considerable pressure by the insights of postmodernism as an interpretative framework that evokes neoliberal affinities based on individual responsibility and empowerment. Thus, social work needs to be cautious in embracing postmodernism uncritically (Ferguson, 2011).

Conclusion.

This chapter was more explicitly concerned with how the politics of social work unfold in the political and social realities of neoliberalism that have a more generalisable international significance, highlighting antagonistic or incompatible political aspirations to social justice causes for practitioners. It discussed the specific problems that social workers face today as a consequence of changes in the political–economic environment in which they work, and the transformation of the cultural and ideological context of practice (Ferguson et al., 2018). It was argued that has become

more difficult for practitioners to show commitment to social justice and adopt more radical and committed forms of practice that do not overlook important social, economic, cultural, and historic contexts and realities (Banks, 2020). Such an approach is perceived as particularly important, given what many have identified as the often trends towards authoritarianism, the dominance of standardized and bureaucratic procedures and market values of contemporary social work practice (Reisch, 2016b:258). Indeed, it could be asserted there is still a case for embedding the importance of relationships based on respect and compassion into social work practice that reveal how structural processes and contextual factors work (Hölscher, 2016:107; Banks, 2020).

2.1. The 2015 “Refugee Crisis” as part of the concentric crises of Greek capitalism.

While the arrival of migrants to Europe is not a new phenomenon, in 2015 refugee flows dramatically grew. In 2015 and early 2016, within a few months period, which would become known as the European refugee or migration ‘crisis’, more than one million people who had left their countries of origin- mainly from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, fleeing conflict, human rights abuses and poverty arrived into the Central, North and North-Western Europe (Mavrommatis, 2018:2).

These massive refugee and migrant movements to Northern EU countries through short maritime passages between Turkey and Greece across the Aegean Sea and the creation of the so-called Western Balkan Route⁴, would develop contrary to various border policing tactics and ambivalent EU policies, such as the Dublin regulation⁵ that introduced emergency controls on borders (suspending the Schengen agreement- erected razor-wire fences between countries) to stop the free movement of people within the EU (Afouxenidis *et al.*, 2017).

The publication of the photo of Aylan Al Kurdi, a three-year-old boy who drowned while trying to reach Greece from Turkey, raised a lot of public compassion and solidarity action to address the most urgent needs of arriving refugees in local communities in Greece - one of the first points of entry into the EU. During the initial months, at the height of the so-called refugee crisis, the rise of solidarity and grassroots initiatives involving informal groups as well as individual volunteers had been crucial for the provision of much needed relief to those arriving on the islands. Temporary

⁴ Through the borders of Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Hungary

⁵ It is designed to ensure that only one EU member country is responsible for examining an asylum application

settlement camps were created to cater for the needs of people on the move and actions were taken to guarantee more comprehensive care and attendance (Oikonomakis, 2018).

In March 2016, more than 53,000 people were left stranded in Greece, waiting at marginal living conditions in makeshift camps, after the application of the EU-Turkey agreement when countries along the Western Balkan route had effectively closed their borders (Cavounidis, 2018). The agreement, aligned particularly with the EU's shift toward securitization, represents an emblematic example of the externalization of borders, making Turkey partly responsible for the management of the EU's eastern border, while creating a new "buffer zone" (Ferreira, 2018:63).

According to the agreement, all asylum seekers who entered the Greek border islands had to remain there to get through a process of registration and fingerprinting until they were returned to Turkey, granted refugee status, or given permission to move to the mainland due to their vulnerability⁶. The transfers from the islands to the mainland ceased, as they were considered a «pull factor» for more border crossings (Dimitriadi, 2017:80).

Due to the lack of planning of a coherent policy and a strategic plan, the role of international and local humanitarian NGOs under the auspices of UNHCR emerged in supporting the refugees' needs, replacing the state's conventional welfare state provisions and duties (see Painter *et al.*, 2017), while the role of solidarity and grassroots movements was progressively pushed to the edge (Oikonomakis, 2018). The situation

⁶ ECRE Asylum systems in 2016 *Overview of developments from selected European countries*
https://emnbelgium.be/sites/default/files/publications/AIDA_2016Update_CountryOverviews-4.pdf

of hundreds of thousands of refugees being stuck on the islands and the Balkan route was characterised as a kind of humanitarian crisis.

To carry this out, the European Commission has allocated over €816.4 million in emergency assistance, since the beginning of 2015 to 2018 to support the Greek authorities, as well as international organisations and NGOs operating in Greece, in managing the refugee and humanitarian crisis. This amount is provided in addition to the €613.5 million, already allocated under the national programmes, through national assistance programmes, between 2014 and 2020. Equally, €643.3 million contracted were made available through the Emergency Support Instrument between 2016 and 2018 (European Commission, 2018). At the backdrop of increased use of private companies for either everyday management, or security and surveillance of migration (Fotiadis and Ciobanu, 2013), the funding provided was to further improve reception conditions, Safe Zones for children and integration into the Greek society, as well as voluntary returns (European Commission, 2018).

Kourachanis (2018) informs that the social policy initiatives developed between 2015-17 by the Greek state, were an amalgam of interventions by the EU, the Greek state and the civil society, with emphasis on accommodation in the hotspots and camps. Refugees were increasingly pushed to spatially isolated and socially marginal living spaces of society (Kandylis, 2019). ‘Hotspots’⁷ on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos became closed centres with a prominent function in the management of asylum processes and controlling migration flows. The number of incoming people reached 173,450⁸ and led to the deterioration of the living conditions of the refugees

⁷ European Commission. (2015). *The Hotspot approach to managing exceptional migratory flows* available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/e-library/multimedia/publications/the-hotspot-approach-to-managing-exceptional-migratory-flows_en

⁸ UNHCR (2016). Refugees and immigrants’ arrivals in Europe, monthly data update, December 2016. <https://data2.unhcr.org/ar/documents/download/53447>

on the Greek islands⁹. In the mainland, the UNHCR operated with municipalities and NGOs for the Vulnerable asylum seekers' accommodation centres (apartments, hotels, open accommodation spaces) providing medical, legal, and psychosocial assistance. However, as Kourachanis (2018) concludes,

“The provision of better housing and social living conditions, such as accommodation in social shelters or social apartments, has been achieved for a particularly small portion of vulnerable asylum seekers whose lives are at risk (p.1165)”.

Poor living conditions, limited access to health-care services and uncertainty about the future, associated with human loss, sorrow and trauma have led to the deterioration of the mental and physical wellbeing of the newly arrived and accommodated refugees and asylum seekers in Greece (Stathopoulou *et al.*, 2019).

At the same time, since 2015, the rise of self-organised refugee accommodation spaces was also observed (particularly in Athens), promising better living conditions than official camps for several thousands of people (Tsavdaroglou *et al.*, 2019). At the beginning of 2016, among translators and legal experts, around 121 social workers were employed by the UNHCR across the sites where refugees resided, throughout the mainland, to support local authorities and partnering organisations¹⁰.

2.2. The Origins of the 2009 Financial Crisis and its impact on the welfare state.

Various personal and professional experiences led to the development of this research. I received my Social Work degree in Greece in 2009. This was when nearly

⁹ Geographical restrictions on the movement of refugees were decided (Director of the Asylum Service decision 10464/31.5.2016) confining them on the Islands.

¹⁰ UNHCR (2016) Greece fact sheet. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/49602>

three decades of prosperity for its economy¹¹ successes, promoting individual consumption and hedonism (Douzinas, 2008:38) accompanied by a seemingly successful European integration, were quite abruptly replaced by austerity and perpetual crisis.

In 2007, the world, following the horrendous consequences of the global financial crisis which began in the United States of America after the collapse of the investment bank of Lehman Brothers, entered a period of unprecedented recession. Toxic financial products and the real estate sector, fuelled by the speculative economy for capital investment, played a central role into what has been defined as the crisis of capitalism (Garrett, 2010:341), further affecting manufacturing, production and service delivery (Lavalette, 2019:7). Rapidly, but not unexpectedly, the crisis moved to the periphery of the EU, especially in the nations of Ireland and the European South (Spain, Greece, Portugal) which, as a consequence, faced bailout programs.

In October 2009, Greece faced unsustainable levels of debt that had reached 126.7% and an insurmountable budget deficit which was 15.2% of GDP (Mavridis and Symeon, 2018:3), while having also difficulties in refinancing its loans through the international financial market. In May 2010 and early 2012, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank and the European Commission (EC) - the so-called “Troika”, announced a €110 and €130 billion rescue package respectively, for the banking system, in return for strictly defined austerity reforms, with the aim for the Government to reduce the country’s public deficit from 13.5% below 3% GDP by 2014 (Matsaganis, 2011:502). As a consequence, between 2008 and 2014, Greece, according

¹¹ The real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was increasing by 3.9 per cent each year for 2001 to 2008 and was the second highest in the Eurozone after Ireland (Dellas and Tavlas, 2013:492). Dellas, H. and Tavlas, G. S. (2013) ‘The gold standard, the euro, and the origins of the Greek sovereign debt crisis’, *Cato Journal*, 33(3), pp. 491–520.

to Karanikolos and Kentikelenis (2016:1), had the biggest fall in GDP which dropped by 29%, experiencing thus an economic depression that had been equivalent to a war period (Mavridis and Symeon, 2018).

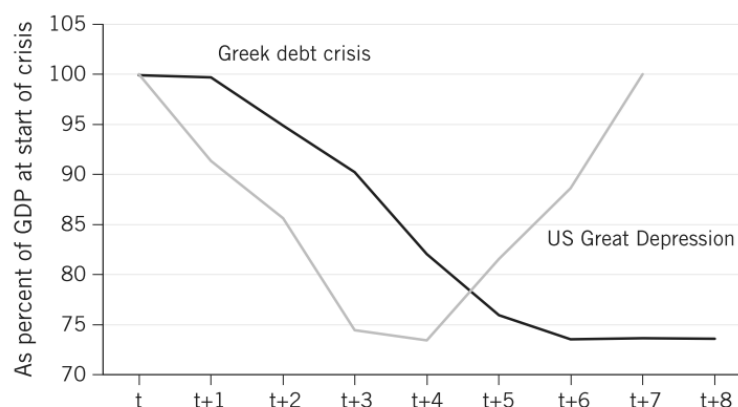


Figure 1. Comparison of Greece’s output loss (2007– 2015) contrary to debt problems experienced by the United States during the Great Depression (1929– 1936). Source: Roos, 2019:277.

These circumstances left their mark on the political and social scene. The newly elected social-democratic government, PASOK (the Panhellenic Socialist Movement), was replaced by a so-called technocratic government, whose members had previous service in international organisations and corporations to further neoliberal restructuring. Such neoliberal reforms had started in the late 1990s (see Karamessini, 2008) but after the crisis, the aim was to prioritise debt servicing to restore Greece’s credibility to private investors, to save the euro zone and the international banks as well as the financial system from collapse over servicing the population’s basic needs (Karamessini, 2015). Due to policies similar to the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) and the free trade agreements, that were imposed by the IMF on much of the Global South during the global debt crisis of the 1980s (Pentaraki, 2013:703) states were now asked to incorporate budget-balancing edicts into their constitutions.

Gerbaudo (2017:44) argued that “the levers of national economic policy were effectively put in the hands of Brussels and Frankfurt”. Greece had become a vicious laboratory, ruled by bankrupted banks and private organisations within a socioeconomic system- a “bankruptocracy” (see Varoufakis, 2011).

The terms of the two Memoranda¹² obliged Greece to proceed structural reforms to boost economic growth with particular attention on exports and on attracting foreign direct investment. These briefly involved: the immediate and extensive privatization of many public enterprises and public real estate such as ports, airports, utilities, energy (Karamessini, 2015:15) with the intention of raising €50 billion by 2015 (Zacune *et al.*, 2013:9); to increase retirement age limits and implement drastic cuts—by 30 to 40 per cent in pensions and salaries both in public health and the private sectors (Petmesidou, 2013; Papadopoulos and Roumpakis, 2013, 2018); to excessively reduce the number of employees in the public sector, as only one hiring was allowed for every ten people retiring in the public sector¹³ (Pentaraki, 2019); and to promote labour market reforms against basic workers’ rights, like job protections¹⁴ and collective bargaining, with extensive downward pressure on wages (the national minimum wage from €751 gross per month was reduced to €586) and working conditions (e.g. zero-hour contract and part-time work), supposedly in order to improve competition and productivity rates (Matsaganis, 2012; Degryse *et al.*, 2013; Salomon, 2015).

These new labour policies and practices, actively dismantling all forms of social solidarity and de-unionizing workers, led to measures towards a more flexible, precarious and unstable employment. Consequently, wider segments of the working

¹² Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies and Memorandum of Understanding of Specific Economic Policy Conditionality.

¹³ Law 3986/2011

¹⁴ Law 4093/2012

population now had lower wages, fewer social rights, subject to further exploitation and abuse (Garrett, 2009:18-19, 2018, 2021:45-48). Coming to grips with class, inequality, and capitalism, Ferguson (2008:34-35) argues that the neoliberal attack against welfare states, has led to a huge increase in insecurity. At the same time, it provided an ideological framework that works to socially control and govern the poor, as a kind of punishment for structural failures. Under dominant discourses of individual responsibility and self-reliance, employed to justify punitive social reforms (Garrett, 2010a), employees were obliged to accept precarious and inhuman kinds of employment. It is estimated that 40% of people in Greece worked in increasingly deskilled, precarious, low-paid occupations on short-term contracts, while between 2010 and 2012 the percentage of uninsured informal labour increased from 26% to 35% (Kesisoglou et al., 2016:25).

The full-blown economic meltdown brought by austerity measures, was also accompanied by a lack of job opportunities, zero-hour contracts and rising unemployment that produced significant economic hardship for the vast majority of working people with whom social workers engage. Unemployment rates had risen up from 7.8% in 2008 to 22% in 2011 and 27,2% in 2013 (Kesisoglou et al., 2016:25). Long-term unemployment, referring to the number of people who have been actively seeking employment for at least a year, persisted throughout the crisis, as it increased between 2005 and 2014 from 5.2% to 19.5% (European Commission, 2014). Young people have suffered disproportionately, since the prospect of employment for them was very limited; youth unemployment in 2013 skyrocketing a 60%, one-third (IMF, 2013:7).

Precarious contracts, diminishing rights and unemployment posed a threat to empowerment, equality, and well-being, leading to massively increased poverty,

widespread inequality, and misery. Papatheodorou, (2015) notes relative poverty rates increased from 19.7% in 2008 to 23.1% in 2011; more than one- third of the Greek population was living below the poverty line, while the risk of poverty or social exclusion increased from 31 to 34.6%. The increase in poverty has gone hand in hand with an increase in inequality. The poor with a monthly income lower than €334 became poorer, as the poverty gap had significantly enlarged, from 23.4% in 2008 to 29.9% in 2011(Papatheodorou, 2015:189). Unemployment benefits and the basic pension of €360 per month, were also below the country's poverty line (Ibid:191). Manifestations of poverty and deprivation in daily life were reflected in the inability of households to afford winter heating or a week's holiday (ibid:190).

Further on, the consequences of fiscal consolidation have been aggravated by the lack of a general safety net. Unlike either the liberal or the continental welfare states (see Esping-Andersen, 1990), the welfare of Greek citizens, according to Ferrera's (1996) regime typology about the "south European welfare model", has the following basic characteristics: it depends on a universalistic 'Beveridgean' health care system, with established national health services, supported by mixed funding system (state revenues and social health insurance contributions); social insurance contributions are highly fragmented and corporatist, associated with clientelistic elements, offering generous protections to privileged groups (Kourachanis, 2019:115), while short-sighted and short-lived provisions are only provided to "protected categories" and for non-insurable social risks, such as poverty (Guillén and Matsaganis, 2000:122). Social care services and social assistance remain a less- developed politico-economic element of social protection (Petmesidou, 2019:162).

Being essentially centred on monetary transfers to family households, family had thus played a central role in the provision of welfare for its dependent members,

serving as a source of emotional support and financial protection (Karamessini, 2015). The family had also played a double role, highlighted in the model of the Familistic Welfare Capitalism; namely as the main provider of welfare to its members and as a key agent in the reproduction of its politico- economic institutional arrangements (Papadopoulos and Roumpakis, 2013:204). These are in accordance with the norms of familism of social support, based on the assumption that the household is the main cornerstone of social solidarity for the lack of and inequalities in public provisions, safeguarding the earnings and career stability of the male breadwinners, while the dependent homemaking wife taking care of their children (Dominelli, 2002b; Kallinikaki, 2010; Teloni, 2011). The rise of poverty that accompanied the crisis has created difficulties in the socio-economic security of the families which have long been relied upon to provide safety nets (Papadopoulos and Roumpakis, 2012).

Additionally, the home protection is being abolished and the institutional framework is being tightened¹⁵. No provision has been made at the central level to provide those renting their homes with any protection (Arapoglou and Gounis, 2015; Kourachanis, 2015, 2019b). In Athens, where 3.8 million people reside, 17,800 people were categorised as roofless and homeless, while 305,000 Greek and 209,000 foreign nationals in privately rented accommodation, faced the risks of poverty and social exclusion (Arapoglou and Gounis, 2014:4). The role of the state had been limited to the creation of a residual social management with emergency elements, provided by municipalities and the civil society which received funding to provide minimum relief by European programs, charities or large private enterprises (Arapoglou and Gounis, 2015; Kourachanis, 2019b). As Kourachanis (2019:124) notes, “homelessness policies

¹⁵ Law 4046/ 2012

Additionally, the Law 3869/2010 was the only institutional initiative that aimed to protect heavily indebted borrowers from foreclosures.

were characterized by a philanthropic philosophy for the survival of the homeless based on the discretion of the organizations and not on the basis of interventions deriving from social citizenship”. Mr Cephas Lumina (2013), the UN Rapporteur on Debt and Human Rights observed a dramatic rise in homelessness during the past year or so, with the total number of people affected recently estimated at 20,000. Cabot (2018:10) shows, homelessness “illustrates wider anxieties not just about the failure of the social state but also the fragmentation and degeneration of Greek social and family ties in the age of austerity”.

Austerity measures, Skordili (2013:130) notes, forced “thousands of lower and middle-income households to substitute nutritious food for fewer and cheaper products, living on diets of inadequate nutritional value and quality”. The social consequences of the combined negative effects of recession and austerity were equally devastating and more far-reaching. Income inequality in a society, Wilkinson and Pickett (2017) recently argued, contributes to more antagonistic forms of social relations, affecting the individual’s mental health. Due to the economic disarray, there has been a 45% increase in suicides and people started suffering from depression and growing helplessness (Giotakos, Tsouvelas and Kontaxakis, 2012; Ferguson, 2020).

Further, the persistent economic recession and austerity policies have put universal health coverage and welfare state provisions under severe pressure. Despite the need for public health budgets to increase, between 2009 and 2014 public social spending had rapidly declined by 36% (Karanikolos and Kentikelenis, 2016). Since the onset of the crisis, social spending cuts to municipalities, which are sole welfare and care providers, amounted to almost 60% in Greece (Karamessini, 2015:18). At the same time, as public funding of the NHS between 2009 and 2012 reduced by 25.2% (€4

billion) and health sector workers suffered salaries cut by 20% (Maresso *et al.*, 2018:390,393), private health services were promoted within it (Petmesidou, 2011:11).

This dystopian structural violence, as imposed by market imperatives and EU/IMF directives, eliminated the concept of public good and fundamental human rights, and made it impossible for political and democratic institutions to exist and work well, by promoting the protection of rights that foster progress towards justice and partly respond to the demands of workers (see FIGH/HLHR, 2014). Thus, such developments solely focused on economic and financial issues had profoundly dismantling consequences for the maintenance of social cohesion, non-discrimination and harmony as well as collective responsibility and political stability for positive goals (Poulopoulos, 2014).

In this light, the capitalist state, far from neutral in a class-divided society, in order to satisfy the ‘needs’ of the dominant mode of production, while being unable to garner popular consent and high degree of legitimacy for restructuring, revealed its anti-democratic and increasingly authoritarian nature with the aim to sustain social order and control social unrest.

For Athanasiou (2012) the crisis became a political paradigm and an ideological framework for the Greek State, which had now lost its functions of care and solidarity and was operating in a permanent “state of emergency”. To extort social acceptance for the implementation of reforms not only dissolved the law and democratic order by legitimising exceptional policies, but it also adopted a biopolitics strategy and arbitrariness, as processes of managing extreme poverty (Ibid:31).

It appeared that the unambiguous sign of failure has been the accumulation of debt; allowing the Greek people to be accused of ‘living beyond their means’, and each

one individually to be held responsible for the country's economic 'malaise', normalising poverty and crippling any collective action (Pentaraki, 2013).

The government was highlighting migrants, drug addicts, prostitutes, homeless and poor people, a basic problem as a potentially menacing Other, of the Greek economy, and was shifting the responsibilities of the crisis onto them. In sort of social Darwinism, all these groups, being first-hand victims of widespread moral panic, were now stigmatised and treated as scapegoats, who did not deserve to exist. Pouloupoulos (2015) makes the point that:

“State violence was introduced with the public disparagement of HIV positive young women from public officers, just before the 2012 election. This case has been symbolic in the transformation of the state from ‘welfare to restrictive’ and unique in modern Western Europe as an extreme example of human rights violation. This case provides us with a clear example of how certain politicians in order to be re-elected turn disease and illness into a crime, attempting to reinforce public fear and support suppressive policies [...] Police on an almost daily basis was arresting immigrants, homeless people, drug users and anyone they thought that it may turn into a threat for ‘law and order’”

Between the periods 2011-2014, transgender citizens and women, allegedly accused as sex-workers and drug users by appearance, have been subject to incredible levels of media hostility and humiliation as a 'public health bomb' including physical abuse by the police, in order to 'clean and beautify the city' (Giannou, 2017:19). Heightened racism and xenophobia turned into a series of racist and murderous anti-immigrant pogroms, led by the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn (GD) movement, in areas of Athens with a high concentration of immigrants, after the large migration waves that the country experienced since 2000. Members on the political left were also targeted.

In September 2013, Pavlos Fyssas¹⁶, a young anti-fascist musician always present in the social struggles of his time, was stabbed to death by a GD supporter.

2.3. The emergence of far-right as a precursor to the politics of “Hostile Environment”

In 2011, following the authoritarian and anti-immigrant turn in Greek politics, a formerly marginal neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn (GD), with close relations to major business circles and whose agenda espoused nationalist worldview and violent activity, managed to enter the Parliament, securing almost 7% of the vote (Ellinas, 2013). GD had managed to politically succeed by presenting itself as an anti-systemic party within the establishment and through every-day activism, involving food distribution and healthcare just for Greeks, as well as violent physical attacks against immigrants, ran mainly by street-armed groups in the neighbourhoods, but also in workplaces. Under an austerity regime, such approaches aimed at providing a tangible answer to the covering basic social needs (food, health, etc.) and the socially constructed demand for ‘security’ against immigration by the government (Paraskeva-Veloudogianni, 2018).

One of the most disturbing features of the socio-political transformations and the rise of the neo-Nazi party in power through its political exposition and action in the public, was the two social workers’ candidacy with GD in the local elections of May 2014 (Teloni and Mantanika, 2015). Being faithful to the critical spirit of social work, Teloni and Mantanika (2015:200) reaffirmed the unconditionality of social work’s political affiliation and allegiances with racism and fascism.

¹⁶ The Night that Changed Everything <https://roarmag.org/magazine/pavlos-fyssas-greek-anti-fascism/>

Paraskeva-Veloudogianni (2018:199) concludes “that the crisis is simultaneously economic, political and ideological, ultimately referring to the Gramscian ‘crisis of hegemony’. In the context of an extreme neoliberal economic management, this led to the electoral collapse of bipartisanship, incapable of penetrating the majority of social classes; intensity of right-wing authoritarianism of state power as management of the political crisis through fear and discipline and; the political emergence of the Greek electoral Left that shocked the Greek and European establishment (Paraskeva-Veloudogianni, 2018). Trust in political institutions was at an all-time low (Figure 2.)

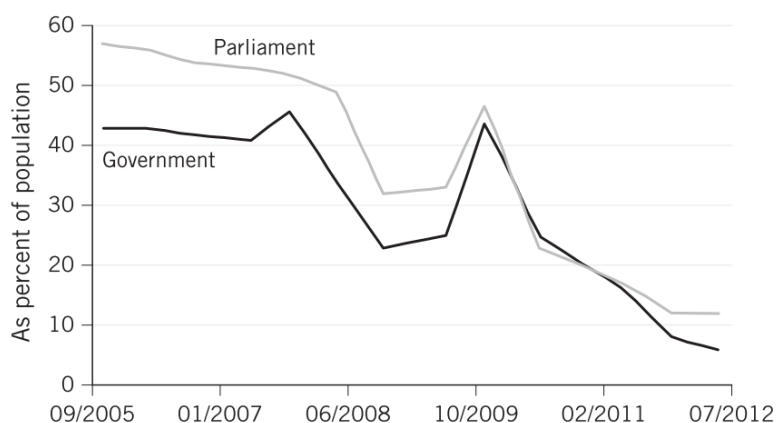


Figure 2. Public trust in Greece’s political institutions, 2005– 2012. Source: Roos, 2020:279.

After five years of increasingly stringent austerity measures, this was clearly exemplified with the win of Syriza (the Coalition of Radical Left) in snap elections in 2015, forming a national-popular anti-austerity coalition with the nationalist right-wing anti-memorandum Anel (the Independent Greeks) with the promise to end austerity regime and renegotiate Greece’s obligations to its European creditors. However, soon, after a semester of failed negotiations with its European creditors and despite a massive

referendum vote against a new bailout financing, Syriza was quickly forced to capitulate and implement a €86 billion bailout agreement which did not offer any concessions on debt relief, privatizations, or fiscal surpluses (Roos, 2020).

Greece's continued compliance to its creditors and the domestic establishment meant further fiscal adjustments and reforms in line with the expectation of uninterrupted debt servicing. In light of the unrealistic 3.5% of GDP budget surplus every year for the next decade (Roos, 2020:294) until 2022, deeply unpopular austerity measures were adopted to push through privatisations for land and infrastructures and imposed a straitjacket on public spending for pensions, healthcare, and education - amounting to approximately 13 billion €, while cutting wages (Karagkounis, 2017; Velegrakis et al., 2022:116). Gaitanou (2018:151) notes "soon the Syriza-Anel government was obliged to face its inability to implement even minor aspects of its political programme, even failing in the protection of elementary civil rights".

This has also been a matter of the dominant values and significations of a society. For example, as Lavalette and Ferguson (2018:210) remind us, the failure of left-wing parties to challenge this ruling-class politics of austerity has created a space for racist and openly fascist ideas to grow.

2.4. Practicing social work with refugees.

Politicians in the EU and the Greek authorities, in their attempt to redirect dissatisfaction from the failures of the neoliberal agenda, utilised the migrants and discursively labelled them as an "illegal other"; a figure of fear and security threat, legitimising in turn, actions taken against them (Sajjad, 2018). Political elites in their public discourses emphasized that "the only realistic" political answer to immigration

is to fortify and seal the borders, protect national identity, and curb the development of socio-economic threats that migrants were allegedly deemed responsible for.

Racism and the securitization of migration were everyday social practices, triggering nationalist reflexes, which in turn rendered refugees vulnerable to all forms of brutality, that made everyday survival an even more urgent matter of life or death¹⁷(Karyotis, 2012; Lazaridis and Skleparis, 2016). The Commissioner of Europe, when discussing the increased intolerance and alarmed occurrences of hate crimes in Greece as well as migrants' access to justice and protection, mentioned that migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, "have borne the brunt of intolerance and racist violence so far"¹⁸.

The violation of the human rights of asylum seekers had culminated in cruel and unusual treatment and torture. Samaras' government of ND launched Operation Xenios Zeus¹⁹ in 2012. The aims of the operation were manifold. They meant to identify undocumented migrants and return them to their home countries as well as to deter illegal immigrants by sealing the border with Turkey. The intervention was rounded up as an operation to make Athens a city of law, for the improvement of the quality of life for residents and visitors. The Prime minister, Antonis Samaras had begun his term by talking about the need to 'recapture our cities' and of his Ministers, underscored that the aim is "to make their lives as difficult as possible" (HRW, 2013; Lazaridis and Skleparis, 2016:187).

¹⁷ In 2012, Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) documented 154 incidents of racist violence, of which 151 were committed against refugees and migrants and 3 against European citizens.

¹⁸ Council of Europe. (2013). Report by Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Following His Visit to Greece, from 28 January to 1 February 2013. Strasbourg [online] at <https://rm.coe.int/16806db8a8#Top>.

¹⁹ Xenios Zeus refers to one of Zeus's many nicknames [patron of hospitality]; meaning "Zeus who looks after strangers", an obvious case of double speech.

The anti-migratory dogma expanded from the borders in urban spaces and was reflected in security practices and large-scale anti-migrant attacks by right-wing groups, against everyone who appeared to be foreigner, especially people of colour (Dalakoglou, 2013a). To a significant extent, a chain of thirty “closed hospitality camps” were meant to be created to serve as detention centres for undocumented migrants who were blamed for a “crime pandemic”²⁰. The operation was extended to Patras in early October 2012²¹ and the refugee community living in abandoned factories was deterred to access the social service I was working.

For the social workers practicing in this context Teloni and Mantanika (2015) characteristically mention that social work practice has been more micro or individually focused:

“In reality, refugees are being deported and asylum seekers, including minors, are being systematically detained. In general, they face appalling and inhuman conditions during detention and in everyday life [...] Social workers attempt to do their best in their everyday practice, dealing mainly with casework, with limited resources and attempting to advocate for their clients (p.199)”.

“Austerity policies” had already signified a harsh and rapid transition to a new social and economic order where social workers were caught between massively increasing needs and welfare cuts (Teloni, 2011; Ioakimidis and Teloni, 2013; Pentaraki, 2019).

These events raised social justice considerations on how refugees gain access to social services or how they could voice their concerns, wishes and wants. How and

²⁰Greece to open new detention centres for illegal migrants
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/29/greece-detention-centres-migrants>

²¹ See Unwelcome Guests Greek Police Abuses of Migrants in Athens
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/12/unwelcome-guests/greek-police-abuses-migrants-athens>

in what ways were these events experienced and countered by social workers, working from a human rights perspective?

It was within such a context that in 2014, after feeling overwhelmed by the harsh reality of practice characterised by precarious and exploitative labour relations, involving delays in payments, uncertainty and volunteerism (Georgoussi, 2003; Ioakimidis, 2008; Pouloupoulos, 2012; Pentaraki and Dionysopoulou, 2019) that I resigned my job as a social worker working with refugees. The tensions, ethical dilemmas and contradictions I faced during this period, motivated me to further explore the collective experience of social work in the context of the concentric crises (financial crisis, political crisis and the refugee crisis).

The social transformations taking place in Greece, after the global financial crisis and EU-instigated austerity measures, with its own population increasingly facing unemployment, rapid impoverishment and evictions from their homes, (Athanasίου, 2018) together with the recent EU anti-migration policies, violate the respect for human rights and undermines democracy. Amid the rising levels of inequalities and the public expenditure cuts in Greece (Matsaganis, 2011; Petmesidou and Guillén, 2014) asylum seekers, refugees and its citizens as well, have become dependent on formal and informal social services of NGOs and charitable organisations, aiming at services on the most needy (Kourachanis, 2015; Karagkounis, 2019).

The emergence of social movements and Syriza's succession to power, provided reasons to hope and reinforced the belief that social work, through collective action and political deliberation, could call into question and explicitly challenge the dominant neoliberal agenda (Pentaraki, 2013; Karagkounis, 2017a). Soon, after the

'NO' vote in the referendum of 2015 about the continuation of neoliberal structural reforms, was ignored by the SYRIZA-led coalition government faced with a financial coup for the interest of capital and further austerity measures introduced at the expense of the welfare state (Pentaraki and Speake, 2015), the future looked bleak for radical movements and progressive social work in Greece. Under the discriminatory and stigmatising "discourse of austerity" (Venieris, 2013:20) the government and media had adopted towards the public, causing prejudice and stigmatisation, direct democratic forms of organization that began to take shape in a more equitable and democratic political framework, particularly in the context of austerity, "gradually gave their place to disappointment and fatalism, to the point where loss and sacrifice have almost been normalised" (Karagkounis, 2019:9).

At a time when exceptional emergences and global humanitarian crises point human rights abuses, closely tied to long-term economic exploitation of global economy (Ferguson, et al., 2018) Završek (2017) argues social workers must engage in more political work and critical research, focusing on universal human rights, human dignity and protection of life.

This account provides not only a short description of where I grew up, studied and worked as a social worker, but also lays the foundations for the historical, ideological and political context within which ideas related with social work and social justice are being discussed in this thesis. It was emphasized that social work is always immersed in the context of the time and grounded on the present socio-economic-political circumstances.

Aims and Objectives:

In 2014, the global definition of social work approved by International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), established in 1928, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) General Assembly acknowledged the foundational values of human rights and social justice as central to social work's mission, among self-determination, equality, freedom.

"Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing" (IFSW, 2014).

Many individual countries' codes of ethics (IFSW, 2018), including the Greece's National Association of Social Workers (GASW, 2017) code, recognize human dignity and social justice as key ethical principles, serving as a foundation for practice.

These values are also reflected in attempts to formulate global standards for social work practice. In particular, "Social workers have an obligation to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatization or subjugation, and to work towards an inclusive society" (IFSW/IASSW, 2004:4.2.5). Additionally, social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public, situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful (IFSW, 2012). In a similar vein, it recognised not only the social workers' responsibility to challenge unjust policies and practices, but also to reflect on the

challenges and dilemmas they face to make ethically informed decisions (IFSW/IASSW, 2004, 4.2.4).

As neoliberal structural transformations have given rise to problems, such as growing inequality, climate change, displacement of people and forced migration as well as racism, followed by the retreat of many established welfare regimes, practitioners -as a global professional community- are compelled to acknowledge the influence of social and political forces in people's problems and the political role they play in addressing these, by promoting change for the good of people in need and securing their civil and human rights (Beresford, 2011).

For increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees that have entered the EU in recent years, the IFSW has called practitioners to be responsibly responsive to the current human tragedy, contributing to their social protection by combating discriminatory practices, while challenging structural oppression and offering durable solutions towards social change and the liberation of people (IFSW, 2012, 2014, 2016).

The IFSW Policy statement on "Refugees," (IFSW, 1998) and the "Displaced Persons," (IFSW, 2002) as well as the statement on children's age determination (IFSW, 2017) all provide further perspectives and resources to reorient approaches of transnational social workers to actively search for alternative policies and systems to address worldwide concerns.

This presupposes a profession that is non-stigmatising and anti-oppressive on the one hand and one that is not void of the political context of practice on the other. In order for global and national policies, which preserve social injustices inflicted upon those in need, to be challenged and changed, social workers' engagement with

strategies that create changes within the social and political contexts, is an imperative need to develop, with emphasis on political action (Higgs, 2015; Ferguson et al., 2018).

The primary aim of the research is to explore the current development and political construction of social work with refugees in Greece, as this takes place in humanitarian non-governmental organisation. The focus of this study is on NGOs' and social workers' views on the manifestations and applicability of the concept of social justice in the context of their practice.

1. Identify how has the role of NGOs as the main provider of social services for refugees changed during the so-called “refugee crisis”.
2. Understand the varied narratives and conceptualisations of social justice articulated both at institutional and practitioner levels.
3. Explore how Greek social workers' understanding of the concept of ‘social justice’ informs their practice when trying to navigate complex ethical-political dilemmas.

A note on terminology.

Overlapping to some extent, the three main categories of legally recognised concepts of people's movement are those of asylum seekers, refugees and (economic) migrants. As the current refugee crisis has shown us, these terms are often used interchangeably, erroneously and / or with much confusion in the media and in public debate (UNHCR, 2016), resulting in implications about the level of protection that they receive. These terms have been widely accepted as standards in international law since the Geneva Convention of 1951.

However, as noted by Cetti (2015), the modern and liberal legal concept of a refugee embedded in national policies, is narrowly defined and refers only to the victim of specific forms of political persecution. Since immigration began to be seen as a potential social and economic problem, countries started to ignore refugee law and pursue policies of exclusion and “neo-refoulement”, reflecting their political interests and economic priorities, which change over time (Cetti, 2015). This position is also reflected in the decreased number of individuals recognised under the 1951 Geneva Convention, while permanent international protections are reduced to temporary forms of leave to remain, with Voutira and Doná (2007:163) explaining that refugees appeared to be “endangered species”. In 2015, Greece recognised only 3% of its asylum seekers as needing protection (Craig and Zwaan, 2019:36). Recent policies and policy changes surrounding asylum and their official discourse of the so-called “Fortress Europe” (see Carr, 2012) tend to limit or marginalize the individual right to refuge and welfare support based on the binary distinction between “deserving” and “undeserving” migrants (see Sales, 2002) to control the flow of transient populations. Within the international research on migration, Watters (2008:47) notes that the everyday discourse surrounding “asylum seekers” ‘is inextricably linked to imagery of cunning

and manipulative foreigners, securing generous material rewards from a hopelessly gullible government”.

In this thesis, the term ‘refugee’ does not explicitly refer to a legal status group, but I use it in a broad way as a manifestation of forced migration related to human mobility, when accessing rights or staying is not an option (Haas, et al., 2020:33) involving asylum seekers, people who have been granted asylum, stateless persons, etc. As Zetter suggests (2014:24), it is “increasingly difficult to discern clear and precise causes of forced displacement, the degree of “force” that impels displacement or, indeed, the extent to which “persecution” describes the conditions which cause people to flee their countries.” Zetter (2007:183) notes, refugee’s motivations often include a mixture of seeking safety and better economic opportunities. Furthermore, the term ‘migrant’ is used to describe non-labour migrants, acknowledging that reasons behind economic migration are often multi-causal and multi-layered.

Literature review

3. Greek Policies on Migration and Asylum.

Introduction.

Hereby, I wish to present the patterns of immigration to Greece in the past few decades in order to situate the current social work intervention within wider political, historical and social processes and hence structures of domination and power.

In this respect, the country's ever-complex migratory landscape which was at first different from that exhibited today, is taken into account. When I refer to "*policy*" here, I don't not only encompass the legal framework around immigration, but I also point out the political and economic domain, as well as practices of authorities involving their agents and the stance of Greeks towards the immigrants themselves (Kiprianos et al., 2003:149).

It briefly considers the main socio-political developments in maintaining of unjust and inhumane policies and practices with focus on control measures, short-term status tied to employment at the expense of long-term settlement, integration, and refugee protection. These, explicitly or implicitly, have been exclusively concerned over societal, economic and political security that have rendered those who enter the country vulnerable to economic marginalization, poverty and destitution with limited social rights through harsh policies and notably protracted bureaucratic procedures and the use of conditionalities in governments' provisions.

Once one begins to grasp these socio-political circumstances and functions of the Greek state, the inherently conditional nature of social injustices of structural oppression and deprivation against immigrants, become apparent.

The present chapter offers a succinct and eclectic overview of Greek policies on migration and asylum (see also Appendix VII).

Nevertheless, discussing their development is crucial, because they provide the political setting of Greece and the restrictive immigration/nationalization laws and policies that de-legitimizing the position of immigrants in society on the basis of ethnic and cultural arguments.

3.1. Migration and asylum policies 1991-2001.

Once known for its large-scale emigration to the USA and from the end of the 1950s up until the mid-1970s to Australia and the industrial nations of Northern Europe, Greece, during the last decades of the 20th century has experienced increasing migrant inflows from non- European Union (EU) member states.

The countries of origin many of the migrants arrived in the country in the mid-1970s, were initially Egypt, and afterwards central-Eastern Europe, 1980's, (e.g. Poles) and the Balkans (e.g. Bulgaria and Romania) to work in agriculture, construction and other service industries. At the end of 80s, a rising flow of migrants followed from the interior regions of the former Soviet Union, in the aftermath of the collapse of the communist regimes of the area, when processes of liberalisation and transition to market economies started. Particularly, when those migrant arrivals increased initially after 1985 and consecutively at the beginning of 90s, Albania -on Greece's northern border- precipitously predominated as a source country after its radical-political reforms in 1989–90. The inflow was composed of Albanians of both Greek and non-Greek descent (Cavounidis, 2002). Among the large numbers of immigrants, often without the necessary documents (“undocumented” or “illegal”) from the Balkans and some legal immigrants from other African or Asian countries, such as the Philippines,

immigrants of Greek descent (Pontic Greeks from the former Soviet Union and Greek Albanians from the southern part of Albania) who used to live for historical reasons outside the borders of the Greek state, were also entered to reside and work in Greece (Levy, 1999; Fakiolas, 2003).

Until early 1991, the basic piece of legislation regulating the status of alien immigrants and entry in Greece was the more than sixty-year-old Law 4310/1929 on the 'Settlement and movement of foreigners in Greece, police passport control and expulsion'. Foreigners in order to live and work in Greece, had to ensure work permit from the Greek consulate authorities in their countries of origin, having first found an employer (Fakiolas, 2003; Apostolatou, 2004).

As far as the Asylum policy is concerned, Greece had already ratified the Geneva Convention in 1959 and the 1967 New York Protocol in 1968, developing a procedure for refugee recognition at the end of the 70s. The asylum seekers arriving in the country at that time were under the protection of UNHCR who would then leave the country via resettlement programmes. For all of those who were entering the country-including asylum seekers, the Ministry for Public Order by the local aliens Departments (Police authorities) was the state authority in the decision concerning their entry and residence in Greece (Papadimitriou and Papageorgiou, 2005).

At the same time, Greece, in 1992, became a full member of the EU's Schengen zone²², which required Greece to be subject to tightening regulations regarding border controls.

²² The Schengen Agreement was originally signed in 1985 by only five of the EC countries, France, Germany, and the Benelux countries. It became part of official European Union policy with the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997.

The Schengen Agreement exemplifies the general “modus of the Europeanisation of migration policy” (Papadopoulos et al., 2008:166). Fostered by the Dublin Regulations²³, the Schengen process initiated the institutional and legal framework of common European asylum policies (CEAS)²⁴ for the creation of common migration, border and surveillance policies across Europe and paved the way towards the fortification of external borders and gradual suppression of free movement at the European borders (Hampshire, 2013:102-103). This brought to the forefront what many have since called ‘Fortress Europe’; the creation of a common internal market with the relaxation of internal border controls for those moving between member states and the strengthening of EU external borders. Reforms have been revolved around visa restrictions, as a prerequisite for entry of third-country migrants, externalization of asylum policies and an effort to confine asylum seekers transitory border areas, such as airport zones and islands or even deter them from entering the EU through deportation and expulsion procedures (Cetti, 2015; Kouvelakis, 2018).

“Entry, exit, sojourn, employment, removal of aliens, procedure for the recognition of refugees and other measures” was the title of the law 1975/1991 that marked the beginning of Greece’s recognition of the presence of migrants as a de facto reality. Greece attempted to regulate mixed migration flows through creating categories of immigrants, resulting in different legal statuses and policies that drive migrants’ rights: i) “Greek repatriates” descent from the former Soviet Union, Albania and other countries, holders of “regular” residence permits, ii) “regular migrants” iii) “refugees

²³ Greece ratified the 1990 Dublin Convention in December 1991, which came into force on 1 September 1997. The Convention determined the State Responsible for Examining Applications for Asylum lodged in one of the Member States of the European Communities by a third-country national.

The Greek government was also determined to become a party to the 1990 Schengen Convention on the Gradual Abolition of Common Border Checks (86), since it was granted in June 1991 observer status by the Schengen group (87).

²⁴ It became fully operational in 2015 and apart from the Dublin regulation it is supported by Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency responsible for supporting border management.

and asylum seekers”, and, last but not least, iv) the unauthorized “irregular” immigrants who were permitted through administrative inefficiency or convenience to enter a country (Kiprianos, et al, 2003).

The aim and intended outcomes of the law 1975/1991 which was in force up until 2001, were primarily to restrict immigration of third country nationals and facilitate their administrative removals and detention. Around 1.5 million expulsions took place between 1991 and 1997 under inhumane conditions. Moreover, there was not a deliberate and concerted policy attempt to encourage integration into social, economic and cultural life in Greece (Apostolatou, 2004; Baldwin-Edwards, 2004).

The ideological and political agenda regarding to the draft bill was driven by security considerations, since “migration was dealt as a problem that the country had to tackle immediately” (Kapsalis, 2005:57).

This made the social construction of migration and asylum possible as a “threat” and “danger” to the Greek state and society, and has since contributed a considerable amount towards the securitisation and criminalisation of migration with the promises to protect a traditionally homogenous society and combat illegal immigration through tightening of border controls, detention and deportation policy. The use of rhetoric about migration- related fears and anxieties to legitimise the deployment of emergency policies has also resulted in the divisive and polarising ‘us/ them’ dichotomy and xenophobic attitudes against the identity of the “Other” (Karyotis, 2012; Karyotis and Skleparis, 2013). Albanians were the most stigmatised immigrant group in Greece during the 1990s and media served to strengthen the image of the “illegal migrant”, legitimising the racist, anti-immigrant politics (Pratsinakis, 2014). Significantly, the implementation of harsh immigration rules on legal status resulted in human rights

violations, leaving the majority of migrants excluded from the labour market and housing (Konsta and Lazaridis, 2010) as well as welfare services, including health care—except for emergency²⁵ cases. Education, in practice, was provided under a tolerance state irrespective of the children's legal status (Karyotis and Skleparis, 2013:689).

The institutional recognition of asylum seekers in Greece came under Law 1975/1991, (modified by law 2452/1996 followed by Presidential Decree 61/1999) which set detailed rules (Art. 24 and 25) on procedures for granting political asylum to refugees (Sitaropoulos, 2000). Until 2013, the asylum procedure was totally in the hands of the Greek police and the decision belonged to the Minister of Public Order (Papageorgiou, 2013). The Convention refugees' right to self-employment and wage-earning employment was finally recognized by Greece in 1994²⁶. The Law explicitly provided vocational training and monthly long-term unemployment allowance to convention refugees, on equal terms as Greek citizens (Sitaropoulos, 2002). Meanwhile, the right to family reunification was initially ignored, until it was established by PD 61/ 1999 on refugee status recognition procedure. The right to the employment of asylum seekers and of humanitarian (de facto) refugees was regulated for the first time by Greek law in 1998 (PD 189/1998) to cover immediate life needs as long as they were not housed in accommodation centres by the Health Ministry and the NGOs (Sitaropoulos, 2002:444).

During the 90s and until the beginning of 2010, Greek immigration policies can be characterised as patch work, focused on gate-keeping (Dimitriadi, 2018) and thus had not supported any long-term policy developments in the areas of immigration, failing at establishing a 'harmonized' asylum policy and practice. Instead, they were

²⁵ law 1975/1991, art. 31.2

²⁶ Presidential Decree 209/1994

made of ad hoc regularization programmes²⁷ for particular working-sector migrants needed in the labour markets (Ambrosini and Cohen, 2018:66), providing short term and under certain conditions, renewable residence permits to the thousands of undocumented migrants who had entered Greece (Triandafyllidou, 2009; see Konsta and Lazaridis, 2010). In fact, such developments facilitated the use of asylum procedures by each “alien” to request asylum from the Greek authorities at any time, to prolong their stay in Greece, because an asylum decision could take as long as six to ten years, while offering protection from arrest and threat of deportation as well as the right to work. To a certain extent, this was seen as a counterbalance to a crackdown on asylum and other regularisation procedures that could deprive refugees of the protection they might be entitled to (Papadimitriou and Papageorgiou, 2005:307; Dimitriadi, 2017:89, 2018:100).

The response from the Greeks to integration process and the economic and social rights attached to asylum and refugee status was considered draconian, since it did not provide for the improvement of the lives of refugees who, “for many years [lived] in a *de facto* and *de jure* limbo”, experiencing conditions of extreme poverty (Sitaropoulos, 2000:108). As regards the significant shortcomings in the refugee protection framework, several explanations have been put forward, which usually focused on the relatively small number of asylum seekers entering the country as well as the shortcomings of the State, pursuing the policies of a transit country (Sitaropoulos, 2000, 2002; Papadimitriou and Papageorgiou, 2005; Papageorgiou, 2013).

²⁷ The first regularisation took place in 1998 (presidential decrees 358/1997 and 359/1997). Since 1998 three regularization programs were adopted in 2001, 2005 and 2007 in Greece, on the basis of Alien Laws 2910/2001 (02.05.2001), 3386/2005 (23.08.2005), and 3536/2007 (23.02.2007) respectively. Regularization procedure for undocumented migrants living and working in Greece consisted of two stages, following the issuance of two presidential decrees: “Temporary Residence Permit Card” or “white card” stage and the subsequent “green card” stage which involved the issuance of a limited duration residence card.

In practice, and due to the “archaism” of the asylum system, these people had restricted access to various public social services, including, among others, the access to reception centres, especially due to the scarcity of reception places, and medical care, resulting in seeking employment in the informal labour market, where they were exploited, to cover their immediate basic needs (Skordas and Sitaropoulos, 2004:47; Papadimitriou and Papageorgiou, 2005:307).

Cabot’s (2014) ethnographic account points out that by the 2000s, there has been a long-lasting ‘asylum crisis’ which pre-dated the economic crisis, as asylum applications were slowly examined, the refugee status was rarely attributed, and the reception infrastructure was practically non-existent. As pointed out by Rozakou (2012:563) the ‘politics of invisibility’, prevailed in this era: for many years, the vast majority of people who irregularly entered Greece remained undocumented and poorly received, as Greece was an “unwelcoming” environment, failing to ensure rights-based protections. As asylum seekers, while in detention in border areas, were deterred through arbitrary bureaucratic processes and violent practices– amounting to extreme cases of torture, of applying and receiving protection, this deeply shaped the perception of Greece as a transit destination and a bad host (Dimitriadi, 2018).

Over the past years, NGOs, national and international media and EU bodies regularly highlighted widespread serious violations of the rights of migrants in Greece: arbitrary detention, inhuman and degrading detention conditions, police violence (see Amnesty International, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2013).

3.2. Second period. 2001-2005. Regularization programmes.

The first half of the 2000s was marked by the adoption of the first comprehensive immigration law- law 2910/2001, voted in 2001 under the title “*Entry and residence of aliens on Greek territory. Acquisition of Greek citizenship by naturalisation and other provisions*”²⁸. The aims of the law, which in principle did not apply to refugees, asylum-seekers, were twofold; to legalise irregular migrants through the purchase of social security stamps as a criterion for eligibility and strengthening external and internal controls in harmony with migration policies pursued by other EU-member states (Fakiolas, 2003:542-543).

The law criminalized overtly discriminatory practices on racial, ethnic or religious grounds (Psarra et al., 2014) and transferred responsibility for immigration to the Ministry of Interior, marking its transformation from a public order issue to a political, social, and economic one (Papageorgiou, 2013:78). In 2003, the social integration department was established in the Ministry of Interior.

The Law 3386/2005, ‘*On the Entry, Residence and Social Integration of Third Country Nationals on Greek Territory*’ and 3536/2007 (partly amended by Law 3731/2008), introduced the basic principles of social integration²⁹ of migrants, for the first time, with the obligation to respect the fundamental norms and values of Greek society (Papageorgiou, 2013:79) and the operation of the Council of Migrants Integration (SEM), promoting equal participation and non-discrimination of migrants in the decision-making process at a local level (Anagnostou, 2016:21).

²⁸ Law No. 2910/2001, Entry and Residence of Aliens in Greek Territory. Acquisition of Greek Citizenship by Naturalisation and Other Provisions [Greece] available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b209fd54.html>

²⁹ ‘Complete Action Plan’ for the Social Integration of Immigrants (art. 65–66 of Law 3386/2005).

Law 3731/2008 facilitated only the regularisation, but not the naturalisation of migrants' children born in Greece (Konsta and Lazaridis, 2010). Citizenship acquisition through naturalisation procedures on the principle of *jus soli*, became possible for immigrants with the 3838/2010 law—which was, however, withdrawn in 2013 (Veikou, 2017:562).

Nevertheless, many of these provisions did not again apply to refugees and asylum seekers. Undocumented migrants, who formed the majority, were explicitly prohibited from accessing services provided by Greek public institutions, local government services, and social security organizations (Karyotis and Skleparis, 2013; Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2019). In this context, irregular entry in Greece was a crime in itself and criminal sanctions were imposed on public bodies, notaries, employers and carriers for breaching their obligations under the law (Aliverti, 2015:254).

The official policies, Triandafyllidou (2009) argues, mirrored a concern with migration, but in an instrumental and opportunistic manner that only served to reinforce the security-oriented approach—with slight variations, aiming at discouraging a new wave of irregular migrants to the country. Instead, and due to the electoral cost, these reforms were associated with the government's interests for temporary and dispensable labour force and were focused on restrictive measures. Border controls and massive removal operations continued to be major aspects of the Greek immigration policy. Rules for granting residence were less transparent, predictable and fair, taking place within a bureaucratic infrastructure characterised by insufficiency, complexity, racist attitudes and corruption. It had almost been impossible for immigrants of non-Greek descent to acquire citizenship on the basis of equality and plurality. These procedures had actually created illegal immigrants, while employment either in the informal or

formal labour market dictated the form of integration (Triandafyllidou, et al., 2009:71-73).

After 2000, the size of the informal sector of the economy appeared to be a strong incentive for immigrants, including refugees and asylum seekers to reside in long-term (Papadimitriou and Papageorgiou, 2005:302). Migrants' influx had transformed radically Greek agriculture and contributed to its preservation and expansion, while at the same time maintained the traditional/ cultural life. (Kasimis et al., 2003:172). Large sections of the economy were partly dependent on immigrant labour, especially for seasonal and other categories of low-qualified work. Migrants covered the "holes" left in the labour market by taking up "unrewarding" jobs in sectors of the Greek economy, such as construction, agriculture, hotels and restaurants as well as domestic work and other categories of low-qualified work, characterized by informality, flexibility and low paying; even below the legal minimum wage (Kasimis and Papadopoulos, 2005; Triandafyllidou, 2009). Such jobs were free of trade union activity and did not adhere to contractual obligations. Until the introduction of regularisation programmes, developed over the decades, employees avoided paying social insurance benefits to their employees in order to reduce the cost of production. Migrants' irregular or precarious legal status with limited social rights combined with the looming prospect of imprisonment and administrative detention rendered them exploitable in the Greek labour market (Cheliotis and Xenakis, 2010).

3.3. The period 2010–2014: The Europeanisation of migration policies.

By 2001, Greece had a foreign population of over seven percent, compared with 1.6 percent in 1991 (Levinson, 2005). Starting in 2007, migration flows to Greece changed, experiencing large influxes of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, and

potentially also victims of trafficking, as well as unaccompanied minors who were fleeing circumstances of extreme poverty and inequality in Central Asia and Africa (Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi, 2014:5).

These forced arrivals took place in the historical moment during which major political changes were occurring, as a result of the recent imperialist interventions in Afghanistan in 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. At the most fundamental level, these ongoing migration patterns were strongly associated with and reflected the very nature of capital accumulation in producing forced displacement and systematic dispossession from the means of production and subsistence, supported by neoliberal policies of privatization and corporate powers of financialization, operating at both global and local scales (Harvey, 2004).

Alongside the lack of experience and the political will to establish an efficient migration management and asylum policy, the numbers of asylum seekers increased, following the effective application of the Dublin II regulations through “Eurodac” processes (Papadimitriou and Papageorgiou, 2005).

The policies adopted by the Socialist government (PASOK) between 2010–2013 were a direct result of deeper processes of “Europeanisation” as expressed by the Lisbon Strategy (2000–2010) about ‘managing migration’, through “security, utility and social integration” (Carmel, 2011) which required a number of provisions, corrections, modifications and extension of the migration policy (Triandafyllidou, 2014; Dimitriadi, 2018).

The Greek Parliament adopted law 3838/2010 on citizenship and naturalization rules, opening up citizenship to immigrants of non-Greek descent to facilitate migrant integration, on the principle of *jus soli*. Particularly, it allowed the naturalisation of

second-generation migrants, provided they had studied at a Greek school for a minimum of six years³⁰ and extended migrant's political rights providing, to those who had lived legally in Greece for five years, the possibility of voting and standing as candidates in local elections. This, however, was found unconstitutional by the State Council³¹ in 2012 and never came into force (Triandafyllidou, 2014).

In 2014, the Law 4251/2014 "*Code for Immigration & Social Integration*" was introduced³², focusing on third-country nationals' long-term residence permits (including family reunification) in line with the principle of non-discrimination and accessing to the labour market to combat undeclared work (Dimitriadi and Sarantaki, 2019a). Additionally, the law facilitated the regularization of migrants who were undocumented, particularly those who had lost their stay permits due to unemployment, as they could not secure the required social security stamps (Ambrosini, 2018:74). During the height of the crisis (2012-2014) unemployment rate for migrants was estimated to be 36% while many, including women, were working under irregular conditions (Triandafyllidou, 2019:9). The law also provided that the transportation of any person without legal documents was considered to be smuggling and therefore illegal and heavily penalized (Bousiou, 2020:435).

The law 3907/2011 formed the legal basis for the reform of the asylum and irregular migration management system in the following years. It established, under the Ministry of Citizen Protection, a separate civilian Asylum Service, independent from the police, the Appeals Authority and the First Reception Service (FRS), responsible for the management of new arrivals. The law aimed at responding to

³⁰ Art1A (2)

³¹ 460/2013

³² It transposes Directives 2011/98/EU and 2009/50/ EU. It was later amended by Law No. 4332/2015

criticisms such as that of the European Court of Human Rights and Court of Justice of the EU, which “found that Greece’s asylum system suffered from ‘systemic deficiencies’, including lack of reception centres, poor detention conditions, and the lack of an effective remedy” (Papademetriou, 2016:94). The law established screening procedures³³, such as identifying vulnerable groups³⁴ for medical and social support, addressed detention conditions, and devised actions for improving host facilities-called “reception centres” (Dimitriadi and Sarantaki, 2019b). The law also created detention centres, since migrants arriving in Greece were subject to “measures which restrict their freedom”³⁵. It also defined practices of voluntary repatriation and mandatory deportation and increased the maximum period of detention from 3 to 18 months. It also allowed the administrative detention³⁶ “for public order reasons” or to facilitate the removal of irregular migrants in accordance with the provisions of the Returns Directive.

More specifically, the law offered resources only to those who lacked the means of providing for themselves. The law 3907/2011 entitles asylum seekers to emergency medical treatment, food and living conditions, precluding, however, irregular migrants. Exceptions include the unaccompanied minors (UAMs) who are under state protection and have to receive material care until the age of 18 (Dimitriadi, 2018:179). In addition, the law introduced the best interest of the child³⁷ as a broader-range interpretative guideline for all decisions concerning them, irrespective of status. Unaccompanied children arrested on the mainland, were to be accommodated in institutions that have

³³ Art.7.

³⁴ Art14(8).

³⁵ Art.13.

³⁶ Art. 30(1).

³⁷ Art.20.

specialised personnel and facilities³⁸ or can be detained on the basis of the provisions concerning “protective custody”³⁹(Ombudsman, 2017:26). The law provided for the recruitment of sufficient specialised staff, including social scientists⁴⁰ to offer psychosocial support services to vulnerable asylum seekers on the basis of human rights⁴¹ and in cooperation with the UNHCR⁴².

Looking at Greek migration control policies, the government extended the detention period of migrants and asylum seekers by up to twelve months. Practices of deterrence at the borders was upgraded through a 12.5km-long barbed wire fence in the region of Evros in 2012, assisted by personnel of the Organization of European Border Guard and Coast Guard (Frontex). Constructed without EU funding in a period of acute economic, political, and social crisis, it was politically legitimised as a security measure to deal with migration-related threats and the need to take strict and immediate measures on the Greek-Turkish borders (Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2019). The new Minister of Citizen Protection, Nikos Dendias, additionally announced the National Operation “ASPIDA”, aiming at strengthening repressive measures at the borders through pushbacks and collective expulsions (Karyotis and Skleparis, 2013; Skleparis, 2018). At the same time, the absolute legitimization of state racism and institutional violence was exemplified in the operation “Xenios Zeus”⁴³. This was launched in the mainland where the state conducted practices of daily patrols and sweeps, amounted to arbitrary apprehensions and detentions, accompanied by deportations and voluntary return programs (Dimitriadi, 2018:101-109).

³⁸ Art.32.

³⁹ Art.118. PD 141/1991.

⁴⁰ Art.2(3)

⁴¹ Art.6 & Art.13

⁴² Art.5

⁴³ “Hospitable Zeus”

In the campaign for the 2012 parliamentary elections, immigration appeared among the dominant parties, as one of the most important issues, to shift the focus and minimise electoral punishment for the impact of austerity policies (Karyotis and Skleparis, 2013). The year 2012 and building upon the previous year's surge in street-level racist violence⁴⁴ brought the legitimisation of its mainstream political expression with the election of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party in the Parliament (Triandafyllidou and Kouki, 2014; Teloni and Mantanika, 2015).

Under the international outcry over the lack of prosecution for the unprecedented surge of violence and the public resistance and mobilisation against racism to strengthen the legal framework, concerning the criminal prosecution of hate crimes and to eradicate discrimination against migrants, the right-wing governing coalition introduced Law 4139/2013 (later Law 4285/2014) known to the public as the “anti-racist legislation”.

The law referred to acts of discrimination, hatred or violence-not hate speech per se, motivated by the (perceived) characteristics of the victim, including race, colour, genealogical background, national or ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability. At the same time, the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection established specialized units throughout the country aiming at tackling racist violence⁴⁵. In addition, Law 4356/2015 provided the establishment of the National Council against Racism and Intolerance in charge of preventing and combatting racism.

⁴⁴ I am making reference to the anti-migrant pogrom that broke out in Athens' city centre against migrants by Golden Dawn battalions in the spring of 2011 (see introduction).

⁴⁵ Presidential Decree 132/2012 (Official Gazette A' 239)

3.4. The response to the 2015-2016 migration challenge and the stranding of refugees, March 2016 -July 2019.

Between January 2015 and February 2016, the aim of the SYRIZA-led coalition government that was formed after the January 2015 elections “was to reinstate the rule of law in migration and asylum management, and liberalise the country’s border control, migration and asylum policies” (Skleparis, 2018:10). They referred to the process of putting an end to indiscriminate and prolonged detention amounting to inhuman human rights violations by improving living conditions for asylum seekers in the country and hosting them in open hospitality facilities. They also intended to facilitate the asylum application process, encourage family reunification, grant citizenship to second-generation migrants and abolish EU restrictions on the travel of migrants. Equally, they pledged to put an end to pushbacks on the ground that it was a violation of the principle of non-refoulement. Additionally, the aim of the government was to ‘Europeanise’ the unfairness of the Dublin Regulation, pushing, in this way, for a fairer CEAS based on the principle of responsibility sharing (Skleparis, 2018).

At that point in time, asylum seekers, mainly vulnerable groups, were released from the closed camps, such as the “emblematic” Amygdaleza camp of Athens and were then free to move around Greece and resort to NGOs and volunteers in order to fend for themselves. In August 2015, the first open hospitality centre under the supervision of the Ministry of Migration Policy opened in Elaionas, after the Municipality of Athens handed over a plot of land.

Law 4332/2015, which was ratified by the Greek parliament on 9th July 2015, amended the Greek Citizenship Code (Law 4521/2014), and enabled migrant children, born and raised in Greece, to get Greek citizenship.

Since 2014, Greece had been facing a rapid increase of refugee flows. The first period between January 2015 and February 2016, more than 800,000 people were estimated to have entered the country, via Turkey, on the Aegean islands (see Figure 4. below). In 2016, the majority of refugees arriving in Greece were particularly from Syria (47%), followed by Afghanistan (24%) and Iraq (15%) (UNHCR, 2018b).

Within the context of unprecedentedly high flows, since North Macedonia sealed its border in 2016- closing the so-called western Balkan Route, and the implementation of ‘EU–Turkey deal’ a significant number of people (around 65,000) had been trapped within Greece, creating a humanitarian crisis on the Greek islands, where refugees waited in “frozen transience”(Nagy, 2018:380).

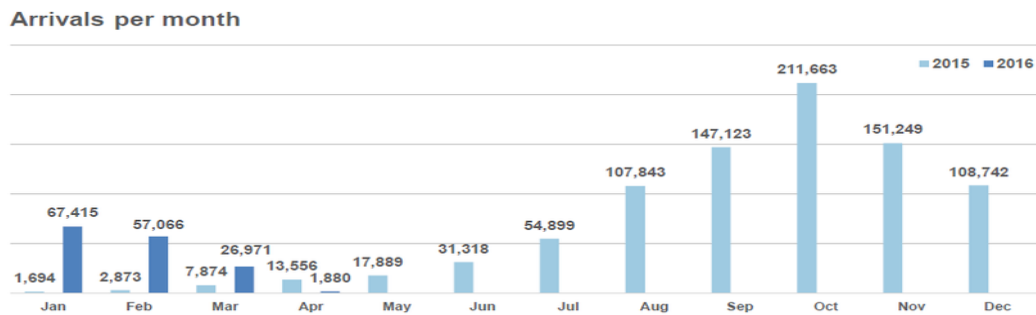


Figure 4. Migrant arrivals in Greece by month (2015-2016). Source UNHCR⁴⁶.

On 18th March 2016, the European Council and Turkey essentially reached a joint agreement aiming at stopping the flow of irregular migration via Turkey to Europe. The aim of the agreement⁴⁷ was to establish a mechanism governing the return

⁴⁶ UNHCR, “Unhcr: Daily estimated arrivals per country – flows through western Balkans route (portal).” [Online]. Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

⁴⁷ Council of Europe. (2016, March 18). EU-Turkey statement at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement/>

of irregular migrants, who managed to arrive at one of the Greek islands, back to Turkey and the resettlement of Syrians from Turkey to the EU (Papademetriou, 2016).

Consistent with the “containment” policy for asylum-seekers within EU migration policy (Vickers, 2019a), this shifted the focus in the Greek hotspots, established on several Greek islands (see image 1,2), from identification and registration, to processes of (in)admissibility, determining whether Turkey is a safe country for them to be returned (“readmission”) to. By imposing geographical restrictions⁴⁸ and prohibiting asylum seekers from moving from the islands to the rest of the country, this resulted into transforming the islands into “vast hotspots where migrants wait in limbo” (Dimitriadi, 2017:92).

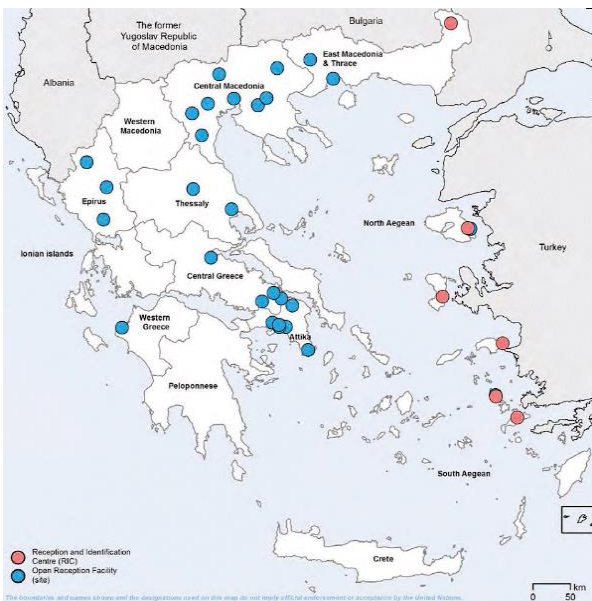


Image 1. Map of the (reception and identification centres - RIC) in the Aegean Sea (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos, Leros) with a total capacity of 6,338 places and (RIC at Fylakio, Evros) as well as Camps in Greece, until September 2018.

Source: ASB, DRC, IOM, UNHCR (2018) Greece, Site Profiles, August-September 2018 <https://bit.ly/2PyOodH>

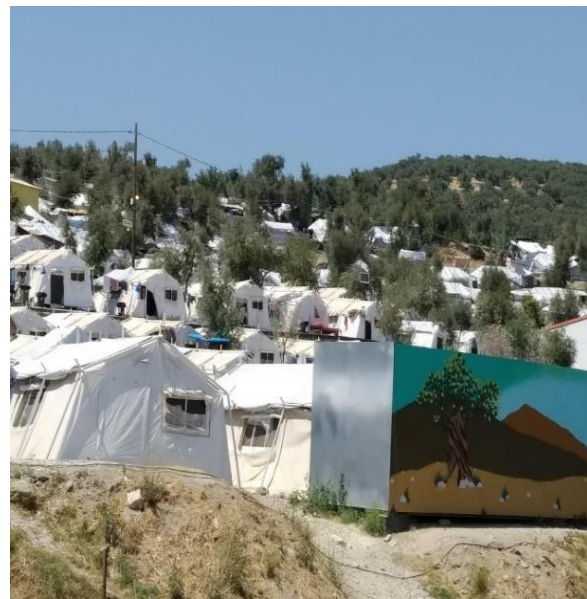


Image 2. The infamous Moria refugee camp on the Greek island Lesbos. Personal archive.

⁴⁸ Decision 10464/31.5.2016 issued by the Director of the Asylum Service

Under the “politics of military containment” at the Schengen external borders, (Papadopoulos et al., 2008:175) NATO deployed its own forces to the Aegean Sea with the stated aim of intercepting ships taking migrants from Turkey to Greece (Vickers, 2019a:78).

The government found itself far beyond its initial aims and intended outcomes, as the Greek asylum law was amended in April 2016 to make the EU-Turkey Statement operable in the country and to enable the implementation of the ‘hotspot’ approach (Skleparis, 2018).

Skleparis (2018) notes that the law 4375/2016 the government adopted, triggered the tightening of asylum, detention, deportation, and external border controls policies. Within this frame, different asylum procedures were implemented on the five islands of the north Aegean and the rest of the country (e.g., “Fast Track Border Procedure”) depending on whether asylum seekers arrived prior to or after the EU-Turkey statement came into force. Migrants arriving on the islands were transferred to the respective RIC, were ‘placed under a status of restriction of liberty’ in detention centres⁴⁹, with the aim of allocating them to distinct legal categories that were accorded different degrees of ‘deservingness’.

Generating economies of conditionality measures tied to the assistance, with strong similarities to the nineteenth-century industrial poor law, only vulnerable

⁴⁹ Law 4375/2016, Art. 14(2) provides for the restriction of the liberty at the RICS of all irregularly entering third-country nationals for up to 25 days, including minors, until they are referred to a suitable accommodation facility. Regarding minors, detention has the sense of protective custody and, in theory, their liberty restriction is limited to 45 days.

groups⁵⁰, such as unaccompanied minors⁵¹-for whom return was also possible⁵², were, in principle, exempted from readmission procedures and given priority for transfer to the mainland.

The Law 4375/2016 put a special emphasis on the facilities, function and staffing of reception and identification camps (RICs) and temporary reception centres (OTFs). This had given rise to a unique landscape with temporary facilities with around 50,000 places in 32 camps in 2016. Old military camps, granted by the Ministry of National Defence, abandoned industrial premises and, in some cases, old hotels were used, located either in the urban peripheries of Athens and Thessaloniki or in rural areas of the country (Kreichauf, 2018).

In November 2016 Greece created the Ministry of Migration Policy⁵³, separating migration and asylum from the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform. The aim was to enable the implementation of the above-mentioned reforms and facilitate asylum seekers and refugees' long- term integration and access to socio-economic rights, after the initial phase of reception.

While all international protection beneficiaries and applicants until 2016 relied on NGOs for their medical care, the Law 4368/2016 adopted by the Greek parliament, provided free access to nursing and medical care to uninsured and vulnerable social groups⁵⁴, as well as access to social security and welfare services under the same conditions as for nationals (Ministry of Migration, 2018:68). Under this law, they were

⁵⁰ Law 4375/2016, Art. 14(8). a) Unaccompanied minors, b) Persons who have a disability or suffering from an incurable or serious illness, c) The elderly, d) Women in pregnancy or having recently given birth, e) Single parents with minor children, f) Victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence or exploitation, persons with a post-traumatic disorder, particularly survivors and relatives of victims of shipwrecks, g) Victims of trafficking in human beings.

⁵¹Law 4375/2016, Art.60

⁵² Art. 25.

⁵³ P.D. 123/2016

⁵⁴ Art.33

now eligible for various social benefits, such as unemployment allowances etc., provided that they had at least one year of work experience with social security, which was only very rarely the case (Skleparis, 2017b). Law 4387/2016 provided for pension rights for uninsured retirees⁵⁵ upon condition that they had established 15 years of permanent and uninterrupted residence in Greece. Successive laws were also introduced for the material reception conditions of asylum seekers. According to laws 4375/2016 and 4540/2018, asylum seekers, as they had received an asylum seeker card, were eligible to have access to the labour market⁵⁶ and vocational training⁵⁷. As regards asylum seekers' housing, the applicable law was the 4540/2018, aiming at the guarantee of decent living standards. This was pursued through the implementation of the "Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation programme - ESTIA", announced by the EC, offering more than 25,000 accommodation places in various parts of the country in the urban space and funded by the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid -ECHO fund (Triandafyllidou, 2019:31). Depending on the place and the kind of the accommodation granted, and whether the accommodation included food or not, asylum-seekers that meet specific vulnerability criteria, also received financial support to cover their basic needs⁵⁸.

As far as children's rights are concerned, law 4415/2016 was introduced to regulate issues concerning education in the Greek language and intercultural education, aiming at facilitating, through preparatory classes (DYEP)⁵⁹, the integration of refugee

⁵⁵ Art.93

⁵⁶ Law 4375/2016 Art.71(4) and Law 4540/2018 Art. 15

⁵⁷ law 4540/2018, Art. 16

⁵⁸ Since 2017, asylum-seekers that meet specific vulnerability criteria received cash assistance, as part of the "ESTIA" programme by a group of NGOs and coordinated by the UNHCR and the Ministry of Migration Policy. The cash assistance was 150 Euros per month for one individual living in an apartment, whereas it was 400 for a family of four. Refugees living in the camps would receive half of the above-mentioned amount. See: <https://help.unhcr.org/greece/living-in-greece/access-to-cash-assistance/>

⁵⁹ Art.38

and migrant children into the educational process. Another legal development, was Law 4540/2018, providing that the Directorate of Social Solidarity of the Ministry of Labour is the responsible authority to ensure the effective protection of unaccompanied minor refugees. Law 4554/2018 introduced a regulatory framework for the guardianship of unaccompanied children in Greek law for the first time. This responsibility included, among others, the appointment of a permanent guardian⁶⁰ for the children with the support of the National Centre for Social Solidarity (NCSS).

A serious concern regarding the respect of social rights was that many of these provisions excluded those who remain on the islands, who were heavily dependent on the financial and humanitarian aid provided by NGOs (Skleparis, 2017b).

In January 2019, the Ministry of Migration Policy announced a new national strategy for immigrant integration (Ministry of migration, 2018). According to Triandafyllidou (2019:36), social integration policies were to be adapted to “the specific needs of Greek society and economy” with responsibilities transferred to the local government and the supporting of ‘interculturalism’. However, the room for civil society organisations and refugee and migrant associations to play a catalytic role in migration affairs is limited (ibid).

Conclusions.

Since the early 1990s Greek immigration policy had not been an important issue and was mainly a reacting to migration pressures, supported by selective and patchy legal framework, with no vision regarding integration on a basis of equality and plurality (Triandafyllidou, 2014). Looking at Greek migration control policies, Karyotis and Skleparis (2013) argued that the Greek state’s previous response to

⁶⁰ Art. 18 regulates the responsibilities relevant to the integration of unaccompanied children, such as providing access to psychological support and health care when needed.

migration flows was characterised by unpreparedness, inconsistencies and short-termism, and migration was understood as constituting a security issue, legitimised by discourses of security threats, drawing on racist and xenophobic attitudes.

Relying upon a utilitarian approach that is directed towards the host society, national policies prioritized control measures, short-term status tied to employment, over long-term settlement and integration, and inhibited access to asylum procedures and refugee protection. On the one hand, this has been exemplified through several regularisation programs between 1998 and 2008. These sought to respond to the growing number of people living in the country, irregularly by facilitating the acquisition of residence/work permits for undocumented migrants. On the other, the policy focus between 2008 and 2014 was on border control and a reform of the asylum system.

As a result, they rendered migrants vulnerable to economic marginalization and destitution – especially given the lack of reception infrastructure and welfare support – and undermined the realization of migrants’ rights.

During the period 2010–2014, Greece was under pressure to address the irregular migration and asylum issues, following the adaptation of its legal framework to international obligations and European directives. In fact, throughout 2014-2015, legislative changes sought to address gaps regarding the settlement and integration of migrant groups already present in the country, by facilitating naturalization for second generation children.

By 2015, the Greek state was mainly pursuing the policies of a transit country, especially as regards asylum (Spyropoulou and Christopoulos, 2016). Since the refugee ‘crisis’ of 2015, several legislative changes have sought to grapple with the increasing

asylum-seeking population in the country. In doing this, there has been a strong focus on deterrence policies following the reinforcement of the EU-Turkey deal.

Migrants and those who stand in solidarity with them, were, nevertheless, resisting and speaking back, bringing attention to their precarious status. Through protesting, they made claims for their limited citizenship rights and opportunities for work and better life, threatened by the economic crisis and security policies (see Skleparis, 2017c).

4. The emergence of the Greek civil society and Migrant-refugee NGOs in Greece.

Introduction.

This chapter aims at responding to the first objective of the research, by providing policy analysis of how welfare responsibilities in Greece were transferred to supranational organizations or devolved to regional and local levels, involving the extensions of privatization and voluntary provisions. It is argued that state-sponsored welfare systems have successively pushed back, and ideologically inspired, policies that have reduced the role of public provision to the private/market sphere.

Since market-led reforms conditioned by neoliberalism became dominant (Harvey, 2005), welfare states have been undergoing a period of unremitting change, accompanied by the dramatic intensification of commercialisation and privatisation of social services (Khan and Dominelli, 2000; Ferguson, Lavalette and Mooney, 2002; Ferguson, 2008; Ferguson, Ioakimidis and Lavalette, 2018).

Such changes in part through the adoption of free trade agreements and implementation of EU policies for the implementation of public–private partnerships and liberalization of the economy have been taking place in Greece since the late 80s. In the midst of structural changes, and since the economic crisis and ongoing recession, NGOs had launched programs to offer basic services for Greece’s growing number of unemployed and vulnerable populations. In the years 2015-2016, and during the “European refugee crisis”, they had virtually transformed from small-sized organisations with family and kinship background and limited range of activities, to large-scale organisations.

4.1. The emergence of the Greek civil society.

After 1974, transition to democracy from the seven-year-long military dictatorship and until the mid-1990s, some new social movements and organisations of the civil society, including unions of public employees, functioned as pressure groups around issues such as feminism, philanthropy, social provision and culture, in close relation with or initiatives from political parties of the centre and the left (Sotiropoulos, 1995, 2013; Afouxenidis, 2006; Frangonikolopoulos and Poulakidakos, 2017). Additionally, several events were significant to the leap of civil society initiatives. The retreat from class-based politics towards political apathy, opened up spaces for civil society, such as education and culture, involving the NGO sector in the system of social welfare with philanthropy (Sotiropoulos, 2013:4). Other factors included the growing mistrust on state institutions, as exclusive vehicles of political participation and natural disasters, such as the earthquake that struck western Athens in 1999, as well as concerns around issues of environmental degradation in Greek cities. The later feature was associated with the phenomenon of postmaterialism⁶¹ about 'quality of life' issues and the rise of environmental grassroots mobilization and associations. Alongside these developments, the state, through subsidies from the EU, had been a major -and in some cases principal- financier of third (voluntary) associations (Frangonikolopoulos, 2014; Sakellariou, 2014; Huliaras, 2015b).

⁶¹ Postmaterialism is the theory which was supported by the political scientist Ronald Inglehart (1977), suggesting that as material affluence spreads, 'quality of life' issues and expressions about environmental concerns tend to displace material ones (e.g., wages, economic growth, job security). Individualistic concerns such as, self-fulfilment, personal identity and guaranteeing freedom of expression took precedence since the 1970s in the most developed market economies over issues of material survival, specific changes in public policy or for economic change. See Inglehart, R. (1977) *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. And Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

From 1997 onwards, when Greece became a member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) followed by the establishment of “International Development Cooperation Department” or “Hellenic Aid” in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1999, many civil and voluntary associations transformed into NGOs (Afouxenidis,2006).

The introduction of subsequent legislative reforms followed by Ministerial Decisions from 1998 was another critical juncture. The Art.12 of Law 2646 of 20.10.1998 marked the beginning of the public-private sector partnerships by introducing NGO activities in the field of health and social care of vulnerable social groups as well as for those who cannot afford to purchase in the private market, including recognised refugees, asylum seekers and humanitarian refugees. Bourikos D., and Sotiropoulos D. (2014:37) argued, that at that time the role of the state was limited to the creation of a management approach to welfare policy by promoting welfare pluralism which allowed much room for involvement of local authorities, private sector and civil society in welfare. Consequently, these processes helped to regulate and finance voluntary associations and social cooperatives to which public administrators may contract out services. As a result, such changes involved the transfer and devolution of the state’s social responsibilities to individuals, civil society groups, and the private sector for delivering various forms of social services.

Similar laws were also introduced in 2002⁶² and 2005⁶³. Independent state-funded organizations such as the office of the Greek Ombudsman⁶⁴ (civil rights watchdog) and the National Committee for Human Rights (NCHR)⁶⁵ were also established to contribute, influence, and monitor state authorities' conduct towards Greek citizens as well as *aliens* residing in Greece, protecting them from rights violations, abuses, mistreatment, or general malpractice on the part of the public administration.

These initiatives, including the decentralization of key public services through institutional reform of the local administration⁶⁶ had been taking place since 1996, around the PASOK government when Simitis, a Social Democrat, became Prime minister. The key public service reforms driving government's agenda at that time, were therefore central in order to improve the overall democratic performance of the political system. Among these attempts, which also included the extensive privatization of public assets and universities, the development of 'civil society' in Greece, was credited to the Greek government's modernised programme in order to create a more liberal and financialized capitalism along the lines of the West (Sitaropoulos, 2000:109; Douzinas, 2008:34-35).

⁶² Law 3013/2002 concerning the "System of Volunteerism for Civil Protection" of the General Secretariat of Civil Protection by the Ministry of Interior about the promotion of volunteerism provided for training seminars to volunteers in the fields of welfare services, natural disasters, and environmental issues (Rozakou, 2016).

Rozakou, K. (2016) 'Crafting the Volunteer: Voluntary Associations and the Reformation of Sociality', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 34(1), pp. 79–102. doi: 10.1353/mgs.2016.0014.

⁶³ Law 3370/2005, regarding the "Organisation and Operation of Public Health Services" the Institute of Social Protection and Solidarity (IKPA/IKPIA) contributes to the register of NGOs maintained by the Ministry of Health by visiting the sites and evaluating the application NGOs submit in order to be certified.

⁶⁴ Law 2477/1997

⁶⁵ Law 2667/1998

⁶⁶ Contrary to the centralized public services, two major reforms on the organisation and function of local authorities changed the landscape of services provided at a local level.

The increase of activities of NGOs within and about 'civil society', encompassing environmental protection, health, social care, human rights, education, culture, and humanitarian aid, Fragonikolopoulos (2014) argues, was not an initiative that grew out of communities or voluntary participation into more organised forms of activism and autonomous forms of political expression, since citizens appeared inert towards any kind of voluntary action. In fact, organized civil society in Greece had been described as “weak”, trapped within the state-centred and statist-clientelistic institutional framework (Mouzelis and Pagoulatos, 2005; Karagkounis, 2017b:656) while being poorly organised in relation to most other western European countries and had limited influence on improving the quality of life of local communities (Huliaras, 2015b; Petropoulos and Huliaras, 2016).

Instead, and since 1992, when civil society was mentioned for the first time by the EC (Feronas, 2009:51), its development had been a more of a top-down process by the efforts of the EU in the context of European expansion for EU membership. The EU⁶⁷ itself placed the engagement with organised civil society at the heart of its pursuit of democratic legitimacy, European integration, and enlargement (Commission, 2001) in order to improve the institutional and administrative structures of governance and overall democratic performance of the political system. This had generally been seen

⁶⁷ For the European Union, the civil society includes the following: trade unions and employers' organisations (social partners); non-governmental organisations; professional associations; charities; grass-roots organisations; organisations that involve citizens in local and municipal life with a particular contribution from churches and religious communities. For a more precise definition of organised civil society, see the Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the role and contribution of civil society organisations in the building of Europe available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/DOC_01_10

There also is a provision for cooperation and participation of NGOs regarding the National Observatory for the Rights of Children (NORC) that monitors and designs policy measures for the protection of children's rights with the coordination of actions of public and private organizations. This is provided by Law 2909/2001, (Art. 4) for the “development of cooperation with state agencies, international organizations, such as UNICEF and UNESCO, and NGOs, for the purpose of exchanging information and coordinating their activities”. Additionally, Law 2817/2000 (art. 2) provides for the participation in educational institutions of NGOs dealing with children with disabilities, allowing them to take part in the formation of school policies. Moreover, NGOs work closely with the ministry of Education in combating school dropouts and raising of social awareness. Equally, NGOs operate mobile units for vaccinations, hygiene, ophthalmologic and dental examinations at schools.

to lie in a Commission's view on NGOs, as contributors of policymaking and agents for improving the quality of democracy (Petropoulos and Huliaras, 2016: 177).

Taking a socio-political frame of analysis, the issue of governance is yet another area of significance in an era of growing global economic competition. Towards, and after, the eve of the post-Second World War Keynesian-inspired welfare state that had given rise to expansive social policies in many European countries (Ferguson, et al., 2002), post-Fordist transformations in the organization of production since the 1980s, have rearticulated new forms of governance structures (or 'partnership' strategies in meeting public needs) "among a plurality of operationally autonomous, but interdependent agencies" (Jessop, 1997:4). International political institutions and sources of power have since constrained the latitude of the nation-state to act independently and contributed to the emergence of new forms of control and regulation with the general aim of aligning policies and modes of organisation more closely into the logic of global capital markets. Simultaneously, the nation-state has been increasingly relying on organizations in civil society and the private sector both to provide social welfare and to impose disciplinary practices on populations to fit into the social order, since public social welfare has been considered as a cost, instead of means of redistribution and social cohesion (Jessop, 2002:459; Lorenz, 2014:25). As Jessop (2002) points out, state intervention has to a considerable extent been "suited to a market-driven, globalizing economy [...] for the continued expansion of the liberal market economy and a self-organizing civil society [...] as a flanking, compensatory mechanism for the inadequacies of the market mechanism" (Ibid:455-456).

The criteria for Eurozone incorporation mirrored in the Maastricht Treaty⁶⁸ (formally known as the Treaty on European Union) is never far from the surface of this discussion, since it has undermined the government's universal obligation to collective responsibilities to fund key public services on the basis of social justice, social citizenship and equality in society. The Maastricht Treaty towards European economic and monetary integration had already advanced the scope of these reforms further, on the realisation of the EMU (European Monetary Union) with rules for every member state covering a diverse range of economic objectives⁶⁹ aimed at establishing a common market for goods, capital and services as well as workers. Operated on a principle of subsidiarity⁷⁰, the Union with the Community Charter and the subsequent White Paper on *European Social Policy: A Way Forward for the Union*⁷¹ sought to foster internal economic prosperity, social cohesion and social security and gave more emphasis on the role of civil society and NGOs "to promote volunteer public service and

⁶⁸ Maastricht: signed in February 1992, ratified in November 1993; Amsterdam: signed in October 1997, implemented in May 1999.

⁶⁹ The control of inflation rate which had to be less than 2-3 percent of GDP, included the retrenchment of the welfare state, with the shrinking of public welfare spending on collective social provisions to prevent budget deficits as well as the elimination of protective labour legislation for flexibility (Burkitt and Baimbridge, 1994; Kouvelakis, 2012), despite the clear reference to the importance of economic and social rights for the citizens of the EU member states (such as the right to political liberties, to a decent living standard, to social security, etc) (Lorenz, 2017:21).

⁷⁰ The idea emanates from the teachings of the Catholic Church and has been the organizing principle in the governance of the European Union, as it has been defined in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions available at: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/subsidiarity>.

Whereas economic policies are discussed at the European level, under the principle of subsidiarity social policies, they are devolved and remain within the competence and responsibility of the national member states. It promotes the obligation of self-help citizen/community initiatives as a priority. Decision making and responsibility ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent authority which is encouraged to maintain its cultural identity. Families and communities as well as the volunteer sector of civil society are accorded with the responsibility of providing social services and welfare by containing social conflicts. The state (beyond the specific social policy context, while referring to the development in Germany) assumes the role of a "watchdog" which intervenes when resources are insufficient to respond to existing needs to stabilise the effects of social inequality. See Lorenz, W. (2014) 'Is history repeating itself? Reinventing social work's role in ensuring social solidarity under conditions of globalization.', in Harrikari, T., Rauhala, P.-L., and Virokannas, E. (eds) *Social change and Social Work. The changing Societal conditions of Social Work in Time and Place*. Farnham: Ashgate, p. 15-30.

environmental conservation, and improvement activities for particular groups of the population” (Townsend, 2006:385).

The EU aligned the governance architecture of its social cohesion policy with the Lisbon strategy (2000–2010), characterised by the subordination of social policy to the demands of the market in achieving growth with a desire to minimize social expenditure to ensure the viability of social protection systems by linking economic dynamism with active welfare state (Maria Petmesidou, 2013; Kourachanis, 2020). The strategy was linked to creating the most competitive, knowledge-based economy in the world before 2010 (Lapavitsas *et al.*, 2012:22). The welfare state operating within the contours of welfare pluralism, where the promotion of the new mixed economy is supposed to provide, was constitutionalized, undermining further the role of state as the dominant or principal provider of health and welfare. According to Kourachanis (2020) welfare should come from different welfare pillars, involving the ‘voluntary’ sector (international organizations, local authorities, NGOs, charities, grassroots initiatives) in the provision of social services often on a contract basis and competitive tendering processes and the ‘commercial’ or private sector through corporate social responsibility, where private firms act to improve welfare in the wider society (Spicker, 2014:251). “Favouring the shift in responsibility for the fulfilment of social rights from the state to civil society” (Kourachanis 2020:56), Kourachanis (2020) argues, the net result of the strategy was to formalise the spirit of residualised provision designed to reduce social exclusion of different groups, while allowing governments to further deflect attention from a class perspective of inequalities.

At a times when public sources of support shrunk due to global economic restructuring and services contracted out to NGOs and private providers (Ferguson, et al., 2018:21-36), welfare initiatives from 1980s to approximately 2008, ignored poverty

concerned with economic distribution and a lack of resources. Instead, these aimed at relieving from social exclusion from the labour market with reference to the problems of social cohesion and citizenship (see Jones and Novak, 1999; Harris, 2003; Levitas, 2005) while focusing ever more so, on reducing welfare dependency of people whose subsistence became fully dependent on self-help and their ability to find paid work in the market (Levitas, 1996; Ferguson, et al., 2018:21-36).

4.2. NGOs in Greece in the context of the economic crisis.

Amid a crisis-ridden environment, the adoption of the economic and social programme ‘Europe 2020’ (June 2010) that replaced Lisbon Strategy for the programming period 2014–2020, was to consolidate an ‘Active Welfare State’ (Kourachanis, 2020), as it was solely focused on economic and financial issues to counterbalance the social consequences of the crisis (see Ferrera and Jessoula, 2016). The declared aim was to promote a high-employment economy by giving emphasis on social “investment” and “innovation” with the objective of helping the most vulnerable to acquire certain skills, increasing thus individual skills and economic competitiveness. To this end, the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Welfare provided the framework to combat poverty and social exclusion as the National Strategy for Social Inclusion (NSSI)(see Ministry of Labour, 2014). EU funding regulations for the implementation of the strategy⁷² enforced partnership schemes between the state, the market and NGOs who were involved in the direct provision of services. According to Kourachanis (2020:75-76) the crisis seems to foster the

⁷² Within EUROPE 2020 the Social Investment Package (SIP), European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation and, more recently, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) became the main policy instruments to implement the objectives against poverty and social exclusion. Local authorities and NGOs relied on (FEAD) for financing anti-poverty and homelessness interventions.

legitimation of welfare pluralism and advanced the role of NGOs in the delivery of services.

Since 2010, NGOs were the epicentre of what has been described as the ‘humanitarian crisis’, expanding the services they offered significantly, in response to the increased needs (see (Skleparis, 2012; Ioakimidis and Teloni, 2013; Arapoglou and Gounis, 2015). In this respect, NGOs were involved in EU funding programs for financing anti-poverty and social inclusion policies, offering short-term material, psychological and social support at night shelters, Day Centres, food banks, social pharmacies that had been established for deprived populations experiencing acute forms of poverty and homelessness (Arapoglou and Gounis, 2015, 2017). Due to inadequate funding, NGOs, largely dependent on occasional European funding, competed to win contracts for funding, as private finance and donors as well as voluntary work were also significant to fill the growing gaps in the welfare services (Sotiropoulos and Bourikos, 2014; Huliaras, 2015a; Simiti, 2017). In due course, the Greek Government shifted responsibilities to NGOs and official policies were increasingly designed to give them a prominent role at providing direct social welfare services for poor populations beyond their initial target groups and expertise, who had not only lost access to work, but also to social services, healthcare, and housing (Arapoglou and Gounis, 2015). During the austerity crisis, Arapoglou and Gounis (2015) noted recipients of social support by NGOs, by far outweigh those on public, central state, or local authorities.

4.3. Migrant-/Refugee-serving NGOs in Greece and “the Refugee Crisis”

Within the period of consolidation of the Greek civil society, medium to large-scale NGOs, utilizing modern management tools developed as “effective consulting or

mediating organizations which acted towards the improvement of migrants' position in the host societies” (Papadopoulos et al., 2013:344;355). EU funding resourced particularly in the human rights and anti-discrimination programmes located in the country’s major urban centres and particularly in the Athens area, making their services available to the poorer; focusing on protection of refugee’ and asylum seekers’; immigrant integration; multi-culturalism and programmes combating, discrimination, racism and xenophobia (Gropas and Triandafyllidou, 2012:5).

In 2000, EU members states set up the European Refugee Fund (ERF) to share the cost of reception, integration and voluntary repatriation of refugees and migrants. The ERF, UNHCR bilateral donors and the Greek state funded several NGOs in Greece to run reception centres, offer legal advice and provide social care, especially health or psychological care to asylum-seekers (Huliaras, 2015a:11).

During the initiating moments of refugee arrivals in 2015 up to their decrease in spring 2016, NGOs, on a wider scale, filled the gaps of the weak welfare state. The UNHCR and the cooperating International and local NGOs virtually substituted for the Greek state’s inability to organize the reception of increasing numbers of migrants (Maniatis, 2018:906). In this context, As Afouxenidis et al., (2017) indicate, there was a sound cooperation between local and national NGOs, grassroots organisations, local populations, solidarity groups, volunteers and activists in order to respond to on-the-ground needs of refugees, providing a wide range of services, including informal aid distribution and sea rescue. Additionally, they highlighted the defects of the Greek asylum regime and opposed to the inhuman conditions of detentions in reception centres (Ibid). Bousiou (2020:439) observed, NGOs eliminated the gaps in resources, but on the other hand contributed to the fragmented implementation of the European asylum regime with control over asylum seekers on the Greek border islands.

Another critical feature for governing displaced population from a political standpoint, is the way governments use large international relief NGOs and aid organisations to manage Western-funded refugee camps in response to the mass movement of refugees.

Humanitarian NGOs are either in the front of delivering aid in crisis or carry out long-term development projects that seek to promote human welfare and particularly empower previously disadvantaged groups within societies (Chouliaraki, 2013:11; Cuttitta, 2018:785). Richey (2018:4) notes that humanitarian aid to emergencies from OECD and DAC has raised from \$10.9 billion per year in 2007–2009 to \$16.4 billion per year in 2013–2015. Equally, humanitarian assistance from donors outside the Global North, rose almost eighteen times in ten years: from 2000 (\$35 million) to 2010 (\$623 million). “Humanitarianism,” in Barnett’s (2011) words, “is a global welfare institution, and aid workers are social workers—appearing to be emancipatory when operating as mechanisms of social control.” (Ibid: unpagued).

The French anthropologist Michel Agier (2011) refers to ‘humanitarian government’ aiming at describing the ways mechanisms of control in the enforcement of migration policies, such as the management of camps and emergency aid efforts by humanitarian NGOs, are interrelated in complementary ways. Developed through a Foucauldian framework, Agier (2011) identifies a “functional [and contextual] solidarity (...) between the humanitarian world and the police and military ordering” (ibid:5). Humanitarianism⁷³ has been referred to as the ‘management of undesirables’

⁷³ Humanitarianism, Payne (:275) explains, is a philosophy of being humane and a practice of treating people with kindness because we value their humanity. On the contrary, humanism assumes that humans have the capacity to reason, make choices and act freely. It accepts human caring in human relations and is concerned with democracy, since it supports that humans should support, help, and value one another.

The neutrality principle places humanitarianism for providing aid beyond politics. It is a troubled concept for the radical potential of social work which is about protecting and advancing human rights for the purpose of challenging existing oppressive powers and arbitrary long-standing social hierarchies in the name of advancing social equality. Unlike humanitarianism, radical social work does not avoid political engagement but highlights the political root causes of human made disasters and human rights violations in seeking to address their underlying causes. At the same time, social work is grounded in law and human rights,

(ibid:4) and a ‘form of policing’- a distinction between the hand that cares (the humanitarian world) and the hand that strikes (the police and military) (Agier, 2011:5).

Humanitarian organisations provide care to refugees, while simultaneously their practice is implicated in control strategies and surveillance of refugees’ lives and their space, so that they remain isolated and prevented from crossing the borders. Additionally, refugees, being deprived from rights such as work, rely on assistance for their basic needs. This connotation politicizes and places the provided services within the frame and logic of care and control (Agier, 2005; Pallister-Wilkins, 2018).

Policy makers in the EU have long relied on humanitarianism to legitimize border and migration policies (Topak, 2019:389). Drawing on ethnographic research in Lesbos, Papada *et al.* (2020) show the symbiotic relationship between state discourses to emergencies at the borders and the development of humanitarian emergency aid. These, through the urgency to act to prevent more deaths, have legitimised NGOs to provide services, such as welfare support, that belong to state. Additionally, the Greek government’s discourses on the detention of migrants into “hospitality centres” (Papataxiarchis, 2016) for their “protection” shifted the allocation of resources from social policies to finance detention systems. This effort into presenting its policy as humane, was reinforced by parallel discourse of “urgency” of the situation from the EU, which allowed the allocation of funds to large construction companies for the construction and operation of detention centres. These priorities are bound up with material practices and measures on preventing persons in need of protection from accessing asylum, such as forced returns by sea (pushbacks), and have serious consequences for the human rights of the refugees (Booth, K., et al., 2014:70-

suggesting that it is not an act of kindness, but rather the realisation of an obligation, constructed around responsibility, and accountability to further legal claims.

74). In 2018, due to delays in funding from the government to NGOs, attributed to limited absorption of EU funding from the AMIF, six guest houses for minors closed (Dimitriadi and Sarantaki, 2019:22).

4.4. The NGOization of social work.

A more thoughtful critique of the involvement of NGOs in welfare pertinent to social work, comes from Ioakimidis and Teloni (2013). Since the early 1990s, they underscore that there had been a political influence in Greece to alignment of national policies with EU economic philosophy and ideological positions, particularly dedicated to seeking neoliberal economic policies (see also Ioakimidis, 2008:256-260). The major tactic was the relocation of collective provisions and welfare functions out of government to private competition between NGOs, the private and public sector which allowed and extended the creation of ‘quasi markets’ in the public welfare state (Ioakimidis, 2008; Ioakimidis and Teloni, 2013). Welfare reforms championed the virtues of market principles in the public sector, while management principles and techniques to health care organisations were introduced (Petmesidou, 2019:169). Thus, the NGOs were tightly drawn into the service delivery system shaped by the state, which has led to objectify and commodify ‘consumers’ as well as intense deskilling, and the virtual removal of therapeutic interventions and service provision (Carey, 2008a; Dominelli, 2010).

In this environment, social workers found themselves working under insecure conditions with short-term and part-time employment contracts, due to deregulation of the labour market and government funding cuts across the human services sector (Ioakimidis, 2012; Ioakimidis and Teloni, 2013).

Meanwhile, many of these changes were also experienced within the field of social protection of refugees. Since 1997, NGOs were given funding and greater role in the reception of refugees (Skordas and Sitaropoulos, 2004), competing to be awarded a contract and subject to state regulation. As Ioakimidis (2008:315-317) points out, central to the restructuring of the state, was the creation of an inefficient and ineffective system outside the publicly funded welfare services, within which asylum-related provisions were delivered, as cheaply as possible, failing, in turn, to support society's most vulnerable people under International Law.

Amid the “refugee crisis”, as I previously mentioned, Greece became a priority for a whole array of different aid initiatives provided by International and professional NGOs (see DeLargy, 2016; Kouki, 2021).

It is worth mentioning at this point, that for Ioakimidis (2015) and Ioakimidis and Trimikliniotis (2019), this relationship between the state and the revitalisation of the so-called “peace industry” that employs International and NGOs agencies, it is historically determined and directly related to a system of rule with imperial logic⁷⁴ which constructs to restore both power and profits to financialised capital (Ioakimidis, 2015; Ioakimidis and Trimikliniotis, 2019).

⁷⁴ Imperialism: Vickers (2019), following Lenin's theory of Imperialism, defines it as to the policy and practice of extending state power through the acquisition of territory, usually by conquest. Following the development of laissez-faire capitalism is a higher stage in the development of capitalism with the rule of monopolies. One of its critical issues is that it divides countries into “imperialist” and “oppressed” and shapes their relations (for example through structural adjustment policies since the 1970s) on material interests to global capital. Beyond the apparent unity of people with regards to their relations with their nations, places and their states, in capitalism, under economic competitiveness and recently the pressure of globalisation to generate surplus value, the working-class is divided into active and reserve army of labour for imperialist countries. This process aims at capital accumulation through exploitation and cheap labour in the form of precarious and/or low-waged employment from oppressed nations. To this division of the working class, racism and nationalism as a form of oppression, play a pivotal role in creating super-exploitable workers without rights.

Vickers, T. (2019) ‘Immigration and Imperialism’, in I., N. and Z., C. (eds) *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 1–16. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-91206-6_35-1.

Crucially, this entails a qualitative shift in social work, whereby its practice as a social emancipatory project, is less based on collectivist social concerns that could generate long-term structural change by tackling issues of power and inequality for poor or marginalized groups. Social workers deal with significant contradictions and constraints in their ability to strengthen local communities, given the ‘Instrumentalist intervention’-often termed as ‘humanitarian’ and their focus on short-term projects rather than maintaining deep linkages with the community, and the pressures they face to be non-political, rather than politically radical, which often challenge the state and other vested interests (Gray and Webb, 2014; Ioakimidis, 2015; Ioakimidis and Trimikliniotis, 2019).

Importantly, the depoliticising use of technocratic expertise is linked to a broader system of neoliberal governance and control that proceeds from the assumption that broader issues of welfare constitute an exception - a state of emergency (Evans, 2016), and primary goal of outsourcing of state services, is to avoid the establishment of welfare state vision of new social rights (Evans et al., 2005; Maniatis, 2018).

Jones (2019), reflecting on the refugee crisis from the island of Samos, one of the first entry points in Greece, notes that large NGOs appeared largely depoliticised, increasingly pulling further away the poor groups that they claim to represent.

NGOs became major employers for professions such as social work. To date, research on social work with refugees indicates that practitioners could find themselves trapped, with few or no means in effectively assisting refugees, with limited services and hostile policies against their users, while facing precarity and poor working conditions (Teloni, et al, 2020). Radical and critical approaches are increasingly adopted lately by social work scholars, reflecting the need to invent new methodologies

and practices that challenge inequality and acting politically (Dedotsi, et al, 2019; Teloni, et al., 2020).

Conclusion.

More broadly, it was argued that outsourcing and contracting out services to the mixed economy and NGOs was the adaptation of welfare states to global economic changes of globalisation, emphasising market relations and minimal welfare state engagement. This new mode of neoliberal governance, under EU policies obliges states to retreat from addressing social problems, leaving a significant part of the implementation of social policies to quasi-markets.

In Greece, where the state took very little responsibility for the welfare of immigrants or refugees until very recently, NGOs already had a major role in this field of reception and integration, including the provision of accommodation and financial support.

Additionally, neoliberal policies had direct effects on the public sector and NGO social workers involved in welfare provision for asylum seekers and refugees, since provided social services appeared to be well below standards and deemed unsuitable for citizens. In the present climate, neoliberal policies, based to a large extent on the co-option of practitioners into surveillance functions (see Humphries, 2004), give little power to social workers to manage their own working lives, let alone give power to others.

From a critical perspective which involves political considerations in improving the quality of people's lives, it was argued that NGOs are a controversial area of social work practice, since they provide services within the parameters set by government policy. In other words, NGOs were used by neoliberal governments to carry out

functions that replace those traditionally performed by the state, and despite the solutions they proposed, they were succumbed to keeping people poor, marginalised and oppressed.

The troubling question is where, if anywhere, does this analysis leave the emancipatory intent of social work?

Methodology.

4.1. Qualitative Methodology.

Aiming at capturing data on social workers' experiences regarding their day-to-day practice and understanding of social justice while working on the field of refugee support, I opted for the use of a qualitative research approach.

Qualitative methods are employed when researchers are endeavouring to discover how the participants see the world, for understanding actions and meanings in their social context or describing the mundane details of everyday settings. Qualitative methods are used to extend our understanding of the context or a setting where participants in study address a problem or an issue (Creswell,2007:40). Additionally, contrary to quantitative approaches that overlook the uniqueness of individuals, they are most useful and powerful to issues related to gender, race, economic status and other individual differences (Creswell, 2007: 40).

Della Porta (2014:229) commenting on the development of research tools, including the interview guide, believes that even though there is not always a direct link between research technique, epistemological methodology and theory, clarifying the theoretical presupposition that informs the knowledge produced by the inquiry is an important step. Methodology is concerned with the ideas, theories or philosophy that “holds together” a research project, Carey (2012) argues, supporting in turn that it indicates the researchers' values as well as informs the research ethics and influences. Therefore, it affects the way the researchers apply the research methods to collect information and data, meanwhile interpreting and reporting their findings (Carey, 2012:83-84).

4.2. Critical social research.

Critical theory has been identified to Marx's own original project about the "way to instigate social change by providing knowledge of the forces of social inequality that can, in turn, inform political action aimed at emancipation (or at least at diminishing domination and inequality)" (Rush, 2004:10). For researchers using a critical approach, knowledge is not based on positivist, free of bias assumptions about the nature of social reality. The latter must be understood as product of historical, cultural and political context produced by the experiences and values of people (Parton, 1996; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000). Payne (2014) has observed that social work practice and theory is historically and culturally shaped by the political, economic, social, and historical circumstances. Such an approach leads to the examination of social phenomena within their historical context for understanding their relation to social structure by showing how they are maintained by political and economic arrangements, legitimated as they are by ideology (Harvey, 1990). This is achieved through a dialectical process of deconstruction and reconstruction (Harvey, 1990).

Kondrat (2002: 436) referring to social structures and institutions, argues that they are consisting "*of social regularities and objective patterns external to individual action, intentions, meanings or actions*". As such, economic, social and cultural structures e.g. class, racism, sexism etc. reflect and are tied to the interests of the advanced capitalist economies and their political regimes and hence heavily influence-but-not-determine the life conditions and ability for action (Ferguson, et al. 2002). The exposure of contradictions and their forces as accepted by the dominant culture as natural and inviolable, could allow the possibility for political action to transform larger dominating structures of oppression (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000). In this sense it is

believed that people possess the agency to make their own history (Reisch and Jani, 2012). According to Jessop and Sum (2016) it “also demonstrates its practical relevance in showing that ‘another world is possible’” (ibid:108) with the desire for change.

Research in social work being part of wider social relations, cannot be separated from the structural and institutional surroundings that generate war, socioeconomic inequalities, oppression, and injustices (Kamali, 2015). In this sense, Kamali (2015) notes critical research in social work should reject the idea of “neutrality” and be understood as a struggle against all kinds of discrimination, exclusion and violence against unprivileged people. Accordingly, it places emphasis on political practice for struggling against processes of governmentalisation of violence that involve increasing, militarisation, securitisation and surveillance of citizens. It aims at revealing the socioeconomic inequities of the politics of neoliberalism and ‘war on terror’ by Western countries that have widen the economic gulf between rich and poor as well as brought about xenophobic and racist reactions in political discourses (Ibid:154-156).

There is clearly a legitimacy in the argument that various social welfare regimes and social work, located within the functioning of our current socioeconomic system – capitalism, are both oriented via state policies to fulfil its need, and thus control and discipline working classes rather than address poverty and inequality (Jones and Novak, 1999; Lavalette, 2005; Moth, 2019b).

The central focus of critical research is to make a detailed exposition of practices and values of oppression and inequality that inhibit people’s self-empowerment. In this view, the aim is to influence social change in the spheres of direct practice, advocacy, research and policy for equality and social justice (Adams, Dominelli and Payne, 2002; Humphries, 2004:104-108).

Critical theories, emphasise on social change and human agency, that is, how human beings through developing collective action, may have an impact on the socially constructed and historical order in which they live (Fook, 2014). By taking the neoliberal landscape into consideration, where nations like Greece are administered like corporations (Garrett, 2013a), I tried, through the research, to develop awareness of the politics of social work not as a well-intentioned practical activity, but as an ethical activity with emancipatory intent in the immediate present (Pease, 2013).

Research approaches which take on this mandate can be found in quantitative measurable methods that enact positivist philosophical presuppositions and limit the possible responses from interviewees into pre-defined answers independent of theory consideration (Geisen, 2008). Social work cannot be examined from that perspective alone. Instead, my research was informed by a political approach which took competing ideologies, economic possibility and restraints as well as political conflicts into account, moving beyond the pathology of liberal individualism (Chris Clark, 2006) and blame the practitioners for the dilemmas inherent in their practice. My intent was to conceptualise individual ethical problems as public issues, shaped by social and economic structures in which social work is practised.

4.3. Data collection.

4.3.1. Qualitative in-Depth Interviews.

In-depth interviews “*are a core, and effective method of qualitative data collection*” (Lewis and McNaughton Nicholls, 2014:55) and are of fundamental importance for the study of motives, beliefs and attitudes as well as the identities and emotions della Porta (2014) supports. They do not only bring human agency into the fore, but they also pinpoint the importance of ideational factors like culture, norms, ethics, perceptions, learning and cognition (ibid:220). Importantly, they enable researchers to understand the sense that actors give to their actions, when the aim is to analyse the meanings, certain participants ascribed to the external world to which they participate in and the construction of identity (ibid:230). In attempting to understand and capture the meaning that social work has, an exploration of its intentional content that demonstrates what kind of action it is and what that action means to its practitioners is needed. On this basis, the research can shed light into the individual and collective, visions, imaginings, hopes, expectations, critique of the present and projection of the future on which the possibility of collection action rest (della Porta, 2014: 231).

Carey (2012:110) discussing the value of interviews as a research method in social work underscores its adaptable and flexible nature that contributes to gathering more varied data than many other approaches. Among others, the topics covered by interviews involve the access to concrete experiences and events which practitioners address in their daily practice. By favouring access to “key players” and informants allows us an opportunity to gain depth knowledge and new insights on issues under-examined in the past, prioritising what the interviewees appreciate as relevant, yet important (ibid:111-112).

It is important to emphasize that in data collection, as an interviewer, I tried to adopt a more flexible approach where participants were encouraged to discuss work relevant issues that were not restricted to pre-determined themes of my own pre-existing assumptions. According to Smith and Eatough (2007) one-to-one semi-structured interviews facilitate rapport, empathy, the elicitation of stories and the collection of richer data. My primary aim was to capture the participants' interests and subjective experiences of practice, following up interesting and important issues that came up during the interview. On this basis, an interview guide was used flexibly, having an open-ended structure to allow the participants to direct the flow and focus of the conversation.

Social justice was presented as the opening concept to a discussion of social work practice.

The open-ended questions were structured thematically, starting with *"can you tell me what the challenges for refugees are?"* and *"what you are dealing with"*. These have been the opening segments of my interaction with participants, which invited a long interactive dialogue and reflection process about the context of practice, understanding of causes of individual and social problems and possible solutions. Freire (2005:88) notes "dialogue is the encounter between men[sic], mediated by the world, in order to name the world".

In the interviews, all participants were asked to recall work related significant events, situations, as well as ideas around particular tasks they set for themselves, and to discuss specific examples, focused on their previous and current experiences regarding their daily routine in social work provision. In this respect, I found useful to ask what they meant by particular terms, references or explanations, such as human

rights or empowerment, and discuss their experiences of translating these meanings into practice

To delve further into things that were important to participants and explore what elements become central to their analysis, I encouraged them to tell extended accounts of their situations, including the reactions of others, and I used probes, such as “*what happened next?*”, aiming at encouraging the telling of stories. This approach provided a way into allowing them to be part of the process of ‘unpacking’ the text (Riessman, 1993:32) and facilitates the respondents to become actively involved in the construction and validation of meaning of significant experiences or events. In practice, many participants preferred to tell their own stories and describe experiences and observations they had encountered in their practice. These present different “social justice” issues that involved regulations separating eligible persons from those who do not qualify for services, such as housing evictions and homelessness, age assessment, gender-based violence, racism or their interactions in public health services, employment, and local welfare agencies. In the findings section, I explain how these responses were constructed as a constant cause of frustration where refugees are exposed to cruel or discriminatory, and absurd bureaucratic mentalities and procedures.

Since it was not possible to carry out participant observation in social welfare provision premises, looking at what people do, what seemed important here was to facilitate them. The aim was at discussing and exploring how participants had voiced their own judgments and disagreements as well as responded or would approach complex ethical issues. They further prompted them to reflect upon their personal and professional values, while allowed them to discuss the barriers they experienced around public policy issues.

In search of “counternarratives”; A critical “*Narrative approach*”.

In the context of the interview, I wanted the participants to provide personal accounts of their experience, hence the interviews were loosely directive towards reflection. However, a guiding concern throughout the fieldwork process was participants’ understandings of social work practice and its relation to larger beliefs and values. This section is centred around a focus on narrative within the research design as a research method, since it is believed that through narratives, it is possible to see “different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change” (Andrews et al., 2013:1).

Broadly defined, narratives are stories that individuals and institutions tell themselves and others about the world they live in and their place within it.

For researchers within refugee research, such as Marita Eastmond (2007:260), the storytelling is part of people’s everyday life and entail a mean for human beings to communicate, collectively or individually, their experiences. Grounded in the phenomenological tradition, narratives, or stories, as they are often also interchangeably called, in their great diversity “provide a site to examine the meanings that actors ascribe to experience” (ibid: 260). Participants, by telling their own experiences to the researcher, Eastmond (2007:249) argues, “gives rise and form to narratives, but it is also organized and given meaning in the telling”. Eastmond (2007:249) also suggests that what is remembered from the past and expressed by a narrator in the light of the present is situated in the specific encounter between the narrator and the audience. As stories are never a transparent expression of reality, what is told in a specific context is affected not only by the power relations of social

interactions between the narrator and listener, but also by lived experiences of the past and present events. The construction of narratives also reflects thoughts and dreams of the future (ibid.).

Conceptualized in this way, narratives provide an opportunity to view the individual as a subject, able to act in the world and reflect on that. In doing so, they draw on the interplay of relations between self and society. As such, they offer an opportunity to explore how participants, from a specific social position make sense of the world, negotiate its meanings as well as act on the challenges and moral dilemmas they face, alleviate suffering and change their situation (Eastmond, 2007:250-1). However, narratives call for our interpretation of the larger contexts in which experience and action are embedded. Especially, in times and places to which we have little access, they could offer particular insights to violence, uncertainty and repression that enquire into human responses and provoke questions about moral responsibility. This entails that we must break with familiar conditions of everyday life and relate them to the social and political contexts that have shaped and continue shaping the circumstances of their lives (Eastmond, 2007).

For Andrews, (2007:2) narratives, even when they are personal, are always political, since we communicate political world views. They are “the ligaments of identity” (Andrews, 2014:87) in the discursive construction of a sense of identity – “of who is ‘us’ and who is ‘them’”. As Yuval-Davis (2006:201-2) writes, the “stories people tell themselves and the others about who they are (and who they are not)” constitute their identity. Andrews (2014:86) argues narratives engage the imagination, not only in constructing stories about the past and the present, but in helping to articulate a vision of an alternative world within which participants live and position themselves.

Some participants could narrate their experiences in ways that are allowed to express their identity against hegemonic narratives, such as that of the state which precede us, thereby alternative constructs of subject position are formulated and counter-narratives emerge (Riessman and Quinney, 2005). Andrews (2004:1) defines counter narratives as “the stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives”. Participating in the development of such counter-narratives requires going beyond the supposed impartiality of positivist science. From these positions, when resisting the deficit identities that have been constructed in the dominant media and political discourse and serve to suppress people on the margins of society, they have the ability to strengthen the confidence of the marginalized and underprivileged (Murray, 2000:345; Creswell, 2007). These new understandings committed to social change and addressed to the oppressing social context could help people engage in new forms of social justice activities. In that sense, they can catalyse political consciousness and “encourage others to act; speaking out invites political mobilization and change” (Riessman, 2007:unpaged).

There are a wide range of definitions of what is meant by counter narratives in social work. As argued by Reisch (2013), the construction of narratives that are in tension with official (macro) narratives offer a structural analysis of society’s problems, while simultaneously recognizing the significance of history, culture and context. In this view, an understanding of the interconnectedness between domestic and international issues is required, including an awareness of the role of social divisions in the marginalisation of certain populations. As a goal, they should challenge the inevitability of the neoliberal project and poverty by providing an alternative vision of

a socially just society on the basis of solidarity against the structural causes of inequality (ibid:77-78).

In line with narrative approaches, the research participants were called on to tell stories when encountered complex ethical and practical issues. Attention was paid to the subject positions jointly enacted by both interviewee and interviewer, where both participants shape the direction and focus of the conversation. I was particularly interested in the possibilities of resisting and challenging government's policies and practices in front line work, including their motives.

4.3.2. Mobile methods, a multi-sited ethnographic approach.

There has been a long discussion in qualitative research about the importance of the place while interviewing (see O'Reilly, 2005; della Porta, 2014; Yeo *et al.*, 2014). Borne out of the new Mobilities Paradigm (see Sheller, 2017), mobile methods are rooted in the broadly defined 'Spatial Turn' of many of the social and human sciences in understanding social phenomena (see Warf and Arias, 2009).

Space is in fact a complex notion. Contrary to the Euclidean conceptions of space, as material, fixed, known and external, which Löw (2016:vii) argues treats space as a mere physical container that can be subjected to control for social action, within the "spatial turn" space is socially produced and constructed within the context of action. In this case, "the constitution of spaces is never rigid, but rather always processual" (Löw, 2016:193) and takes place by way of institutions, conventions, and discourses.

The emergence of space as a product linked to social reality is largely due to Henri Lefebvre (1991[1974]), a French Marxist philosopher, sociologist and theorist of the city. Lefebvre (1991:26) argues: '(Social) space is a (social) product'. It is

produced and re-produced in historical time under the material process of social production related to the capitalist universalizing social relations of the society. Under capitalist social relations, the constructed spaces arise between the material, conceptual and lived in time. In this respect, Harvey (2019:120-148) argues that what we do cannot be understood in isolation from all the others, since it is dependent upon the primary spatio-temporal frame within which we politically understand ourselves as subjects with consciousness in a relational world. This allows to identify conflicting claims and imagine alternative political possibilities in absolute space and time.

In this light, “space matters” not as a territorial backdrop against which action takes place, but because “where *events* unfold”, such as the understanding of human experience, social relations and the production of culture “are integral to *how* and *why* they take shape” to social and spatial context. (Warf and Arias, 2009:10). When space is understood as relationally constituted of objects, places and (groups of) people and their actions, through perception and memories or imagination, it can become a category of analysis for the material context in which social world, practices and institutions are rendered meaningful and knowable (Fuller and Löw, 2017).

When people tell their histories through a discussion of the everyday and its places, they describe very similar processes, meaning that stories are mapped onto a place that makes the place specific (Cresswell, 2019) in its wider geographical context. At the same time, they seem to occupy all available possibilities – and impossibilities – of location that attend centrally to structure, including the reproduction of racism, and class and gender inequalities.

Using social-movement theory of collective-action frames- used to provide explanations for the structure, demands, and actions of collective action and activists

around common values, issues, goals as political projects, Martin (2003) searches how activists draw upon and represent experiences of daily life situated in the material spaces. In doing so, she argues that the construction of such frames involves a process of attributing meanings and representations to places that “provide an important mobilizing discourse and identity for collective action” (ibid:730) at a number of spatial scales; the neighbourhood, the city, the nation. In doing so, they construct meanings of what the specific place is, what it represents and how it is or should be lived (Martin, 2003).

Jones *et al.*, (2008) argue that walking methods enable ‘naturally occurring conversation’ and when connected with what people said to, where exactly they said it, they have been praised for enabling the researchers to collect real-time, multi-sensory information about how participants use and understand different spaces (Jones *et al.*, 2008).

Different terms for the mobile method are used, including go-along (Kusenbach, 2003; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008; Carpiano, 2009a; Garcia *et al.*, 2012) and walking interviews (Evans and Jones, 2011; Butler and Derrett, 2014; Lynch and Mannion, 2016). For Stillerman and Salcedo (2012), they took the form of walkabouts. Others that have been deployed include guided walks (Horton *et al.*, 2014), walk-alongs (Degen and Rose, 2012), mobile interviews (Holton and Riley, 2014) and walking methods (Macpherson, 2016).

In my approach to weaving together observations and insights from site walks and interviews with the research participants, I follow Kusenbach’s (2003:463) definition of ‘go-along’ method:

“Accompany individual informants on their ‘natural’ outings and – through asking questions, listening and observing – actively exploring their subjects’ stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with, their physical and social environment”

Kusenbach (2003:466) supports, go along provide access to participants’ personal identities, biographical experiences, values and meanings of daily routines. During the interviews the places chosen by the participants prompt narrations and explanations rendering visible participants’ own perceptions about localised social and physical environments as well towards others (see also Carpiano, 2009; Hall, 2009; Riley, 2010). 'Being there' in a shared physical environment, walking, as place-making, allows the construction of closeness between people and entails an embodied self-reflexivity, where the body and the senses are important (Pink, 2015:111-115). O’Neill and Roberts (2020:134) note walking in a location stirs memories of the place as visited on previous occasions, or similar places, and the feelings and events experienced.

While navigated around the service, Machi, apologised to me, because the interview was interrupted by the sound of a guitar. It was for the music lesson, she mentioned. Recalling the lack of recreational services other practitioners had mentioned and refugees’ isolation in accommodation services and camps. Machi replied:

“Yes, this space here, as well as other places that are used as day centres provide recreational activities. One of my favourite groups is the one where women take Greek language lessons. Why is that? Because, at the same time their children are supported with

recreational activities. So, they have the chance to learn the language, without worrying –“what am I going to do with my child?” You provide them with the opportunity to a fundamental right they have”

Thus, isolated refugees and particular women appeared to enjoy services for participation in public life outside the home. Services provided were trying to free women from domestic duties related to the social role or duties women have in society by prioritising opportunities to respect human rights.

I adopted a multi-sited approach to “go-alongs”, conducting thus interviews in spatially different sites. Routes that had not been pre-designed involved me participating in guided walks within the informants’ chosen context. Participants had been invited to talk about their experiences, while walking.

Ten “Go-along” interviews were conducted with the purpose of 'showing' me around as part of the discussion.

The majority of interviews took place in Athens-the capital city of the region (Attica), which had changed for refugees from a city of transition to organise their journey and temporary accommodation in open sites (squares, parks), hotels, and houses (Afouxenidis et al., 2017), into a city of destination. Between November 2015 and June 2018, approximately 49.000 refugees were accommodated in non-camp housing facilities, in rented urban apartments in Athens and other cities through the ‘accommodation scheme’ ESTIA, which was funded by the European Union (UNHCR, 2018a). Papataxiarchis (2017:80) describes this development from the model of the camp to urban apartments as the emergence of the ‘*humanitarian city*’ that can serve as an environment of sociability and reciprocity. ESTIA programme was developed among the UNHCR, the Greek government, local authorities, and NGOs in

support of the Greek authorities' efforts to expand reception capacity for asylum seekers who would relocate to other countries of the EU. From 2017 onwards the programme aimed at the integration of those who would remain in Greece and thus expanded to vulnerable cases too (Kourachanis, 2019:225).

Thus, go along took place around two refugee camps- consisted of shipping container housing units and social services and local neighbourhoods that introduced me to the places, services provided, and issues practitioners and refugees face alike.

4.3.3. Participant observations.

To provide a descriptive context in setting the scene for future readers as well as to complement other methods used during the fieldwork, I did rely on a limited participant observation of public events and social action that were open to the general public, before returning home to record field-notes about personal impressions and feelings on a personal fieldwork diary. These were organised by either activists or organisations and were publicized through solidarity networks and social media. I would not go as far as to say that “participant observation” was a key data collection method in this study. Instead, I would present this limited experience of exposure to the more political dimensions of social work and collective action, supplementary to the main method.

Riley (2010:74) notes that the knowledge we create is a result of a social process situated in particular spaces and places in which we do our thinking and interpretation after observation (Ferguson, 2014). Within qualitative inquiry Silverman (2015) states that participant observation in a very general sense is adherent to every social research as a ‘mode-of-being’ in the world, where the researcher, according to Lofland and Lofland (1995), is advised to achieve familiarity with the setting and informants in

ways that *she* “participates in the minds of the settings’ participants” (cited in Laine, 2000:63).

While the research is not based on an ethnographic research design where the goal of participant-observation is to gain a deep and intimate familiarity with a community through detailed, recorded observations and reflection (Davis and Craven, 2016:85), this approach started as part of my own support for grassroots initiatives that aimed at empowering refugees and promote equality. In fact, in all these settings, I had no prior direct experience neither as an observer and participant nor a member. When someone, I recall, interacted with me, for a moment, I felt as if he was trying to find other ways to call me than “*our syntrophos*⁷⁵” to address my observations. In collecting data, I realised that information could also provide context, richness (e.g., activities that are happening, people involved), and stimulate my reflection around the participants’ interviews. All field notes become data for contextualized analysis and consequently, they inform the interpretation and analysis of the study, through critical reflection (Maharaj, 2016).

More significantly, set against a backdrop of the individual-centred practice, I have witnessed first-hand in my interviews, what constitutes social work, I wanted to explore the social theoretical assumptions influencing their social relations and attempts to apply these ideas and concepts in their actions and responses. In other worlds, it led me to question what may be missing from practice. Carey (2008b) notes neoliberal ideology, legislation and policy, existed in employment or within education, influence at both conscious and unconscious levels what practitioners attend to and their understanding of what they recognise as social work. This, not only prevents them

⁷⁵ Fellow comrade, based on the ethos of egalitarian relationships and comradeship of the collectivity.

from considering other alternative democratic spaces and forms of actions than ordinary or routine practices as social work, but they also progressively surrender their independence and ability to critically reflect on their experience to define activity, while being subjected to managerialist forms of control driven by privatisation (Carey, 2008a).

Initially, participant observation involved educational events and scheduled meetings of a grassroots community organisation in a densely populated centre of an urban city. Discussions evolved around various aspects of politics, such as fascism and capitalism, including the European immigration and national legislation which were discussed and challenged. By the end of these meetings, I found myself working alongside activists and migrants on organising an anti-racist festival in mid-June.

From April to July, I also attended weekly workers' meetings against refugees' evictions and engaging in advocacy activities, such as information about policy developments, I *walked* into this public venue where they air their views with a participant- Areti, who like few other social workers, I met during my interviews, initially joined these meetings and mobilisations after finishing their 9 to 5 work.

Ioakimidis (2016), particularly when discussing practitioners' social action with refugees, makes reference to the "dichotomy between the social worker as a nine-to-five state agent and five-nine activist" within the context of socio-political activism for social workers that aims at social change and a socially just society. Observing while being involved in non-hierarchical participatory meetings and events in which multiple voices could be heard, including refugees themselves from which women were not excluded, allowed me to gain a deeper experience of how new relations and practices of solidarity were developed. Additionally, this allowed me to grasp an

understanding of activists' self-positioning and perspectives as beings "in a situation" who critically act upon social conditions (Freire, 2005:109) which support various forms of oppression.

Even though I had made my role as a researcher known and clear to all-, I was introduced as a researcher with an interest in social work, since permission had not been provided to record activities and meetings' relevant data is excluded in the presentation of the findings. It took a number of meetings to consolidate familiarity with participants from SVEMKO⁷⁶ before I felt enough confidence had been built to ask them to participate in the research.

On the same spirit, I attended discussions⁷⁷ which took place at the 22nd Antiracist Festival and I sought media outlets, blogs and public lectures⁷⁸ that told the story from alternative viewpoints, hoping to elicit information from all sides of a story of which I would, otherwise, be ignorant.

I also walked around the places where social services were based in order to get an experience of physical and material contexts to achieve an embodied experience. Since they are socially 'constructed' I found myself contemplating on walking about "what has changed in the social environment – and in 'who we are'"(O'Neill and Roberts, 2020).

⁷⁶ Association of workers in non-governmental organizations.

⁷⁷ These among others were the Criminalization of solidarity, militarization of borders and (anti)social migration policies; The rise of the Far-Right, the neoliberal orthodoxy, and the antagonistic Left, Airbnb, urban repression and ghettoing, Migrant land workers in Southern Europe: The example of Greece and Italy.

⁷⁸ Historical Materialism Athens Conference in Athens on 2-5 May 2019. Social work conference in Athens on 5-6 May 2019 under the title: Human relationships and social work within a changing environment.

4.4. Sampling, Recruitment and Size of Participants.

The participants in the current study were recruited via a snowball sampling technique by asking initial participants to nominate other potential participants (Bryman, 2012). I contacted each person individually, asking if they would be willing to take part in my study via NGOs providing welfare services spread out throughout Athens.

Snowball sampling is often used to find and recruit “hidden populations,” that is, groups not easily accessible to researchers through other sampling strategies (Farr, 2008:6). Social workers working in the increasingly regulated and securitised field, and I thought that they were a “hard to reach group” involved not only in different projects in various locations but also employed in short-term positions (Teloni et al, 2020). So, initial participants were thus asked if they could also nominate others who work under certain conditions, such as reception camps, and who would be interested in taking part.

Additionally, I wanted the interviewed participants included in this research to represent a range of voices and perspectives. Hence, an effort was made to include some participants who had experience in trade unionism and/ or other forms of collective action. Two of the participants were current members of the Greek Association of Social Workers (GASW) and one was an academic involved in a range of collective activities and anti-racist campaigns. Four of the participants who also took part in the open assembly comprised of NGOs workers and activists who mobilised against refugee policy evictions.

The fact that prior to commencing my PhD research, I had worked in the same field for some years and also University of Essex’s reputation as a “progressive university” helped with allowing initial access to practitioners. In addition to personal

contacts, social workers were also invited by an e-mail that was distributed via the organisations. While all the agencies agreed to allow access to their staff, it was up to individual workers if they wanted to co-operate. On one occasion, a practitioner mentioned that even if the organisation did not allow it, she would have negotiated it, since she considered it as important for the profession.

The vast majority of my interview data derives from thirty-seven (N=37) (see Appendix I) semi-structured in-depth interviews with social workers and other allied professionals. In qualitative research, an adequate size should be investigated so as to ensure that the number of participants suffices to provide meaningful and adequate information. Limited diversity and relatively small sample size can be considered a limitation (Cohen, et al., 2007). However, sample sizes in qualitative research are usually very small due to the time-consuming nature of the analytical process (Langdrige, 2007:58). As Richie et al. (Richie *et al.*, 2013:144) note “it is impossible to do justice to the richness of the data yielded if the sample is large-scale”. Ness and Fusch (2015:1409) made the point that neither large sample size nor a small one could guarantee one will reach data saturation, so it is best to think of data in terms of rich as quality and thick as quantity. For the purposes of this research the size of the sample is not a problem, since the work does not make general claims about larger populations.

Twenty-nine were with qualified social workers (twenty-five female and four male) and ranged in age from 23 to 53 years⁷⁹. Ten of them had pursued post-graduate studies, while one had a PhD and held a permanent academic job in social work. Other informants in this research involved, one psychologist, one journalist, one nurse, four political scientists.

⁷⁹ The average age was 34.7 years

As far as social workers are concerned, all of the participants were qualified practitioners⁸⁰. The majority worked in front-line positions and were engaged in different areas of social work found in more specialised settings, such as child protection and accommodation, legal and social support as well as mental health and gender violence. Some of the participants occupied mid-management and supervisory roles. One participant was working part-time, holding a role in administration and “teaching”. Two of the participants interviewed had resigned, but were approached as informants with long-term experience who could offer interesting insights.

Two of the participants had immigrant backgrounds. One participant identified as lesbian. The social workers’ length of service varied from newly qualified to some who had over 17 years’ experience.

The interviews were conducted from February 2019 to August 2019 in Greece. Twenty-six of the participants were based in Attica, Athens, where almost half of the Greek population is concentrated. The rest were based in large towns and in rural contexts, including islands, with a substantial number of refugees. The list of the interviewees with pseudonyms and personal information is provided in Appendices (I).

The majority of the interviews took place in one-to-one social service settings, in often quiet and removed rooms of the organisations, while a few of them took place in public spaces, such as central squares in benches, cafes and containers in camps. Through these interviews, I was able to gather more detailed data vis-à-vis my research questions establish closer relationships with participants and develop trust.

⁸⁰ Social workers currently in Greece need to register with the Greek Professional Association of Social Workers (SKLE) (Law 4488/2017) to practice.

4.5. Data Analysis.

For the data gathered I opted to draw on thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2013). This approach of analysis can fall within the sphere of interpretive qualitative research framework that acknowledges the self-reflective nature of qualitative inquiry, the importance of language and discourse and the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the data. They also embrace the constructivist worldview that the world is socially made rather than natural, since humans intersubjectively construct their social realities in and through their interactions with one another (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2018).

Initially and with regards to the paradigm of the theoretical constructs falls into, thematic analysis is described as theoretically flexible analytic method, applied across theoretical frameworks and paradigms for research. Within ‘experiential’ research this method seeks to identify patterns within and across heterogeneous data and adequately captures the participants’ complex lived social experiences, knowledge and perspectives, including behaviour and practice. When this approach is used within a critical framework, it tends to revolve around the analyst’s interpretation of data which takes the implications of representation, construction or language practices for individuals and society into account (Clarke and Braun, 2017).

It was for this reason that I chose to follow the framework for conducting thematic analysis provided by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013), who have provided a systematic approach - a six-phase process for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns of meaning – themes – across a dataset: (1) immersion in the data through repeated reading of the transcripts; (2) systematic coding of the data; (3) development

of pre-liminary themes; (4) revision of those themes; (5) selection of a final set of themes; (6) organization of the final written product around those themes.

At this first level of coding, the process of data analysis ran concurrent with data collection. The audio recordings of the interviews were listened several times and transcribed verbatim (in the original Greek language), while each interview was still ‘fresh’ in my mind. On reflection, the process of doing transcription by myself and closely reading the transcripts several times afterwards in a holistic manner for familiarisation, was very valuable in terms of analytic sensibility (Braun and Clarke, 2013:205-6) which helped me make conceptual links between raw data and theoretical abstractions. This allowed me to start observing patterns in the responses. This process of writing copious memos or field notes is chiefly associated with grounded theory methodology, and particularly with memoing. It involved reflective handwritten annotations to capture on how feelings and meanings were expressed nonverbally during the interview, including my own personal impressions, ideas and observations immediately after interviews (see Appendix VI). Also, I wanted to make sure that key comments and indications of any areas might need revisiting upon following interviews with new participants. In this respect, I developed questions from the emerging data that were used in subsequent interviews. For example, during the first interviews it became apparent that there were difficulties for asylum seekers to have access to public services, including accommodation. So, these then became specific issues to particularly ask about at the next interviews. Additionally, the context was considered in order to assess its meaning and significance in the participants’ narratives. I must note that each interview was analysed separately and a list of the main points raised, was made before being compared to other passages with similar topics and which were

scattered about the other interviews in order to find any similarities or differences between them.

As I later identified it to be difficult to generalise across and between cases, regarding coding I chose to pay attention to the same words, keywords and ideas as well as themes or topics that appeared to be important within individual accounts and were used and reoccurred with relative frequency throughout the whole data set across interviews. Having already highlighted words, phrases or sentences and adopting the terminology of the participants with the aim at staying close to the data, codes were given meaningful names in order for any parts of the data that could relate to a topic to be coded with the appropriate label. Since codes permit the researcher to organize, categorize, sort, and identify the data, this process also provided an indication of the idea or concept that could be related to a broader theme or category. In many instances, in order for me to be able to tie everything together, I utilised research questions in organising the concepts and my analytic observations. For example, questions on social justice provided the analytic concepts to identify what I was potentially looking for across responses and how informants appeared to apply some of the core conceptualisations in relation to practice in general and more specifically to working with refugees. With regards to this, I tried to identify processes (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) that define actions, responses or events in response to situations or problems with the purpose of a goal within the data set.

Further, a comprehensive set of codes which involved different concepts, issues and ideas was categorized into broader themes. The analysis was conducted with a focus on not only the semantic content of data, focusing on the content of what is said and identifying common areas, but also its latent meaning, such as underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualisations, ideologies and so forth (Braun and Clarke, 2006;

Clarke and Braun, 2017). By drawing on both inductive (i.e. meaning that themes identified were linked to the data itself) and deductive (i.e. based on pre-conceived ideas and therefore evolving from the researcher's analytic interests and knowledge) approach, I sought, through iterative and reflexive process with the data, to create conceptual groupings of themes and subthemes in order to identify the patterns and relationships among them (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2013).

The themes were interpreted through the lens of previous research and analysis in critical theory and (mostly in the form of radical and critical social work) placing an emphasis on relevant historical, ideological and cultural context. So, specific attention was given to how problems were defined, represented and legitimated and how solutions were described and justified, aiming at connecting them to the broader context of power as well as the social positions of participants within existing power structures. Here, for example I attempted to situate what is occurring to social work practices under a framework with emphasis on political economy and how neoliberalism has adversely impacted on the jobs of those employed as social workers. In this respect, interpretations are inevitably also connected to my professional background as well as my theoretical and practise knowledge, and consequently I have had an active role in identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the data. For this purpose, I have chosen particularly vivid extracts, which capture the essence of the points I am demonstrating.

4.6. Research Limitations and Ethical Considerations.

It is important to state that interviewing a limited number of social workers and informants does not allow me to claim representativeness, hence the findings may not therefore fully represent all of those who work with refugees and asylum seekers. As a

non-probability sampling, snowball sampling is limited in terms of its representativeness (Schreier, 2018). Additionally, this sampling may raise some bias against selecting interviewees who are too well connected (Cornelius and Harrington, 2014).

Refugees' invisibility and voice within social services, procedures and policies, linked to issues of power relations and representation, as Krause (2017) has already argued, call for a shift to research and practice with refugees via participatory approaches. These approaches enable researchers to go beyond observation or even advocacy on behalf of subjects, but involve them in every step of the research process. Central to this approach is the value placed on the knowledge and perspectives of those who experience social injustice.

Also, arts-based pedagogies, which acknowledge the structural world, power and oppression, involve efforts to include participants and others who might be socially marginal as coresearchers and coproducers of research, both as objects and subjects of research. An example could be the work of Brazilian theatre artist and activist Augusto Boal (2008), using popular theatre techniques, as part of what he termed 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. Participants are involved in a process of engaging with, and in interactions with problem situations in order to change them along more emancipatory lines. This approach is based on Freire's principles of liberational education to improve practice in line with human rights (Ife, 2009) and inspire grass roots activism and social change by mobilizing marginalized groups and initiate political action (see Barak, 2016).

Oppression and dominance were challenged by social movements in the 1950s and 1960s, which disputed traditional forms of interventions and professionalism

seeing marginalised groups as passive victims (Thompson, 2002; Jeyapal, 2017). Thus, they contributed to the diversification of social work theory, and practice approaches, by finding ways to foster awareness of discrimination and inequality, while addressing oppression, the foundations of which are structured by imperialism and colonization, through collective action and political voice (Ferguson, 2008, 2012; Lavalette, 2012; Sewpaul, 2016).

In contrast to charity, which sees vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized people in poverty in need of pity and compassion, charged with assessing their deservingness, social movements are straightening social work theory and practice, as a community organising activity that is conscious of its political ends; acknowledging, through critical reflection the structural causes of inequality and oppression, the political reasons behind wider social policy processes such as austerity welfare, privatisation, anti-immigration sentiments against ethnic groups and bureaucratisation of social work. Simultaneously, social work contributes to social justice's aims, by raising concerns through social research and community work (Teloni, 2016).

When considering the embedded racism within Western migration control policies and practices, Jeyapal (2017) argues that social activism across dimensions of political and civil rights, social and cultural rights, and collective rights with resistance movements provides insights to the lives and experiences of racialized individuals who have divisive histories of violent, conflict, structural racism, colonialism, and genocide in the pursuit of social justice.

The research was granted ethical approval by the departmental ethics committee of the university of Essex (Ref 18006/ Appendix IV). Access was secured separately

with each organisation. I was also granted ethical approval by the three of the NGOs involved in research as requested.

During the meetings I had with participants, I gave out an information sheet (see Appendix II) and explained the purpose of the study, including what their participation would require prior to the interviews taking place. In this process, I stressed how the data would be recorded, stored and used as part of the PhD study. Data were securely stored and encrypted with a password only known to me. I stated that they could withdraw themselves and data from the study at any time without providing a reason. A decision like that, I highlighted, would have no effect on their work in any way. Moreover, there were occasions when their desire to speak off the record at certain moments of the interview was respected. In fact, there were also occasions when people explicitly asked me not to include some of the things we had discussed – something I was always careful about and which I fully acknowledged.

All participants were given the choice of place as well as being interviewed alone or in walking. In many cases our interaction with regards to conduct walking interviews was brief, which did not allow for the time and space for us to properly go through this process.

Risks and challenges were also faced during my fieldwork. To make contact with potential respondents and access activist networks, I initially tried to approach individuals for a chat who were mobilised in various forms of protest and strikes against social injustice when emerged – as a direct confrontation with the state's policies and its perceived authoritarianism. Driven by an activist approach, this, I thought, would be an excellent way to chat together with participants with our fist raised. My whereabouts and expected time of return were also shared with family members.

However, in discussing it with my supervisors this was considered a personal safety issue, due to physical violence, as much as it was for protecting my respondents.

Only the interviewees who gave their informed consent (see Appendix III) to participate in the study are included. All participants were guaranteed anonymity. To preserve anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used to identify the informants and agencies. Since some readers might be able to infer participants' or places' identities and organisations' names, I had, as my supervisors suggested, to protect respondents from such inferences, and in occasions, when this could not be done, data was decided to be excluded from the analysis.

I deliberately tried to be as attentive as possible to the power dynamics inherent to social research and think through the relationships I hoped to build with the participants. I needed to acknowledge the awareness of the current conservative political, economic and ideological context within which this research is located, where services for refugees are increasingly outsourced and privatised. Particularly regarding the walking interviews and when I accessed services or the camps, I relied on their professional expertise and asked them to guide me at every stage with the aim of ensuring that would not act in ways that could cause distress either to the participants or the service users. Several times walking interviews in services or certain environments such as streets and camps were restricted due to ethical considerations. For example, on one occasion this involved the privacy, consent and dignity of service users who were provided with accommodation.

With regards to the narrative approach, Creswell (2007:57) notes that ethical issues arise with regards to ownership of stories, how the author and participants are represented and credited, including who has the authority to change them or their

purpose. In response, the research needs to be reflective about their personal and political background and the research practice must be conducted in active collaboration with the participants, where members involved learn in a reciprocal manner and negotiate the meaning of the stories lived and told (*ibid*).

My intention was to be reflexive with the data analysis in order not to suppress the participants' understanding and interpretation when attempting to make sense of their lived experience and social contexts. In fact, my analysis and understanding were developed through interactions, cooperation and discussion with the participants, including their interpretations. By considering the circumstances, conditions, and goals of narratives, “themes” were constructed to give shape and meaning to subjective experience. Participants were respected as subjects with agency and consciousness as well as histories and intentions. As a researcher, I have the aspiration to understand the phenomenon from participants’ subjective points of view and to give ‘voice’ to subjugated knowledge, especially in the case of female informants.

The following chapters provide the findings of the current study. In Chapter 5, emphasis is given to the NGOs and their engagement with social justice related issues. The findings indicate that while NGO projects focus on short-term results their work remains palliative, often ignoring long term goals of social justice, refugee empowerment and social change. Interestingly, most organisations operate under a clear mandate exemplified in the language of democracy, human rights and participation as Chapter 6 illustrates, however they often fall short of meeting their objectives and social workers’ aims. In Chapter 7, social and immigration policies, including welfare services which stemmed from them appeared socially divisive and unjust to the extent they perpetuate, inequalities, differentiation and discrimination. Welfare practices were described to be imbued with moral stigma, where refugees

found themselves in a subordinate role, left without voice, and the ability to speak and express their desires. As a result, the discourses of race and racial difference are sidelined, or obscured. Chapter 8 focuses on current concerns over the unevenness of housing policies for refugees, presenting social workers with some uncomfortable dilemmas. The findings suggest that unlike social work organisations, frontline practitioners articulate and engage with a more inclusionary practice in relation to dealing with refugee accommodation, while at the same time raise concerns about institutional racism. Additionally, the process of promoting inclusion involved social action and engagement with social movements. Collectively, the activities of the practitioners' advocacy movement against the evictions constitute a countervailing way of organizing away from the regulatory practices of state institutions and policies. In this context, forming alliances with service users helped interrogate the supposed neutrality of law and challenged the limits of "charitable practice" while calling for broader reforms in national and international immigration policy.

The last chapter provides the conclusion to this study. Social work in Greece appeared to face significant constraints and contradictions in its ability to strengthen social justice given the pressures practitioners face to be non-political. However, social work also involved a degree of political involvement, with a focus on how to enable a person to take part in the society which they live in.

Section 2

Findings and Discussion

Research Objective 1.

Introduction. NGOs and the free market.

The neoliberal capitalist mode of production with its relentless pursuit of market values now encompasses the entirety of human relations and entails privatisation, deregulation, and primacy of the individual's rights and of economic development. As markets are touted as the driving force of everyday life, the fundamental role of the state is to promote market values throughout every aspect of the social order and regulate freedom with minimal interference, often by enabling non-governmental entities or private companies to provide services.

In the broader neoliberalization of society, the rationality of markets, entrepreneurialism, and competition is taken as the only legitimate frame for organizing the economy, public politics, and society towards privatizing the provision of goods and services.

An underlying predisposition towards the imposition of market relations into all areas of life is associated with the overall fragmentation of social rights which have been accompanied by a moral-ideological framework, calling to individual reliance and personal responsibility for aspects of social protection once governed by the welfare state.

Deep cutbacks, deregulation, and privatization associated with structural adjustment programs and austerity measures of the recent global debt crisis in the

centres of international capital are supposed to increase opportunities for private investment, and they are touted as the best strategy for economic growth. However, in terms of economic strategy, austerity has been part of a historical project of class struggle from the top in order to redistribute wealth upward (Harvey, 2005; Lavalette, 2019). It is refugees and migrants who are hurt the most by austerity and who are scapegoated most aggressively for its painful effects.

In the Greek case, during the period of prolonged recession, the state, following the rules of fiscal discipline and the policies of fiscal consolidation, has reduced its welfare commitment of basic universal provisions towards an inadequate and rudimentary social safety net (Missos, 2019) which targets scarce resources at those people living in destitution and devolved its responsibilities to family protection, networks of voluntary agencies and charities (Ioakimidis et al., 2014; Arapoglou and Gounis, 2017).

Consequently, and with a focus on the alleged personal inadequacies in a time of low economic growth, high unemployment and rising poverty, this trend has fuelled a corresponding emphasis on entrepreneurial freedoms through work incentives, resilience and skills. In doing so, citizens, within the calculating logics of competition to improve human capital, should comply with the neoliberal ideology and assume the hegemonic positioning of successful, atomised, self-seeking individual (Hardy, 2021).

In summary, neoliberalism is at the centre of hegemonic ruling-class ideas and emphasises individualisation, corporatisation, marketisation, competition, managerialism and privatisation and the focus on economic policy over social policy. It works ideologically to deflect a generalized anxiety and anger from its proper target and focus on the ethics of individual conduct against the risks of life within a

competitive society. The following narratives are bound together by politics in which the logic of the marketplace is recalibrated to exploit society's most vulnerable.

5.1. Privatization and Individualization of refugee care.

Within the context shaped by the consequences of the crisis and the residual state under neoliberalism, social workers developed individualistic practices that made use of and benefited from informal forms of solidarity, transferring the collective responsibility of the welfare state to the individual, the family, and the community.

The increasingly neoliberal individualisation of care without locating refugees' needs and interests in a wider context can undermine the collective ability of service users and communities to contribute through collective action to broader changes in social relations and the social order (Thompson, 2003), and then asked to provide their own solutions with minimal resources.

Without recognizing the contributing influences of social context or structural disadvantage on refugees' lives and experiences, this becomes a feature of a responsibilization and could involve practitioners working with individuals to adapt their needs to scarce resources. The more individualised responses to the problems of refugees, the easier it is to ignore social injustice along with other personal, social, political and cultural aspects that shape refugees' personal experiences.

Iliana, a social worker in Athens, on responding to lack of accommodation explains how she dealt with homelessness and the pressing requests for housing.

“I try somehow to encourage them on a different level, that is to build a network in which they can depend on their own powers-let's say a network of people sharing a common nationality. There are communities, such as those of Afghans which can help you, if you try to form a friendship or know people who can help you because they have experienced the same conditions. It will help you find someone to rent a house together. That is to find support on the local network”

While social workers have always offered individualized case-work services, the individualization of refugee care was well captured by Georgia's reflections on the prevalence of managerially determined activities with a narrow attention to the needs and interests of individuals.

Georgia, a social worker working for an NGO in the local area of Athens, admitted that social work's role with regards to housing requests was lessened to a bureaucratic one, with little professional discretion, leading to a focus on case management. As she explained, her role to refugees "*beyond applying for accommodation on your behalf, attach the documents needed and tell you what I have to say- such as go to that psychologist or to that psychiatrist in order to support your claim, I cannot do anything more*".

In her defence, she would explain to them that "*the decision doesn't depend on me or the service, but on the ministry itself which would send the request for accommodation to the UNHCR*". Following the pressures from refugees she would directly refer them to the UNHCR to demand their rightful place in accommodation.

Her responses appeared to be spontaneous expressions of helplessness; "*Unfortunately, not everyone can be assisted*", she admitted. "*What can be done from there onwards? Nothing. They get the same response. That there is nothing available at the moment and your request is on hold*", thereby referring to the long waiting lists and unsure outcomes of the bureaucratic procedures. In response, she would also refer refugees to *squats* providing shelter, help and food to refugees in such dire

circumstances (Arapoglou and Gounis, 2017:71). As Georgia explained “*We would informally tell them to go to squats [lower voice] which was something we weren’t supposed to do due to existing dangers, but there at least there they would have a roof over their head and a meal.*”

At the same time a workfare-orientated approach appeared as increasingly accepted as natural and inevitable to deal with the failure to address refugees’ legitimate claim on society’s support and welfare. Interventions were aimed at every person to take responsibility and prepare themselves for the labour market to provide for his/her own welfare. Georgia explained “*we tell them that they need to find work. To find opportunities and learn the language.*”

This role for social work offers no or little opportunities for working with refugees in asserting and protecting their rights and taking more power in their lives.

From a policy perspective, the so-called workfare relates to the individual activation by means of human capital, where welfare promotes the service users’ ability to sell their labour on the market that demands flexible employment (Jessop, 1999).

Electra, a social worker working with unaccompanied minors, when spoke about integration, implicitly shared the individualizing frame for employment in line with the neoliberal logic by asking.

“How is it possible for a man, who has come from a country in which he has never attended school, that comes to Europe, and decides to stay in Greece, considering the problems the country has - the economic problems, the rising unemployment etc. What can he do at school? Can we do something useful? For example, someone could come here and say to me, I was a tailor back in my country, I know how to sew. Do you remember the old colleges that existed in the 70s and the 60s in Greece? Where the child didn’t want to go to school and they didn’t want to become a doctor or lawyer, so their dad would send them to the shoemaker and learn a craft... So, this is the

way society works. Otherwise, what kind of hope could you have when you exist in a society where 99% have graduated from universities? What does Germany want? It wants cheap labour.

The individualizing work – moving people from welfare to paid work – that appear rational and reasonable works against the possibility of recognising structural problems and long-term solutions related to the social provisions and guarantees provided by the welfare state.

As Gray and Webb (2013c:210) explained, neoliberalism puts emphasis on personal security and its unrelenting focus on individualised agency “the individual should literally become like a market, calculating every social transaction to their own benefit”. The politics of austerity have been an attack on the living standards of the working class people, with harmful effects on welfare state, social work and service users-the “Others” who fell outside the Neoliberal normativity (Gray and Webb, 2013c:212).

Electra’s narrative also pointed to the racialized division within the working class. Most importantly, such an approach could legitimate and support the extension of the state’s powers, allowing the adoption of measures of governance that involve training and job placement in the agricultural sector for children⁸¹, which would otherwise seem excessively authoritarian. In other words, measures that are strongly

⁸¹ In the framework of the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) a pilot vocational training and on the job placement in the agricultural sector for refugee children aged 15-18 to develop skills and entrepreneurship that can benefit local economic activity developed by ministry of education (code MIS 5009755). Available at: <https://www2.aua.gr/el/info/efarmogi-pilotikoy-programmatos-agrotikis-ekpaideysis-se-prosfyges-15-eos-18-eton-me-kodiko-ops>

interested in policies that pledge employment for growth, while allowing domestic power structures and class relations of exploitation to remain firmly in place.

The narrative revealed the ongoing reification of migrants in a market society that largely reduces them to commodities and turns them into fodder for profit. Economically, they offer an exploitable workforce for European employers, which has been an important aspect of the EU border regime and global neoliberalism. Additionally, this seems to be particularly important, if the context of the national labour market policies in which refugees are working, is to be considered.

The ruthless selection practices of the European border regime of controls and detention, De Genova (2015c) notes “serve to sort out the most able-bodied, disproportionately favouring the younger, stronger, and healthier among prospective (labor) migrants.”

Greece has long demanded migrants to low-skilled jobs (illegal work) and flexible labour for seasonal agricultural work to increasing agricultural production and help to keep wages and agricultural product prices low. An immigrant labour force for marginal, unstable, exploitative, and uninsured jobs does not compete with native workers’ and is independent from trade union practices and labour rights legislation. In such an environment, the low cost work does not entitle the worker to basic social security, nor to benefits either, as their earnings are usually below the minimum level required (Triandafyllidou, 2009; Kasimis, Papadopoulos and Pappas, 2010; Kasimis, Papadopoulos and Zografakis, 2015; Nori and Farinella, 2020:Ch.3).

5.2. Short-term thinking and provisions; Social services promote welfare dependency; technocratic and administrative social practice.

On asking Antonis if he had the time to work with cases and build relationships, he responded:

“Look, the truth is that we haven’t worked with cases so much. I mean to get someone and see him for more than 5 times. We have very limited cases. We try to avoid it, because what I have seen happening in all the social services and confirm it, if I am wrong, is that we are papering the beneficiaries, we get them by the hand and escort them from one door to another. And this is creating dependent people for example. I try to respond to certain claims and then I say ‘farewell’. Always informing that the door is always open in case you need anything else”

He indeed, implied the importance of service users gaining greater control over their lives and escaping institutionalized services. Social work was viewed not as an end in itself, playing a passive role as an instrument to provide security from risks. However, Ferguson (2007:396) stresses that “deploring the ‘dependence’ of service users and emphasizing their responsibilities can legitimize policies which users experience not as empowering, but as punitive”. Moreover, “it can lead to the undermining of collective service provision” and the development of best practices for support (ibid:398), including reducing opportunities for social work based on relationships.

Antonis justified this practice as being part of the way the service works, as it was medical-oriented, and thus social services were provided to supplement other services.

Accordingly, the practitioner was coerced by the authority of the employer into rigid instructional and routinised practices, characterised by fragmentation, specialisation and deskilling of nominally skilled jobs. Practice itself, when it falls into

a form of instrumental reason and is limited to being a means to an end, is empty in terms of morality and ethics. Such an approach that acquires its meaning only through its connection with other ends, offers only temporary relief as opposed to addressing the political nature of and dealing with long-term solutions or social aims for service users in the face of social distress.

“I will work with the request. This will be my starting point. That is, things like, I want to see a social worker- Yes, what would you like? – I don’t know, what can you offer me? This case will be rejected from the beginning. [...]. So, only when someone is a patient here, they can be supported by the social service.” (Antonis, social worker).

Practice was also narrowly defined by Electra, reducing social work to the dictates of the service, supported and subsidized by the state. She focused primarily on addressing single issues by arguing that lacked interest in working with service users who appeared unwilling to assume responsibility for themselves.

“What we can do is come to terms with the existing reality and do whatever we can. And this is my goal every time I come to this work, for this is what I was assigned to do, with the best possible way. And some boys I could help, and some others I cannot help because they don’t want it, because they haven’t chosen it....”

Broadly speaking, all respondents described their day-to-day work as engagement with a broad range of duties and responsibilities, including individual or group “counselling”, “case management”, “referral”, “program design” and “coordination”, “peer training” and “supervision”, “student supervision” and “management”.

The job description is populated by artefacts, symbols, and emotions indicative of conflictual social relations. The following comment from Rea - a social worker - illustrates the variety of practitioner’s responsibilities:

“What do we do? I have been trained for all sorts of things. We do tax return applications, register children at schools, escort people at hospitals or public services if the social mediators are not available. We arrange medical appointments, to keep their records and be alert that there is progress. To rearrange them. To make referrals to other organisations for their networking and satisfy their needs in necessities from the supermarket. There are too many, that I cannot think of them all. It is not only one for sure. To make sure and solve conflicts that might arise among the residents”.

Being a social worker in Greece, might be like or used as “Swiss Army Knife”, as Areti put it, or “*being like a god*” for Alexandros, describing his previous role in an accommodation setting. As he explained, “*you are scientifically responsible for the service users, you have your cases, person in charge for the rest of the staff, responsible for matters concerning the maintenance of the building, for catering. You do all of them*”.

5.3. Restrictive NGO funding as a means of social control.

On a different occasion, while integration was discussed with Electra in terms of the lack of political will as the contemporary interventions were firmly fragmented and did not respond to people’s needs, this inevitably entailed explicit or implicit judgments about what a normal state of affairs would look like.

She firmly placed herself as “realist”, feeling politically unrepresented within wider structures of power and domination, especially in relation to global market economy and liberal capitalist ideology. While cultural, social and political elements were not considered ‘independent facts’ from social work practice, they were presented as objective, quite apart from processes of power and actions of resistance to pursue socially distributive policies - both in relation to income, but also to power and influence, radically different from existing government policies.

Her statement must be understood in relative terms, as no actor possesses full autonomy in an interdependent world. The problems that social workers and service users experience are primarily caused by hardships that are entrenched in relations of inequality and exploitation. In southern economies, based on tourism, commerce and shipping large agricultural and tourist sectors, educated young persons have a poorer chance of getting a job (Kasimis and Papadopoulos, 2005). Following three economic adjustment programmes, the working class in Greece is facing rising unemployment levels, low wages and a mismatch between their own skills and those required by industrial economies. Both native and migrant populations were badly affected.

Instead of focusing on strategies that target social change against a backdrop of growing social inequality, the social provisions thus accorded are described by Rhea as narrow and fragmentary for the neediest, rather than universal. In a context that lacks a welfare state tradition, the residual social programmes employed by NGOs (Polyzoidis, 2009) have largely promoted individualistic approaches that are more stringent and conditional to active citizenship, while serving primarily desperate and marginal populations. Interventions to targeted groups are not based on solidarity, but are driven by compassion, characterised as moralistic, since poverty is seen as a result of personal failings. Thus, they are designed to push the poor into the obligation of “workfare” with heavy emphasis on training and retraining (Garrett, 2021:129-132).

Such approaches that have emphasised social control, are built on a means-tested basis and agendas of exclusion, serving to delineate the ‘deserving’ from the ‘undeserving’ poor, since they do require for an individual to be “identified” as able to integrate and live without recourse to state resources. Rhea stated that,

“Vulnerability has always been a priority here. I told you the criteria. Health problems or abuse. A homeless lone mother with a baby. What has changed... this setting has always been related with integration. We are responsible for receiving the family and preparing it to stand

on its feet. During the last years, there has been a distinct emphasis on integration. This means pressure for Greek language, emphasis on their skills and where someone could be employed. There are cases that we cannot work towards integration, but to respond to immediate needs, such as health problems. These change all the time. However, we work with integration. This doesn't depend on us. We have the tools, but we cannot implement them, because we are not the ones who can control who is coming in and who is not. Once we had the possibility to choose. To have them interviewed and decide if someone can be in this setting or not. This cannot be done any more and we respond to the demands of the UNHCR..."

Additionally, with regards to integration the major task for the social worker, clearly, was personal reform in order to function properly (successfully) in the larger society. Rhea said that,

"The accommodation here lasts 6 months and can be expanded for 6 months until we see what we have achieved. There are flats that are basically for the follow up. When someone leaves this place, we support them for a little while until she/he finds employment or something else. But the requirement for this is for someone to have made progress, have learnt the language, their children to attend school. So, that we can say that somehow, they can stay in the country and talk about independence. For full independence."

In the context of the current debate, professionals still had to grapple with a number of challenges. In this regard, and this seemed a fair question to ask, was about labour exploitation that renders them dispensable and deems them as unworthy of humanity or dignity. Rhea explained,

"This whole thing is extremely sensitive. As far as the adults are concerned, we inform them that there is labour exploitation, and we give them a heads-up. We had a case who didn't listen to us, and he went to some guy to pick up peaches. He kept them there for a week and he didn't pay them. He came back with a number to call him back. Our lawyer called us. The guy had disappeared. They lost their money. If they call us here for work, we will ask, is it legal? Is it going to be insured? If not, we would prefer him to tell it directly to the person, so he can choose. Before that, we would have informed our service user that is illegal to work without insurance. From then on, you can see how you are imagining it. When we do that, we look that they are insured. Now, this also happens. Some would find work as

gardeners. We have talked to their employees, and they said they will be insured. And the salary would be good. The UNHCR though says that when you work, cash assistance is not provided. It is 90 € for the focal person and 50€ for the rest of the members in the family. And they stopped going to work out of fear that they will lose the welfare benefit. And this is where institutionalisation begins. I say to them, there you would get 700 € now you get 50 €”.

In Rhea’s narrative, social work is well-positioned to work with oppressed populations and help them to assert their interests against conditions that favour exploitation, discrimination, and oppression. Within a self-reflective framework, emphasis was given to the capacity to identify and then question existing power relations.

Social action that merits policy responses to overcome oppressive power relationships for equality here was not considered, despite the contextual realities of the violations of human rights. The support of the hegemonic capitalist economic order and accumulation for those providing and receiving services was supported and legitimised when exploitation was approached through the position of individual responsibility, choice, and problem-solving methods.

Moreover, welfare provided by UNHCR appeared here to trigger a dependency syndrome, with some beneficiaries eventually loathing the idea of fending for themselves, thereby derailing prospects for promoting self-reliance.

Refugees appeared to prefer the receipt of reduced benefits to the jobs that are available and have earnings noticeably higher. The refugees were invariably seen as acting “irrational” to the conduct of profit calculation and utility, and to take on responsibility for economic activity in the labour market.

Operating from the basis of rational self-interested calculation that deliberates action and behaviour, refugees were required to behave in ways consistent with the rational administration of bureaucratic systems, and professional expertise who were in control over the content of services for self-interest and utility maximisation.

Me: I have noticed from the discussions I had and my experience that service users are moving from service to service to get the same services.

“I would characterise it- I don’t know if it sounds awkward- a syndrome that characterises this population. Because no matter how much we try, and other workers in other organisations, to offer the best information this won’t change by 15 social workers and different organisations when working with same requests. I believe for them, it is a matter of psychological satisfaction- that is they increase the possibilities to have their requests satisfied- for example their accommodation” Alexia, Service manager.

The participant further explained that since this is happening regularly, they try to “avoid” them when they are accommodated or supported by others, unless there is an emergency. If refugees are supported by other organisations, she noted that they redirect them back to them, explaining that they “*deprive us from time spent for others sleeping rough*” for example.

While the story connected the lack of resources available to meet existing service users’ demands equitably and the workload of practitioners, the narrative ignored the reality of the way in which people come to be in the position of ‘needing’ such services and the way in which such services are used.

It does not offer a serious commentary about the sheer desperation that follows the disintegration of the welfare state, accompanied by an ever-expanding poverty and insecurity, which interferes with large numbers of people in Greece. The story placed the blame for insecurity and isolation on individualised acts.

If concrete expressions of despair often appear deeply “irrational”, this only points to the irrationality of the negative effects associated with the welfare system.

Additionally, services have been analysed in terms of rhetorical emphasis on efficiency and competition, while serious questions regarding the political culture and economy are omitted, that treats human beings as disposable and redundant, denied of the rights and dignities accorded both to citizens and even to humanity. Refugees are expected to act in a responsible manner as individuals who rationally assess the costs and benefits of their acts.

Against the rationality assumptions of the neoclassical tradition, Marx’s argument had been that individuals struggle to make their own history ‘under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past’ (Marx, 1852[2000]:329). Since their experiences are influenced by the material relationship within their new country of residence, such practices should be understood as part of resistance to oppression and exploitation.

Katie, speaking from the waiting zones for the internally displaced, where people are treated and managed as nameless victims devoid of identity (Agier, 2011:213), informed me of the fact that what refugees do apart from queuing in the breadline, is to roam around to ask - one could raise in this situation, and yet at the same time the most fundamental one - “*Basically, how can I leave this place*”. Getting different responses, she notes, creates confusion and, in this sense, conditions of tension within communities, living in the camps.

“The answer you will often get, and you might hear by social workers, is that they are “acting”. Which is something you expect- I don’t say it doesn’t happen, but it is here where you have to step in and say “But they have rights, and these are being violated here!

[...] And if we assume that some instrumentalise the system, it is impressive they find the way to do it” Katie’s, manager.

In this context of the camps, the actions of the refugees themselves to mediate the most important decisions about their life and death, according to the participant, expresses a refusal of the identity assigned to them- that of the victims.

Under such circumstances, which close down any sense of responsibility that is attentive to the suffering and needs of those who represent the “human waste” (see Bauman, 2003) to a neoliberal capitalist society, it is recognised that what should be challenged is the normalized and widely accepted violation of human rights and dignities that inflict real horrors, enslavement, and injuries upon the lives of those who are poor and incarcerated.

By ignoring the refugees’ warnings, and whose basic needs go unmet, practitioners did not take a broader politics of exploitation, including the intersections of race and class, into consideration and thus did not offer a critical translation of the big picture.

Provided by the analysis above, the dilemmas, practitioners face, Katia explained, are caught between their efforts to promote independence and autonomy as being tied to the individual subject and which has been a key route to challenging ‘paternalism’ and their involvement in order to protect the basic rights of the individuals and expose enduring misconducts. In a system where the discourse of vulnerability determines the minimal conditions for services, being identified as not vulnerable, refugees are risking their exclusion. As she elaborates:

“On the one hand you know, what you have to promote is to try for someone to get his/her life back and on the other, what is happening is that if you don’t mediate [between the services] they won’t have access at all. It is not enough for the other to support his/her right, as it doesn’t mean that she/he will have access at the end, because she/he

can support her/himself. In the end, they will say she/he is not vulnerable, and they will abandon her/him.”

It is not simply the model of autonomy being utilized, at issue here. Adding to the complexity of this, is the acknowledgement of the lack of basic services, arising within the contemporary social context, determined by its social policy. These are related to issues with a particular focus on protection, against sexual gender-based violence and mental health and practical concerns with regards to the ways assistance is provided to the refugees.

This brought a scene into her mind, where practitioners had the same aims, yet she felt that they were competing with one another.

“You have to prove you are vulnerable [...]. It is ridiculous what is happening in a meeting every two weeks- not always, only when there are spaces available for housing. There is a meeting with those who provide accommodation and those who want to make a referral there. George, it is like an auction. ‘No, mine is more vulnerable, because of this and that.’ ‘No, mine is more vulnerable!’ And you are called to decide if cancer is more serious than the victim of rape or torture. [...] It is extreme, but this is what happens [...] and then you have to prove that they are more vulnerable from the others. Schizophrenia!”

The provision of services is alienated for practitioners, trying to decide between the validity of a range of competing claims on resources. Processes are guided, not by known and agreed criteria, such as needs and human rights, but rather by arbitrary and discretionary processes, regulating refugees’ exclusion and inclusion. This means that meeting someone’s needs will lead to the neglect of some others. These not only make human suffering the focal point, but also resemble often antagonistic auctions, characterised by increasing and intensive competition for limited resources. The reality of scarce resources implies a limit to the exercise of rights, which in turn require that resources are made available to fulfil them.

5.4. Impact of competitive “quasi” markets.

As refugees try to navigate, on their own, in an increasingly fragmented and incoherent social landscape, organisations providing social services are ruled by imperatives of competition and commodification, pitting practitioners and services against each other in a struggle for survival. This is how Lydia, a social worker, holding a managerial position, reported a growing antagonism and competition between NGOs and other organizations for funds, where the latter is the decisive factor.

“I want to say something else that I have had in my mind for a long time now and if I don’t, it might not depict how things are. I want to say that we also must think of the profit. The resources. The money in relation to the refugee crisis are enormous and the competition is huge. We have a culture that doesn’t promote complementary actions and the corporation. What are you providing? - so that I can do something else, and thus to complement each other’s services and have good result.” Lydia, Social worker.

In this context, partnerships and alliances that the “refugee crisis” itself necessitated, are difficult to affect, and Lydia designates a politically induced condition that starts at an individual level, rooted in the wider socio-political environment and culture.

“And we must also discuss our own culture and DNA and how we have learnt from our schools and families and so on... So, there could be an excellent framework, but what matters is the people that implement it each time. The human makes the difference. You may have the best policy and it cannot be implemented because you don’t have the appropriate people to implement it”

Her overall argument about competing interests is grounded in achieving the things that the society values, meaning participation and integration. The way in which a society is organized, and functions can affect the way in which people can individually or collectively define their own needs and identify solutions. In such an

environment, “*where our actions are fragmentary and there is not a regularity*”, Lydia with regards to practical and moral (concerning what ought to happen) effects on refugees, further argues that it is difficult to “*cultivate to them the philosophy they need to participate in these processes too, in order for their integration to be effective*”.

On the basis that participation in the theory and practice of community work is a human right, meaning to exercise human agency as ‘human capabilities’ and act for themselves, refugees are not only being denied a foundational aspect of their humanity with regards to worth and dignity, but they are also ignored in efforts to positively contribute to a more just society (Hugman and Bartolomei, 2014).

While institutions, such as family and education were strongly criticized, the participant appeared unable to give answers to these vital demands, falling into relativism. To achieve integration and the achievement of economic, cultural and political inclusion was considered as something produced by individuals and communities themselves.

“I can’t understand where all this starts from... it is what we say, the chicken made the egg or the egg the chicken? And you don’t know where it starts, we have our responsibility, they [refugees] have their own, but we are inclined to say to others that they must do this or that, but we cannot see how we can change”

Even though the capacity to be able to exercise autonomy and moral responsibility is recognised to refugees, the violence of globalized capitalist economy that depends on vicious and desperate processes of exploitation and repression, was not

recognised. This approach hides the dismantling of welfare systems. In this extreme, little attention is then paid to expression and representation in the political arena forms of collective action, involving grassroots groups and collectives, or anticapitalistic and alternative movements that struggle for basic economic and material resources to cover the most elementary needs for people's autonomy and welfare.

For Sophie, antagonism is also a deeply felt "reality." It is a consequence of and at the heart of market processes about the correct or appropriate role and activities to be performed. It is expressed in both service closures and recompositions, which according to Sophie, are touted as more results-oriented, on the basis of quantitative metrics. Within the contemporary neoliberal framework, the social worker is forced to a pressure of skill training and crisis management that aggressively narrows possibilities for shaping policy outcomes to either protect or improve living conditions for refugees. As a result, practitioners neither have a control over their work, nor its product, through which they reaffirm their role in meeting or providing for certain needs.

"This is a big topic. I will answer with an example, because it is complicated, as well as its description. Some elements are mine and some from my colleagues. I used to work with victims of violence. There was a difficulty in finding money. While working there, we built expertise, experience, cooperation, networks. The funding weakened. So, one day I was told that by the end of that month the funding stops. You will be placed on a different position. At my work, this means that I need to tie up loose ends. When the time comes, I become a vocational councillor. The funding is provided for 6 months. The demands are strict and the funding more rigid. You must produce work. there is a demand for quantitative outcomes to prove your work. That you met with 530 people in six months. I try to do that. And your service says to you I did not find money for the programme. This practice is problematic, there is no continuity in the services. It is difficult to establish relationships with the people.

This relationship ends abruptly. There is a practical difficulty, but all that also has an ethical hardship. It has an emotional impact.”

Activities whose value must be demonstrated on the basis of quantitative and standardized measures depersonalize and alienate the practitioners, since the product of their labour is beyond their control and practice and are becoming increasingly fractured and impossible. “*My experience*”, she explains, “*was with people who had experienced torture. And it was impossible to have more than 3 sessions a day. It was emotionally difficult. And there comes the manager and tells you that you must have sessions with at least 5 people*”. In this way, it appeared that there is a kind of ontological assertion of capital at the level of spirit and being.

“It is that we are considered to be production lines”, Sophie explained. “It is linked to the demands of the population. The numbers are big. At the same time, there is antagonism among the services for the hunting of funding. There is an inconspicuous war happening out there. So, when everything runs so quick, and they want me to meet 1000 person in six months for example, this is a moral issue for me. It is moral because I know that I cannot provide qualitative services for a huge number of people, in such a limited time frame.”

The struggle against this truncated conception of provided services carries in turn implications for virtuous practice on the basis for responsive and responsible professionalism, lacking integrity (Hugman and Bartolomei, 2014:26).

This conceptual paradox, one of needs set against human rights as a collective responsibility and a moral right, was expressed by Alexandros. While human rights discourse was used in the front line of negotiating for welfare services against racist discrimination, his narrative echoed profound dichotomous thought about them and their relationship with social work.

Me: Do you feel a professional of human rights?

“Me, personally, this period of my life, I feel some contradictions. I believe that bankrupt rightsism is not good. The bankrupt. Only rights. And not [considering] what is happening in the country. This is where I ended up. Maybe I don’t feel a professional of human rights. I feel a social work professional and that I help people figure something out, as I would do with anyone. Honestly. How I feel with what I am doing comes very often. During a period, I was feeling like a social work administrator, a manager, an asshole [...] Someone who was trying to pick up the pieces, a frustrating thing. This is how I was thinking of it, how I was experiencing it.”

In need of creating a system for their genuine participation in which *“it would be impossible for the state to keep its eyes shut”*, he elaborates on the ways that people with different migrant backgrounds are kept separated and not allowed to influence or transform one another as they are excluded from democratic practices and the public life. On the one hand, he views refugees currently being neglected and solely relying on humanitarian aid (clothed and fed), instead of being considered as future citizens of the country, where they should be allowed to fully participate, in order to make choices for themselves. On the other, he stressed the example of integration of the *“second-generation”* migrants and their right to citizenship, only for those meeting certain criteria- a challenge, that naturalises inequality and difference resulting in hundreds of thousands of children of migrant origin not having the right to Greek citizenship. Both of these processes were understood as undermining the refugees’ social integration and enhancing phenomena of social exclusion, since they are suppressed and ignored.

By reflecting on an occasion of a public event where refugees took part and engaged in community activities, he came to realise how: *“Important it is for these people to be visible. To be able to be heard. To participate. To be active. [They do] Not*

[want] *to be entrapped in this condition- in the breadline. Excluded from society, from activities. They want to be active. They have blood in their veins too. So, they need space to develop. Time to integrate. We must stand by them.*”

5.5. The commodification of altruism expressed in the costing of social and health care.

Provided it is not the unintended result of governmental and administrative incapacity, John, by using the concept of integration as a point of reference, pointed that the limited intervention with regards to the overall psychosocial wellbeing is as much a deliberate policy of apparent passivity and quasi-victimization, as it is a neoliberal policy to the management of human affairs.

“What is the reason you have psychosocial interventions in your programs? What does integration mean? It means issuing AFM, AMKA, and being registered with the IDIKA. Meaning insufficient social rights? You don’t want that. You want a person who was a professional in Syria or a scientist or a youth studying or even a worker to have equally, as Greeks, a good level of life [...] Because you know as a social worker, when someone is dependent on benefits that are not even close to what is called the universal basic income, then the person will find resort to things that won’t help either his/her family, let alone the social cohesion. According to our view, ok?”

Pursued domestic policies in the economic and social domains are considered essentially responsible for increased social inequalities instead of offering the socioeconomic infrastructures that would enable economic independence and the integration of the refugees in the Greek labour market and society to escape the constraints of an often-narrow social milieu. Essentially, he argued that the quality of our social relations is closely connected to material conditions and inequality, resulting in unhealthy societies with social problems.

“What AMKA does, is to link a citizen with the NHS. Is this citizen contributing to the NHS? They are using services that are not financially covered. [...] When you have people who suffer, and use AMKA, and rightly do so, and have surgeries and tests, or being admitted to hospital, all these expenses are transferred to them. [...] Someone has to pay that debt. For example, a refugee with cancer, will he/she pay or not?”

Indeed, lacking such documents, many practitioners mentioned, refugees cannot access health, welfare and support services – their lives are truly lived on the margins of the margins.

However, it has been noted that within the existing framework, a restrictive approach to integration has been framed within the practice of recollecting documents that seemed to be at the heart of recent responses to migration and integration. This practice was accused, often rightly, of suppressing or failing to facilitate the exercise of social rights. The point made here is that the State with the operation of a market economy has taken an instrumental approach to people who are vulnerable and abdicated its responsibility for social welfare provisions. In the case mentioned above, John explained that such expenses are eventually to be paid by each service user, since the cost is transferred to the tax office. He thus argues that the notion of integration does not go far enough in promoting social rights, undermining possibilities for social justice.

It is argued that the experiences of those seeking social services, who are without rights and recourses to support, should not be separated from economic security and the impact of welfare cuts and class inequality.

“We are focused on the most vulnerable. So, the people who are most likely to get sick and die are people in poverty. [...] So, we must know people living in poverty that got easily ill, and it is hard for them to get employed, and it is easier for them go to hospital for surgeries

and charge the system that has its budget cut in half. When the budget in 2014 was 5 million, now it is 1 million and even less for the vulnerable. And this budget is allocated per clinic or hospital or region. So, we have to get the full picture before we talk about integration.”

Yet there is wide gulf between the human rights granted by law to all and the concrete practices experienced. The state, by reducing for example funding to health care, which has become more costly to those who depend on it, often lacks any acceptable social service with respect to the adherence to fundamental human rights. In John’s narrative, there is an overwhelming moral and practical case for reform, since too often the social, political, and economic underpinnings of people’s problems are not considered.

*“For me this is a paradox. It is irrational to talk about integration and exhaust the discussion about integration on three issues: AMKA, AFM and IDIKA and unemployment card. [...] We are 20 experienced scientists on these matters, and we discuss with and listen to 2 agencies of the UN supporting the ministry. I am very sceptical. Why should we consider integration as the issuing of AMKA? We are both Greeks and know what the OAED does. No one goes there to find work. [...] I don’t see how **poverty** can be solved. The exploitation and the catastrophe. I will do these steps because they are important, but it cannot be dominant in the political discussions. What should be dominant is how we can tackle poverty, social exclusion, and the empowerment of social cohesion. This is integration.”*

Spelling out the desperation of many who live in poverty and are exploited, criticism is directed to the state, as well as to other institutions, including social work, since the influence they can exercise on the decisions on economic and social policy taken by the state, is minimal. In this account, policies appeared to be produced through ‘top-down’ processes by “experts”, where they discuss and decide what is good and hardly take cognisance of all, including refugees’ social, economic and political conditions.

Developments should emerge from practices that take more than just a snapshot to inform policy making. He argues for changes that facilitate a shift from destitution to a system that provides access to better social services for all with respect to being able to satisfy basic needs. With regards to the latter point, this cannot only be achieved through meaningful paid work, but also through dignifying and relational processes. These are concerned with processes of inclusion that encourage capability and capacity in order for individuals to take part in economic activity, especially in labour market participation.

“[...] must allow their access to employment, the protection of their position in the labour market, in the education with opportunities, their degrees to be recognised- because many graduates cannot have them recognised in Greece” [...] “You must have integration classes. Classes for those over the age of 40 or 50. How are they going to be employed? Because, you don’t want to have them all picking up oranges. How many are going to do that? [...] Let alone, the majority are children and women. [...]”

Moreover, as John notes, the full realisation of welfare demands an understanding of the problems that lay behind and is not possible without economic and social rights. *“(refugees) most of the times are people who happen to be poor. On the one hand, they come to Greece, and they need protection, but on the other, the point is what kind of opportunities you have created for both the locals and them to flourish”*. Unless social policies and services actually exist, these rights cannot be met.

Its use also inevitably entails explicit or implicit judgments about what a normal state of affairs would look like. More generally, social policies with emphasis on the equal right of all, to have their basic needs implemented, should be extended beyond these groups in extreme circumstances and well beyond the nation state, implying significant limitations in current supranational institutions. Advocacy here is related to commitment to the possibilities of politics for affecting significant changes.

“This is where the advocacy lies. Universal rights for all. Equality. It is not ok just to give you the opportunity to learn Greek with my own terms, and not with the terms you can respond. So, the discussion is broader, and we must see on the political level what kind of Europe we want, and what kind of (welfare) systems we want. Because these must be inclusive, and we all should be part of”.

The ongoing implementation of authoritarian welfare policies that refugees experience speaks to the maintenance of inequalities and therefore to the perpetuation of injustices. These involve the social and material structures in which institutionalised domination and oppression operate. *“Someone who was being in limbo for 18-20 months or three years as an asylum seeker, is that ok? Can he/she see his/her future in Europe? We have to see it holistically; we have to see the conditions of reception.”* When he considers successful social policy aimed at improving the lives of refugees, there is a far more complex picture.

“I believe that very few things have been capitalised. I believe that we only see opportunities to create settlements. To have them built with cement and tar. Is this how we see the whole situation? Or do we see people who are exhausted and need our help, and we need to find ways to help them and support them on the basis of what the EU and our democracy stands for? This is what we believe we need to support the human being, and this should take part in the community. In this case, we need reception services and infrastructure, but I don't know if all the money the EU gave to Greece will provide for the child or the family sector the next day”.

His approach is based on rights, on society as whole, rather than on an underclass, and his recommendations identify government action as central to tackling structural inequalities, so that the lives of the people who are currently worse-off are improved. This approach appears to be focusing on addressing the more serious challenges faced by vulnerable groups in society, including issues around unemployment, underemployment, inadequate shelter, homelessness. Additionally, his

perception about the EU is characterised by strong contradictions. It was portrayed as oppressive to which immigration and border controls are integral – especially given the lack of reception infrastructure and welfare support. but in need of reform, potentially representing shared communities and institutions with common values, including recognition of basic human rights.

John argued that social work would best promote strategies for poverty reduction, given that, in their view, poverty is central to most of the woes faced by people using social services. So, the aim is to advocate for a socially responsive state, which here, at any level, is perceived as a problem creator. The Greek state, instead of redistributive and transformative economic policies, is pursuing constrained neoliberal policies, resulting in extreme levels of poverty and inequality.

This is in stark contrast to social workers' narratives, whose first priority is not to challenge poverty and social inequality, but are reduced in the main to the chance someone has to engage, for example, in paid employment. The issue of when people are responsible for their own plight, is also of great practical importance, especially when people are employed mostly in manual, unskilled jobs well below their levels of education and qualifications. Often these applications are limited with regards to the state of the social world, where there is compelling evidence of that disadvantage. However, this certainly does not imply a fundamental transition to a new social and economic order.

There is a broad consensus among practitioners that social policies have largely lacked relevance and appropriateness, rendering the interventions proffered by the professionals providing services patently ineffective, particularly when viewed in the context of the fight against mass poverty and the divisions arising from racism and the

victimization of migrants. More generally, all the respondents put emphasis on the state itself for being responsible for how issues regarding refugees' integration faces challenges. They point out the authorities and policies for not responding adequately, or at all, to the phenomenon of migration in a way that would enable their integration.

Research objective 2.

Understand the varied narratives and conceptualisations of social justice articulated both at institutional and practitioner levels.

A common theme in practitioners was the correlation between their own professional values and the overall broader statements, goals, and objectives of the organisations they worked with. In most cases, practitioners' interests and motivations appear to be in line with their organisations' normative (moral, ethical, and political) public positions and analysis of the refugee question.

Reisch and Jani (2012:1135) have argued that “Social work’s master narrative influences ideas about science, knowledge and reason, and concepts of normal behaviour [...]‘local narratives’ through government documents, mission statements and the cultural artefacts of social service organisations.”

Organisational mission and vision statements are not only used for normative means, but they are also political statements that reflect specific stakeholder interests, aims and values at a formal level. They are adorned with goals, objectives, activities, or outcomes and this is the means by which services are delivered. Especially, regarding their reflected content, trends, themes, and patterns these are framed in ways particular to their own social, political, and institutional context.

6.1. Social Justice and NGOs’ vision and mission statements.

It has been argued by Bourdieu (1989) that “*there is an official point of view [...] that assign everyone an identity*”. This is expressed by discourse in authorised by the state accounts, publications, and accounts that “*have a legitimate point of view*”

which “*everyone needs to recognise, at least within the boundaries of a definite society*” (ibid:22).

Mission and vision statements were explored through each organisations’ websites where they were located. Only the statements of the 11 organisations I visited were considered, which means that other publications, press releases and forms of publication were outside the following considerations. Hence, the sample does not aim to cover the full range of perspectives among organisations, but it provides a brief account of how varied and complex normative documents help shape practitioners’ actions.

By deconstructing (Dominelli 2014: 258-259) incomplete and contrary arguments, these, following their reinterpretation were seen in a new light with the hope of clarifying certain ambiguities and reconstructing them, so that they reflect different possibilities for practice. This is deliberately a work of synthesis of themes which situate the “place” of the matter dealt- that is the conceptualisation of social justice within the overall welfare context.

It must be reminded that the organisations’ operation carried the full legitimacy of the state behind them, as carriers of the values of, and providers of services for, the state.

The values reviewed that underpinned organisations’ programmes and goals were filled with notions ranging from ensuring that marginalised service users were treated respectfully and fairly, with respect for their dignity and diversity to the voicing of human rights violations for equality of opportunity. Access to needed information, services and resources as well as inclusion through commitments to health, education, living conditions were acknowledged for contributing to wellbeing and empowerment. Participation, accountability, and advocacy as a means of advancing human rights,

unity, solidarity for issues related to poverty, unemployment, discrimination and economic/social exclusion were emphasised. Other notions of injustices were also involved and contextualised with a focus on the global context in relation to war, violence, peace.

For the most part, such self-serving statements, although sharing some common discourse, were written, and framed in ways that reflected the organisations' own connections to institutional needs and causes for their engagement in public-private partnerships. They argued that their vision was a force for the public good, supporting civil society, giving voice to the vulnerable and disadvantaged, against discrimination and ensuring fair opportunities. The concept of social justice did not appear explicitly or defined to describe their activities.

Equally, overtly political ideologies did not appear. What constitutes social justice was open to interpretation. Progressive priorities seemed to be grounded as rights with strong individual focus making their commitment to equal opportunity policies or anti-discriminatory practice, explicit. These values appeared not to be separate from or inconsistent with each other; rather, they were elements that may be observed in different interventions and approaches. However, once interpreted and clarified, these norms are no longer considered vague.

Organisations were motivated to a large or small extent by social justice issues, including human rights, poverty, social exclusion and the disadvantaged. Socioeconomic injustices in the form of exploitation and marginalisation seemed to be an overarching theme focusing on practices that are *“tackling” “preventing” “eradicating” “social” “financial” and “economic” “exclusion”* as well as aiming at the *“(re) integration”* of the most *“vulnerable”* and marginalised individuals, such as migrants, refugees, youth, Roma, sex workers and Greeks in poverty.

The notion of *vulnerability(ble) concerned with* needs appeared 15 times, providing an awareness of the impact of disadvantage and exclusion on people's lives. Race and gender including other complex differentiated characteristics like “nationality”, “religious and ideological beliefs”, “political opinions”, “gender identity”, “sexual orientation”, “origin” were stressed to expand access of service users to their services without prejudice. Social justice in this respect, seemed to be related with equality, concerning “discrimination” by processes of othering, without services being restricted to certain individuals or groups.

In fact, they express the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) that ensure respect for citizens regardless of such characteristics of identity and positionality, including ethnicity.

However, most statements tend to ignore social arrangements around wealth and power that give greater attention to global inequalities and injustices, and whose activities undermine the wellbeing of those using social services. They provide no evidence on ethical consideration about how wealth is accumulated and distributed. On the contrary, they reflect a liberal perspective on social justice, relating to issues of human rights, fair access and support for marginalised groups and members of society in the meeting of basic needs.

This implicitly means that by correcting the outcomes of injustices, everyone could have equal access to chances and opportunities for autonomy and independence.

However, this could constrain their progressive aims. When working with disenfranchised communities who had been exposed to or unjustly treated by methodical modifications of employment laws, incriminated social rights and the abolishment of welfare system, setting out strivings that satisfy utilitarian public benefit based on “innovative” and “philanthropic” “voluntary” social action in partnership

with “*private and public*” actors “*for a society of equal opportunities*”, and “*a Europe on solidarity*”, seemed provisional.

If social services were to act justly, dedicated to eliminating poverty, social inequalities and injustices would have political connotations associated with egalitarianism and the redistribution of wealth to minorities who suffer from oppression and marginalisation. This requires an understanding that inequalities and social hierarchies are structural, requiring ongoing political pressure against harmful institutional practices (Ioakimidis, 2012: 243-257).

Acknowledging the realities of social inequalities and the impact of material disadvantage on vulnerable, marginalised groups and individuals is a central component of anti-discriminatory practice, which from socio-cultural, interpersonal and structural points of view, recognises the significance of difference and diversity for equality and social justice (Thompson, 2003:81-112). In fact, the contested notions of “*class*” “*disability*” and “*poverty*” related to inequality, appeared to be less contentious and depicted in more neutral terms, regardless of their social, political, cultural and historical context. An attention to structural and discursive understanding of power relations and their impact on oppressed and marginalised populations is necessary to redress oppressive relations at the individual, cultural and structural levels (Thompson, 2003).

Concerning to the services provided, broad inter-connected themes emerged from these publications. “*Humanitarian*” and “*comprehensive*” services involving health, education, access to services and basic goods, housing, and autonomy were considered in relation to notions of social exclusion from labour market, welfare, and that of poverty as well as with social integration and cohesion. Services provided like “*job counselling*”, “*information*” “*accommodation*” “*financial*” and “*material*

support” seem to respond to “*individual*” “*humanitarian*” and “*medical*” immediate needs through “*personalised counselling*”, “*empowerment*” as well as “*moral and psychological support*” in order for service users to make decisions about “*opportunities*” for their “*well-being*” and render themselves “*self-reliant*” and “*safe*”.

In essence, the services were focused on problem-solving objectives for people who live “*under poverty*” and “*experienced victimisation, “isolation” and “racism”*” among others, since due to disadvantage, services were restricted from “*reaching and realising their full potential*”.

Social justice appeared to be related to equal opportunities and inclusion through education and employment to reduce social exclusion. For those members of society who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or marginalised, these would enable human participation and development when provided. Rather than focusing on political strategies in favour of redistribution to address poverty and challenging the individualised nature of social exclusion (see Garrett, 2002), the focus was on integration through participation in paid work, into mainstream and unchained social and economic structures. In times characterised by the retreat and the reorganisation of the welfare and institutionalisation of neoliberal ideology, the responsibility organisations had, appeared at implementing existing social policy measures to respond to problems on a humanitarian level and deal with people’s immediate needs as service providers.

In such context, discourses on social exclusion and equal opportunities in a free-market environment could lead to the depoliticization of social work against structural causes of social exclusion in which many personal and collective failings are embedded and result in imbalances of power and resources that divide society.

Wealth and income inequalities increased between and within countries. According to the Oxfam Report (2018), 42 billionaires and owners of multinational enterprises had a fortune equivalent to that of the poorest half of humanity (3.7 billion people), while the richest 1% continue to own more wealth than the whole of the rest of humanity. On the same report, economic inequality between men and women indicates that women are over-represented in low paid and less secure jobs that have further increased because of the austerity policies. Equally, women were subjected to systemic discrimination and violence on the basis of societal norms and beliefs that undermine their status and abilities. Importantly, they have not only got fewer economic rights without the protections of employment, but those with immigrant background work under precarious conditions, due to legal and social barriers which prevent them from unionising (ibid).

From the point of view of Marxism, such enormous class-based contradictions are related to the capitalist mode of production. These involve social oppressive relations of subordination of those who must sell their waged labour to survive, and those who care for them - mainly women- by those of the ruling class who have control over the means of production and which they extract surplus value from, through exploitation (Lavalette, 2005; Ferguson, 2011).

Ignoring existing structural and institutional arrangements that do affect the conditions of refugees in the country suggest an individualistic viewing of social

problems which are primarily treated as temporal and personal, curtailing further efforts at establishing new social relations for the general benefit of the population.



Image 3. *Fuck NGOs' Charity*⁸². It is common for NGOs that employ social workers to work with “the system”, beholden on government for resources even rhetorically opposing it. (Briskam, 2019). Source: personal archive.

Critical social work's major thesis is that action should go beyond the micro-individual perspective to challenge, in alliance with service users, the existing social relations to meet the needs of people and challenge individualised welfare ideologies. Such ideologies reject explanations that attempt to locate the causes of injustices and the social problems of poverty, racism, unemployment and homelessness in overtly antagonistic social relationships.

The recognition of oppressive reality is a prerequisite for developing critical consciousness, meaning “Learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against oppressive elements of reality”(Freire, 2005).

Goals that go beyond the service delivery with attempts to promote greater social equality and restructure the framework that produces inequalities for the well-

⁸² Solidarity is articulated through a message that appeals against the Christian and Humanitarian traditions of charity that characterises private conduct. It stresses the discrimination of the welfare state policies in failing at providing support and housing to refugees on the basis of social rights. The new decision of the Greek Ministry of Migration Policy (2019) regarding asylum seekers accommodation signalled forced evictions from camp or apartments within a month from the delivery of the asylum service's decision to those who have been recognized under international protection conventions. Additionally, according to the law, their payment of monthly allowance was going to be terminated. Grassroot movements, activists and NGO workers including social workers alongside migrants, refugees and asylum seekers held to anti-racist political action and social protest against forcible evictions aimed at preventing homelessness of refugees and demanding human rights for the promotion of long-term plans to integrate refugees into the social and political life. Rights and dignity were understood as public social responsibility. Public space allows the refugees to reveal and expose the exclusionary nature of citizenship by using it for political purposes to make their voices heard to promote local and community solidarity. [Personal diary 16.04.2019].

being and welfare of all, include notions like “*social change*” “*solidarity*”, “*collective values*”, “*democracy*”, “*individual, political and social human rights*”, “*violations and concerns regarding injustice*”, “*racism*”, “*extremism*”, and “*far right rhetoric*”.

They do not only take a critical appreciation of the context in which social workers work, but operate with an open and responsive way for “*open*”, “*equal*” and “*tolerant societies*”.

Service responses were aimed at strong connection with government, networks and society through “*participation*”. Importantly, they denote a rhetorical break with the dominant political messaging of right-wing populism, where refugees are depicted through racialized discourse as an existential threat to the fabric of society and have steadfastly been vilified as the root cause of numerous societal ills. These political discourses have been accentuated at recent times of social and economic crisis (Lazaridis and Veikou, 2017). In that case, they reflect commitment of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice to social work’s ideals, such as counteracting stigma and the protection of vulnerable groups within established infrastructure of social services and welfare (Dominelli, 2018).

To this, it is important to note that historically, the profession of social work in Greece was the outcome of practices informed by the development of national consciousness with strong features of social control (Ioakimidis, 2008).

On one statement, both “*Greek*” and “*European policies*” were directly linked to “*poverty*” and “*social exclusion*”, since the former explicitly appeared to be based on “*suppression*” that inhibits the promotion of “*social collaboration*” and the development of “*personal values*”. Equally, fostering appropriate measures in public, involving “*Society*” “*the Greek state*”, the “*EU institutions*” and the “*international community*” to tackle poverty and social exclusion reflect a broader macro perspective

on issues which were understood as political. “*Integration*” was also depicted as a “*bidirectional process*” between society and marginalised community professing egalitarian and reciprocal ideals which reflect concerns of “*achieving social cohesion*”. The emphasis was on developing interactions between different peoples and cultures. It is in fact deemed as a prerequisite for “*mutual respect, understanding and acceptance*” through the recognition of “*roles-duties and rights*” at all levels, including “*social, economic, political, civic and cultural*” dimensions for refugees in need of special support in realising their social rights like “*education, job market, and access to services*”.

While integration is never the two-way process it claims to be between the host community and the refugees, this represents a certain point of departure that tends to focus on institutional issues and the role and influence the central state has over the design of the services delivered, in order to better cope with services users’ needs and/or to overcome obstacles in the delivery of existing services. It is important to stress here that human rights are axiomatically depicted as interdependent and interrelated, as well as indivisible, equally important and not hierarchically classified.

Statements tend to make strong rhetorical claims about “*empowerment*”, “*advocacy*”, “*defence*”, “*respect*” and “*promotion*” of “*human*”, “*individual*” and “*social rights*” as well as “*dignity*” that are consistent with broader considerations of social justice practices.

They were also supportive of service users to be treated fairly under the law by promoting right-based initiatives that protect vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in order to access rights that would otherwise be denied. In that sense, they provided a reference point for determining the scope of state responsibility for well-being. “*Advocacy*”, “*lobbying*” and “*campaigns*” aimed at promoting changes to laws and

government policies due to existing gaps and inequalities for interventions and measures, or to raise public awareness in shaping public attitudes to immigration towards strengthening the pre-conditions for equal citizenship. Social justice seems to be grounded on human rights action that is more about protecting and advancing the rights of individuals to participate and make decisions affecting their lives rather than bringing “*relief*” to them.

Rights though, do not exist in a vacuum. They are not abstract, discretionary concepts. The fundamental second-generation rights are social, economic and cultural and include the rights to reasonable levels of education, healthcare, and housing as well as minority language rights, as embodied in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)⁸³ of 1996 and Articles 23-29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that all humans have in theory (under international law), appear to be unenforceable in practice (Trispiotis, 2010:8) for refugees which can make it all more difficult to break out of poverty and precarity. The obligation to fulfil means that States are accountable for eliminating social inequities and must thus take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights; they are incremental because they have direct financial implications and represent long-term aspirations.

⁸³ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains both civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights. As a separated treaty was adopted on 16 December 1966 ultimately and came into legal force in 1976 (Greece ratified the ICESCR in 16 May 1985 and acceded to the European Union, thus becoming bound by its founding treaties in 1981). Article 2 on the principle of ‘progressive realisation’ requires the state parties unable immediately to fulfil rights prescribed by the covenant to ‘take steps’ towards achieving the full realisation of such rights and report on their progress. They call the states to respect the rights and dignity of people covered by the social security benefits including social insurance (Article 9). ‘The right to health’ is considered a priority irrespective of nationality, ratified in Article 12.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (1966). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ICESCR.aspx>. The full list of ratification status by Greece can be accessed here: [Treaty bodies Treaties \(ohchr.org\)](#) Greece has neither signed nor ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Yet, while the discourse on rights carries significant implications for people in relation to the state and a counterweight to overt racist stereotyping, they might undermine and displace the debate away from its political and social root causes. From a Marxist perspective, Hanieh (2018) supports that arguments in defence of migration on the basis on human rights and universal norms regarding respect and dignity, frequently reinforce implicit categories about ‘deserving’ and ‘non-deserving’ migrants. Example of that right-based language is the prominence of anti-trafficking and anti-slavery discourse about migration used for the tightening of border controls and the heavy militarization of European borders. From this perspective, migrants’ worth is instrumentally measured in relation to the needs of the global economy and the national labour markets. Classed, engendered and racialised categories including that of migration and illegality must be viewed as endemically constructed processes—both materially and ideologically – of capitalism that are being reinforced for capital accumulation, which generates deferent forms of dispossession. In this respect, contemporary migration is not approached as an important socioeconomic issue for the state and ruling class interests involving significant implications for authoritarian responses to mobility, such as border securitisation and migration policy. Equally, it is not seen as a significant part of the international working class bound up with diverse intersections that mark systemic gendered forms of violence and precarious class exploitation (ibid).

One statement about the mission of social services to refugees emphasises the social collapse and breakdown. In particular, it recognises that “wars”, “conflicts”, “environmental disasters” and “prosecutions due to gender identity/sexual orientation, nationality, origin, political or religious beliefs” have influenced all aspects of refugees’ lives and driven them from homes in the first place. However, these factors

seem to be related only with the fundamental social conditions of how crises were experienced at the point of origin. In contrast, what was ignored from this reality, was the underlying structural necessity of immigrant labour to the rich countries of the North via imperialist expansion for wealth production and accumulation that war and the systemic legal, political and psychological patterns sustain (Castles and Kosak, 1984).

For social work with contextual focus on poverty and inequality, there is the need for the acknowledgement of colonialism, neoliberalism, and continuing forms of imperialism. That is how historically the failures of slavery, racial segregation and sexism of advanced capitalism have led to global divisions of power distributing resources along the West-South. In the light of these divisions, the prosperity of the former is reproduced whilst the destruction of the infrastructures as well as the living conditions of many non-Western countries perpetuate the poverty of the latter. In doing so, these practices lead to forced displacement, human rights and ethnic violence (Kamali, 2015).

People's movement is not only the outcome of circumstances, but constitutive element of imperialism and global neoliberal capitalist accumulation that causes dispossession at the global scale. In a more closely connected and interdependent world, internationalized social problems, environmental disasters and political crises linked to industrialised capitalist growth in one location become problematic—often in new ways—in other nation spaces (Dominelli, 2010).

Effects of capitalist development that are articulated as “*crises*”, such as “*financial*”, “*refugee*” “*migrant*” or “*humanitarian*”, demand recognition. Rather than understanding such crises in a narrow manner as framed strictly through humanitarian lens and abstracted from any political conditions of human vulnerability whatsoever, it

should be noted that such crises obscure series of structural reforms for privatisation that have previously been difficult to be implemented.

By taking Agamben's political philosophy (2005) about the account of sovereign power and the state of exception, when the use of the term *crisis* is concerned with a (security) threat, it is itself a technology of governance, not only in economics and politics, but in every aspect of social life for the creation of a new social order.

The language and events of a crisis itself signal the slow disappearance of meaningful political action (Humphreys, 2006:678) divorced from the intimate connection with the responsibility to transform the conditions that shape the crisis in first place-poverty, inequality, and alienation by displacing accountability away from social contracts and legal conceptions with several political effects.

'Sovereign' acts of domination or coercion by suspending the law are conceived as supposedly provisional measures. Their severe imposition may serve to solidify a politico-ethical doctrine that today's political conditions appear to necessitate, and in which governments may act in ways that in ordinary times would be outside the normative justification of the law (Agamben, 2005:26-29).

In other words, basic rights of people, and conditions of safety for all, involving legal, political, and social norms could be reduced to a minimum; a realm of lawlessness according to Humphreys (2006), that suspends the moral legal order. The decision to suspend the law enables means and institutions to justify and legitimise emergent as well exceptional policies to respond accurately to the reality of an exceptional situation- a "*crisis*" to save the social and legal system from radical threats.



Image 4. NGOs: Racists, Cops, Humanitarians. Three in one.⁸⁴ Source: Personal archive.

Considering the emergency frame of “*crisis*” applied to the refugee and austerity policies towards the violation of human rights that permit inequalities to persist, the values in the statements referring to “*philanthropy*” “*impartiality*”, “*neutrality*” “*independence*”, “*universality*”, “*love*”⁸⁵ “*brotherhood*” and “*objectivity*” seem to stand outside politics where every excluded group claims recognition and expresses demands against the established order. Hence, services seem not to have a direct involvement as institutions obliged to support rights and on how someone is protected in accessing services.

The principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, as provided in international law, are an eloquent reflection of the values and morals that have

⁸⁴ Oppression expressed in culture and language as a process of how groups are represented and constructed in language and imagery. By focusing on the ambivalence of NGOs role, the genre raises political question, regarding the actions upon those considered subordinate “Others” by enabling us to contemplate on the authority, position and consequences of responses that deny refugees the legitimacy of their own voice and in turn reproduce oppressive hierarchies. The concepts not only depict dehumanising and impersonal social relations, but they are also associated with a terminology that reinforces a masculine-based conception of the world. At the same time, it discourages acts with positive initiative, devaluing and alienating the humanity of the groups involved in the provision of services.

⁸⁵ αγάπη [agápi]

underpinned traditional humanitarianism to the atrocities of war and aspired to save lives and comfort human suffering. Scott-Smith (2016:4) explains that each humanitarian NGO has its own articulation of these classical principles around emergency-focused relief. In each case, the principle of impartiality is based on the idea that assistance should be provided not by considering race, ethnicity or gender, but in response to need (Ibid). The strict respect of the principle of neutrality allows the provision of basic aid in conflict-affected regions to humanitarian actors, by abstaining from political and ideological disputes in order to be trusted (Scott-Smith, 2016:4; Chouliaraki, 2013:12).

On the nature of political dimension of humanitarianism and solidarity, Chouliaraki (2013:10-12) explains that its roots go back to 18th century “culture of sympathy” with the rise of capitalism. This gave rise to a new moral discourse, thought and practices which had both Christian and philanthropic roots about the goodness of human nature and the importance of treating the distant other as “cordial strangers” instead of enemies. Solidarity in this sense, Chouliaraki explains, was based on a morality of altruistic benevolence and apolitical assistance on the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. This version of solidarity as “salvation” in response to atrocities of war (2013:10) stood in contrast to political “solidarity of revolution” aspired to change the social relations of economic exploitation. These were informed by “grand narratives of solidarity”, such as Marxian and anti-colonial theory for social justice seeking to social change (ibid).

The conception of human within the emergence of modern humanitarianism in 1863 is understood as a category grounded on the principle of “common humanity” where the individuals are equivalent to each other and deserve moral recognition (Rozakou, 2016:90). However, this often obscures the capitalist relations which

underpin social relations and transcends the significance or even the relevance of social inequalities, since it reproduces rather than challenges the historical relations of power between the West and the developing world.

Historically, under these principles, the provision of humanitarian support appeared to be a moral imperative, which assumed that some exist in a natural state, as helpless victims in need of relief due to perils, rather than because of the inequality distributed across the globe. However now, humanitarian organisations are now firmly, and in many ways self-consciously, part of politics [...]intended to transform states and societies” (see Barnett, 2005:734).

Mission statements reflect progressive ideas. The role and the scope of social work responsibilities were related to the fulfilment of the organizational missions, allowing possibilities for practice that promote social justice. Clearly, they do not permit oppressive and anti-discriminatory values for asylum seekers. There was an explicitly progressive alignment with respect to believing in equal human rights for people and a desire not to discriminate against them. These ambitions have become entangled with professional discourses as narratives of social work and to a certain degree appeared as more congruent with social work’s value base and the social justice agenda.

Given the current restrictive legislative and policy frameworks characterised by systemic abuse, social workers find themselves in that they can largely depend on the IFSW (2014) and IASSW (2018) themes of social justice in the quest for ethical social work practice with refugees and asylum seekers. These explicit sections on human rights and social justice can serve as justification for social work action (Webb, 2009) when their expertise is challenged and called into question. Through critical reflection, they can be used in challenging social conditions that cause social exclusion and

stigmatisation, while highlighting the negative discrimination refugees face (see Briskman et al., 2012). This is also embedded within the professional ethical code which states that social workers should have an impact on the way in which social provision is provided by employers, social policies and politicians to enhance wellbeing and promote social justice (GASW:7). All NGOs employment posts for social workers required government-issued license⁸⁶ and commitment to the social work code of ethics, following the application to GASW register⁸⁷. Against litigation and government control, they can enable practitioners to practise in non-oppressive ways, recognising the diversity within communities and groups, while giving emphasis on empowerment based on their specific needs in relation to contextual factors (Dolgoff et al., 2012).

Most importantly, the definitions provided by social work's global institutions⁸⁸ are dialectically connected to the lived realities of practitioners and the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Consideration is given to inform policy developments and to secure better outcomes for people seeking asylum, while also simultaneously aim at shaping the evolution of local agency activities and priorities in line with the professions' ethical commitments to social change (Healy, 2008; Jones and Truell, 2012).

Furthermore, as they represent a source of contradictions defined by and tied to historical, social, cultural, and institutional contexts, they allow practitioners to engage with emerging debates on standards of ethical practice that challenge the fallacy and relative arbitrariness of underlying ideologies and political agendas which are strongly

⁸⁶ in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 23 (2) [1992]

⁸⁷ Law 4488/2017, art. 110. provides that to be able to practise as a social worker in Greece, individuals must be registered with Greek Association of Social Workers (GASW).

⁸⁸ International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

related to social structures which maintain oppression, and working to alleviate that oppression (Ioakimidis, 2014).

6.2. Social worker's views on the value base of Organisations and spaces for political action.

Athena, talked directly to social work's inescapable political nature closely aligned with a human rights approach that the organisation where she was employed, supported. The reluctance to address the political dimensions of practice had brought tensions within the profession regarding the role of practitioners to deliver on the purpose and aim of social work.

“And there is a matching with the profile of the organisation. The other social workers I have in mind have this kind of political thought and assertiveness in their practice. The organisation has that kind of spirit too. And I have seen people leaving because of that. It is a mutual relationship” (Athena, Social worker)

The discourses and visions that mobilise social change were not so easy to combine with professional practice. This appeared to be the case for theories that reflect and contain political assumptions and reinforce the profession's commitment to social justice through political participation and activism against the dominant neoliberal capitalist vision. Iliana, for example, questioned how radical social work could have a practical intent and translate its emancipation tasks in a form that is intelligible within social work organisations.

“So, for me, even though I haven't come across... it is difficult to defend radical social work, that is to address the root causes of problems. As citizens, this is what we should do, but as professionals, given we are provided with an area of work, this is what we are going to serve, and you cannot go against the employer.”

It has been observed that activism that goes beyond individual advocacy is incompatible with professional practice (Mendes, 2002:18). Requiring any

fundamental change to existing social structures is related with citizenship rights. However, the history of profession had long history in activism and is considered not only an ethical practice, but also an established form of macro practice, both inside and outside the social work profession, involving; political participation, advocacy and collaboration with grassroots movements, consciousness raising (Reisch, 2002; Reisch and Jani, 2012; Greenslade, McAuliffe and Chenoweth, 2015). Valtonen (2008:98) underscores the importance of activism for communities that are often without channels of 'voice' in mainstream society, and with low rates of participation in the political processes where their demand can be articulated and promoted.

In an increasingly contentious political climate, practitioners taking an overtly political stance in their practice against the hierarchically organised institutional forces which shape them, could be discouraged to act on the values of the profession. Iliana made the point that there is difficulty in performing roles or functions in a situation in which the organisations have a monopoly over the immediate provision of basic goods and services for people suffering severe deprivation.

“There are the organisations that do activism and that are not professional. And there are those that claim that they do advocacy, and this is not done. It cannot be done. You cannot receive money from the UNHCR or the state to implement programmes and then show up and say the UNHCR has the worst programme because it ignores the rights of refugees. You cannot do that because you have been authorised to do a certain job. Why, do you take part into this? Are you going to say about the rights the UNHCR does not respect when it has given you the money to implement them and you don't do that because of the restrictions that have been set by the UNHCR? What do you do? So, you either say you don't do it, and you make complaints or... shut up. What can you do? And if you don't keep silent, they will do it. They will cut the funding. This is how things are. You cannot both implement programmes and practise activism. It cannot happen. You can implement them and make suggestions for improvements. But you cannot make complaints via a press conference. Only suggestions, provided you have the evidence. I wouldn't deny

funding, as long as I could assess what I was doing and making suggestions that if they were right, I would be listened. I don't think that any organisation wants to do any harm to society"

When practitioners are faced with conflict, they openly challenge contemporary welfare policies or go against organisational directives, they are faced with dilemmas. Getting funding by the state almost appeared to be equated with complacency or unquestioning compliance. She thus believed that activism and collective actions are not allowed. On the contrary, she deemed it necessary to engage in policy practice like growing an evidence-base of what she thought could be the most efficient way to achieve change.

On the other hand, Rhea stressed that they had embraced rights to association to improve their working conditions and get paid. Faced with insecurity, they found the opportunity to organize around the concept of decent work.

"We have done that. When we had been unpaid for ten months, we withheld our labour until we were paid. And most of us took part.

She said that what they would hear very often from the organisation was that their priority should be the needs of the service users. Instead, their needs must be understood as connected to social services provided that decent work and the ability to work are enabled by the organisation. As noted, human rights cannot be conceptualised as simple engagement with the service users *"Otherwise the rightism you sell, collapses"*.

Katie notes how the organisational context shapes how problems and interventions are defined with regards to the refugees themselves. Since organisations work as "service providers", this mandates types of services, who can be served or not, as well as the rules and regulations for receiving services. Contrary to the institutional

responses to refugees, she noted that refugees experience the context of grassroot organisation differently- as more humane.

“PICKA⁸⁹ is an independent structure and very interesting in how they work with the volunteers. And indeed, it is a space that is more humane. Their approach is more humane. And that because you don’t have service providers. You will not see what happens in other humanitarian organisations where they [the refugees] must do this, or I will demand that from them. The whole environment is more humane.” (Katie, Manager.)

Both Lydia and Hera lump together social works’ values with that of their organisation’s interests, and expectations, such as practice without discrimination and respect for humans.

“The way we work are the values of the organisation and if someone reads them, they will see that these are the values of social work.” (Lydia, social worker.)

“I don’t think that there was ever a need to put our values forward in order for something to be done. I could give an example that I don’t know if it is relevant or not... but on the other hand everyone knows what the organisation is and what its values are” (Hera, Legal advisor)

Lydia made the claim that their practice is not characterised as philanthropy. In addition to humanitarian assistance, deontology, the professional setting, and principles providing guidance on how practitioners should understand and realize their commitments. Her commitment to social work involves both ideas about the human nature and the relationship to society. These are based on helping those in need, closely identified with human nature, undermining positivist measures of practice effectiveness:

[...] For us here, Humanism is a core value. The core of our practice is the human being and what we are trying to do; it is not done as

⁸⁹ A Solidarity camp with a degree of normative and institutional autonomy. The mission states that they aim at providing community-based solidarity spaces. Its vision is to inspire society and to expand a solidarity model which promotes equality, trust, justice, respect for each other and for the environment, creativity, empowerment, and active participation. The organisation is not among those I visited. see at: <https://www.lesvossolidarity.org/en/who-we-are/mission-and-vision>

philanthropy. It is done in a professional setting- with principles and rules and deontology. And all that to be able to support- not the one hundred, this could not be achieved; But we can make it for the one. (S)he is not a number, (s)he is human. [...] Being in a place where I can help other people via my role - because this is in our human nature; to help others who need us, but I do that within an organisation that has a framework, has the principles, the philosophy, that we discuss in a team that I appreciate and respect” (Lydia, Social worker).

Lydia appeared to respect difference without implying structural considerations and recognises common human needs, while acknowledging individualised-based approaches and efforts of addressing them. At the same time, it appeared that there was the requirement to retain an objective, and scientific approach to practice.

In conclusion, one would agree that publicly shared mission statements reflect progressive ideas. The role and the scope of social work responsibilities are related to the fulfilment of the organizational mission, allowing possibilities for practice that promote social justice. Clearly, they do not permit oppressive and anti-discriminatory values. There was an explicitly progressive alignment with respect to believing in equal human rights for people and a desire not to discriminate against them. This, in turn, then leads to denouncing philanthropic discourse as narrative of social work, justified in terms of professional practice and deontology.

Funding influenced organizational activities and provided services, result in services that either refuse services from a marginalised population or work *on behalf* of service users. Due to that, it was raised that there could not be an alignment between radical social work values and professional practice in terms of dealing with social problems.

Workers' rights to association and organising for better working conditions was explained as a resolution to the demands for human rights and betterment of social services.

Research objective 3.

Explore how Greek social workers' understanding of the concept of 'social justice' informs their practice when trying to navigate complex ethical-political dilemmas in the context of NGOs.

7.1. Otherness- objectification- institutional racism.

Refugees are, I will argue, often relegated to the domain of the excluded. These groups are often dematerialized into refugee statistics or homogenized and silenced under the rubric of voiceless refugees.

Refugees have tended to be defined as 'other', that they are politically, socially, culturally, even historically different from 'us', with no rights to make sense of their experience in their own terms. Often, their life experiences could be overlooked and subsumed within the worldview of the dominant group, reproducing binaries that ultimately help to reject the migrant "other" and reinforce the 'othering'. The events are focused on the issue of the migrant "other" in social services and the limits of his/her presence in society.

Many participants with concerns over the difference and the diversity of cultures paid attention to multiple forms of "*Otherness*", offering useful critique of the oppressive aspects of social work. In this respect, contradictions, and further limitations to realising its emancipatory intent that include mutual recognition and dignity in social services, policies and practices towards people seeking safety and refuge, became apparent.

In the context of postmodern social theory, according to Agger (1998:37), "otherness" refers to the fact that all theories of modernity within Western capitalist democracies, including positivism and rationalism, were constructed within a

framework of privileging the rational, logical subject, free will, and potential liberation embedded in enlightened reasoning, formal liberties, and economic progress. As Sewpaul and Hölscher have commented, while modernity, as a paradigm, has pursued equality among autonomous subjects, it has led to the practice of exclusion and marginalization of the “Other” on the basis of Western hegemony and claims to perfection, development and progress regardless of the diversity of individuals in the world (cited in Astray et al., 2014:35).

In social work, Dominelli (2007:8-9) makes the point that, “Othering” facilitates dominant discourses that privilege insiders and advance binary *us vs them* conceptualisations of the world, social relations and inequalities. The exclusion of outsiders as part of that process can penetrate the routines of every day practices making the exclusion of outsiders seem natural and immutable. At the level of macro-analysis “Othering”, Dominelli (1998b) supports, is associated with racism and the active process of racialisation. It involves exclusionary policies, practices, ways of thinking and acting by which people, different from oneself, are attributed with subordinate status and are deemed “inferior”, thereby resulting in denying their social and political rights as well as access to welfare resources. At the level of the individual, such practices are salient and tend to omit discrimination and social work’s capacity to oppress. They also allow members of a disadvantaged ethnic group to be treated as dependent beings, relying on people superior to them, who take decisions on their behalf without justifying them (Dominelli, 1998a) In a highly regulated ideological area of social work practice, negative representations of asylum seekers by social workers, Masocha (2015:92-103) demonstrated, were presented through discursive strategies as reasonable and justified.

Irrespective of intent, Kamali (2015) supports that, ‘Othering’ processes involving discrimination, racism and xenophobia should not be reduced to psychological “abnormalities” as they are essential properties of European societies of which racism and xenophobia are part, resulting from slavery and colonial wars of privileged dominant groups (colonialist and imperialist European Countries) to justify capital accumulation and inequalities over scarce resources. Moreover, exercising economic and symbolic violence is a necessary condition of power hierarchies and domination in society, legitimising such xenophobic and racist actions (Kamali 2015).

“Othering” discourses breeding nationalism and xenophobia often also depict migration as a national security issue (Wiebe, 2009; Bourbeau, 2015). European policy frameworks and public perceptions of migration are backed by ideas of ‘threat’, being ‘uninvited’, as well as states being ‘overburdened’ by immigration (Green, 2020:8-10). In Greece, ethnic discrimination, nationalism and xenophobia were also evident before, but especially during the years of economic decline and austerity (Callinicos, 1999; Ellinas, 2013).

I met Electra, a social worker working for unaccompanied minors, in the context of a “ghettoised” state-led refugee site, located far away from the city centre. Responding to the question of how she defines social justice in practice, she put emphasis on the relationships between practitioners and the service users. At that point, an apparently spontaneous process of “othering” in her narrative began to take shape. Despite her alleged commitment to the principle of “*the best interest of the child*” to pursue “*close relationships with the minors*” on the basis of dialogue, she illustrated the process on how to relate to the “other”-the unaccompanied minors who are placed within the refugee camp; in the “*field work*”, as she explained.

“My goal is not to learn about the lives of other people. They have said all these things so many times. They have told me all that while being at the Reception and Identification Centers (RIC), and I am now in a position to understand that all these are “múfa”⁹⁰. You know what I mean. So, I don’t insist on that too much” (Electra, social worker).

While stressing the bureaucratised processes minors undergo upon their arrival and putting the emphasis on the need to foster trusting relations, in practice, to give voice to this invisible group of people is limited to the underlying assumption of what she considers permissible and legitimate even before their stories are heard or their experiences known. The narrative surrounding their stories is that they should be approached from an assumed position of suspicion, conveying certain forms of truth or significance.

In terms of the language used, the underlying assumption made was concerned with stereotypes that were shaped about refugees as “undeserving migrants”, regardless of the social, political, historical and economic context of a world characterized by grave injustices and huge inequalities. As it became apparent, this was driven by some practitioners’ belief that many were not in fact genuine asylum-seekers, but were economic migrants; something to be viewed as problematic in several respects including assumptions about welfare scrounging, immorality and criminality among asylum seekers. Language-and thus, ideological work used in relation to the refugee’s arrival and reception utilised metaphors of a homogenous group that evoked images of natural disasters or threat e.g., *lélapa*⁹¹, “*tsunami*”, “*mob*”, emphasising on bureaucratic administration processes against a dysfunctional and insufficient migration system.

⁹⁰ Bogus, fake, a pretence.

⁹¹ “*λαίλαπα*”, *conflagration*

As the interview progressed, and against the images of “malice” “neglect” or “indifference” refugees appeared to exhibit, soon these were followed by the need of “identification” processes about “vulnerability” with emphasis on “management” for eligibility regarding services.

By paying particular attention to the specific ways in which refugees demand medical care and assistance from the system, I was told by Electra that on the one hand this provision is open to abuse and on the other, its chronic usage leads to dependency.

Independence from assistance was crucial, to reaffirm someone’s control over his/her life, particularly through their own efforts. She was of the opinion that hardships were important as they would empower people, making them able to claim their independence. As she put it, describing the refugees who were now working as translators: “to be able to find solutions at their wits’ end” so, “people could get stronger from that effort”.

As she told me, this has changed following the recent policy developments⁹². Far from being considered a rightful and protective provision, she explained that it was understood as an expected demand. “On the contrary, there are those who arrived after 2015 who would say- Get me my money! Get me my money! And finally, all that has been turned into a conflagration”⁹³ she emphatically said. In this contrast, between

⁹² Since October 2015, the UNHCR operating in the country is running the ESTIA accommodation scheme offering more than 25,000 accommodation places in various parts of the country. Partners of the programme apart of the NGOs also included municipalities, which participate through their municipal development enterprises and other schemes. Initially, the ESTIA programme referred to the provision of accommodation to beneficiaries of the relocation programme. Since 2016, it has been expanded to Dublin family reunification candidates and vulnerable asylum seekers waiting for a decision on their asylum application. The programme offers cash assistance ranging from €90 to €550. Once the recipients find a job, they stop receiving financial assistance. Similarly, if they become financially independent, in theory, they should not reside in the formal accommodation spaces.

⁹³ In the right-wing populist rhetoric, the metaphor of the discursive construction of “Other” and the stranger as a burden on social expenditure for Wodak (2015:53,114) is supported by the well-known topos of burden- if a person, an institution, or a country is burdened by a specific problem, one must act to diminish those burdens. Those coming to benefit from our benefit system should be kept out of the country. Important divides within a society, such as class, caste, religion, gender and so forth, are neglected in focusing on such ‘Others’. Wodak,R (2015) “*The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*”, London: Sage.

dependency/independency, the discussion was focused on the distinction of migrant/refugee definitions and motives.

Against a lay claim for international protection for refugees fearing prosecution, the motivations of migrants to migrate to Greece revealed their principal factor for their mobility, ignoring conditions produced by push factors (poverty, conflict, war, environmental disaster, etc.). Electra [by voicing the refugee's perspective] gave her explanation for their arrival in Greece, implying that this has created a burden on the welfare system, as refugees receive preferential treatment with regards to benefits and public services:

“I launched into this country from mine -why would I stay there, when I could come here to get my money, to be taken care of and be escorted to the doctors?”

The trope of the migrant benefit scrounger, intersected with the trope of the unwanted and undesirable migrant. The exclusionary politics about the uncontrollable immigration of dangerous ‘Others’ were also circulated in the narratives and political considerations of social workers.

Georgia explained that refugees want to leave, and they have been entrapped in Greece. She informed me when refugees ask why they cannot leave the country, she explains to them what has been signed on the EU level. *“They are unwelcomed”* she admitted and explained that it is not us, but *“other countries that do not want them”*. Her desire for open borders in order for them to go everywhere they wanted and live decently, since Greece was suffering an economic insecurity, was accompanied by the questioning about *“How many can Greece accommodate?”*. These contrasting statements could be seen as symptomatic of wider social trends and of their impact on everyday reality.

They provide an important point of reference on institutional patterns of “otherisation” in ways that emphasise the country’s role as a gatekeeper of crisis management to ensure undesirable migrants will not reach Europe, while “overcrowding” is closely linked to the description of migrants as a problem. These ideas were heavily evident in Alexandros’ account regarding their integration to Greece.

“This requires of course an economy to support something like that. We don’t have the economy. This is where the political is linked. That Greece has the weight of refugees on its shoulders, which is disanalogous with what it can afford, both economically and demographically. And it plays the role of the police officer of Europe⁹⁴. And the refugee crisis has been linked with the economics, unfortunately. At the same time -this is my personal view- the refugee crisis is part of a context of geopolitical pressure. I [Turkey] put pressure on Greece for the Aegean- Take the refugees, because I will unleash them now.” (Alexandros, Social worker)

Recent arrivals were combined with austerity which was reinforced by the policies of neoliberal structural adjustment and framed under the rubric of debt, neocolonialism intensified the practitioner’s dilemma. Remarkably, migration was tacitly endorsed and regarded by the participant as a ‘burden’. Human rights and refugee protection were understood from the standpoint of Eurocentric initiatives, isolating them from the rest of society and subject to national, political constraints.

The responsibility for the housing and welfare of destitute asylum seekers was primarily considered one of immigration control and management, in a bid to reduce numbers over anxieties about identity, citizenship and place.

⁹⁴ With the implementation of the EU–Turkey Deal (otherwise known as the EU–Turkey Statement and Action Plan or the EU–Turkey Agreement), if the construction of the five hotspots did not have been completed before the deadline of 15 February 2016, it was suggested that Greece was warned/ threatened with removal from the Schengen Zone. Athanasopoulos AA (2016) Athens wages battle against time on the refugee issue and Schengen. To Vima, 30 January (in Greek) Available at: <https://www.tovima.gr/2016/01/30/politics/maxi-me-ton-xrono-dinei-i-athina-gia-prosfygiko-kai-sengen/>.

As Alexandros further explained: *Because, if the whole condition doesn't change in dealing with the problem of the refugees, we won't be able to see anything in the end. Even though you have the best intentions. Ok, discrimination in public services and all that will eventually end. But what if there are no jobs here? What is going to happen? And even if you had the funding, you cannot integrate the whole of these people with the locals. Concerning their numbers and considering the local communities, you cannot get more people compared to other EU countries. It cannot happen.*"

Taking the above into consideration, this type of argument about dispersing the migrants to other parts of Greece, feeding into the integration debate is largely recognisable in the current anti-immigration climate of western Europe in which refugees are no longer being discussed within the humanitarian framework of the Geneva Convention.

In fact, while the significant socioeconomic challenges unleashed by neoliberal globalisation are recognised in terms of increased unemployment, the visibility of the migrant 'Other' and concerns towards migration about demographics have created a sense that traditional ways of life are under threat (Sajjad, 2018:12).

This discussion appeared not to be taken place from the broader perspective of the securitisation of migration, and the deliberate construction of policies that shape and control migration. "In the era of migration management and migrants' "rational" distribution across the European territory" constitutive element of emerging militarisation of migrants' control and surveillance (Lagios et al., 2018:43) some social workers' narratives reflect the important observation made by Fekete (2013), who states that problems Muslims face in Europe are now viewed through a cultural lens that primarily explains societal and political issues, such as unemployment, discrimination, poverty, marginalisation.

Some of these problematisations overlap with and commonly reflect the wider immigration and refugee policies of Western states and expose a more fluid notion of race that changes over time in accordance with social, political and economic context.

This is viewed as a by-product of the very policies that seek to deter migration with attacks on civil rights that undermine the fundamentals of justice. These have, for many decades, been shaped from a reality of stigmatisation of asylum claims and consequent efforts to restrict access of asylum seekers to their territories with the prospect of settlement through hostile political imperatives of “non-arrival measures”. The novel ways controls operate to prevent people arriving, are radically in conflict with protection obligations for refugees (Gibney, 2006).

Equally, beyond refugee’s criminalisation and securitisation, politics of labelling around who is a ‘migrant’ and a ‘refugee’ concerning their “worthiness” at the expense of the complexities that force people to seek sanctuary, not only legitimate their deportation and incarceration, but also their dehumanisation (Cohen, 2006; Sajjad, 2018).

Concerning their motivations to flee from deprivation and poverty as migrants, they are not considered fleeing persecution, but making an informed and beneficial choice for economic reasons. Such a defining characteristic surrounds the concepts of the ‘bogus asylum seeker’, who is suspected of abusing the asylum system, as the dominant figure of migration. For Sajjad (2018:8) this equates with a “categorical fetishism” and de-politicization of migration which crafts the individual through ordering procedures, as being ahistorical and neutral in relationship to a (benevolent) state.

In describing the provision of services to refugees through knowing, listening, and connecting, Apostolis says that their needs are often overlooked and even impeded by systems of support. For example, he argued that “*This is not intentional. It is lack of fantasy and most importantly we haven’t spoken with the people themselves and learn what they want. They go to get interviewed (in services) and they seat and listen the others [the professionals] speaking*”. As a result, refugees’ stories are either not deemed relevant or credible or, increasingly, not heard at all. Telling stories to achieve social and political change and expressing grievances is a human right that is systematically denied to refugees in many fronts.

Concerned with their inclusion and involvement, he continued by saying that without listening to the voices of people seeking asylum and not valuing the knowledge and the experiences of migrant communities in their great diversity, we encourage their “*...dehumanisation. (S)he becomes the beneficiary. (S)he is nothing else, but only that*”.

Apostolis mentioned that refugees are invisible and unrepresented and consigned a passive role, one that is being restricted by lack of opportunities. They are denied the right to present narratives that may disturb the dominant truth of asylum procedures and social policy. In terms of representation, services do not provide the opportunity for marginalised refugee communities to display their own narratives in the public sphere that highlight their experiences and concerns.

Hence, they are frequently treated in an institutional context as dependent, rather than as autonomous and active actors. Clarke (2006, 12) writes that ‘when migrants are excluded from knowledge production, their narratives are not told or are told in such ways that their voices can easily be appropriated for different interests.

Apostolis explicitly stated that the services refugees receive are linked to the benefits organisations can have. *“This is what I see in terms of the big organisations, and I want this to be heard, that is, we don’t listen. What is dominant is the brand and the logic of branding. The branding of the organisation is more important than the stories people have”*.

A similar situation regarding their visibility and representation was described by Areti who expressed grave concerns for the refugees’ involvement in service provision that entitle some to protection, rights and resources whilst simultaneously disempowering others through systematic exclusion. Having the people’s involvement with lived experience of mental distress around service delivery in mind, she wondered if we could strive to create the conditions for dialogue -wherever possible- and the practice of speaking with and to in a more equitable, just distribution of the ability to speak and be heard rather than speaking for others. Dialogue and relations appeared to be inadequately pursued by more privileged persons. As she argued, concerning the practice of speaking with others:

“In most cases, what we narrate are the stories of our beneficiaries. If you like, their voice is not heard. It is our voice. And still, it is not our voice too. They don’t speak for themselves. It is the professionals that do it for them. They are those who design the programmes on their behalf. Have we ever asked those who receive the services, if this program responds to their needs?”

This reflexive invocation illustrates a kind of dominant representational practice that someone purports to speak for others, but at the same time effaces their voices. It points to the fact that, refugees are not only simply unable to reflect their complex social needs, but also the failure and inability of services to directly engage with people due to a combination of political and economic factors sometimes allied to severe discrimination and a lack of access to rights and/or citizenship. In this respect, the

participant felt her practice to be compromised, since refugees couldn't be considered as agents of change themselves, through their direct involvement in the process of practice. In particular, Areti pointed to a series of everyday challenges that limit social workers' emancipatory aims, exacerbated by the changing social circumstances in which individuals find themselves like homelessness, evictions, different vulnerabilities. Conditions that impact both the refugees and social workers' responses. She asked herself: "*How am I supposed to support the claim nothing for us, without us? How can I say that to someone who is going to be evicted in three weeks' time? To someone who has been sleeping rough for a year now and is still unable to be accommodated? Or whose asylum application has been rejected twice?*".

Most participants recognised that within their organisations words and imagery that perpetuate ideas that objectify and commonly dehumanize refugees were used, revealing the hegemonic structures that keep them trapped in oppressive social relationships and simply rule out society's responsibility to respond to their needs.

Antonis mentioned that what social services do is "*pampering*" by "*taking people by the hand and escorting them to the door [of the services]*" resulting into "*creating dependent people*" with their capacity to act or get involved whether individually or collectively, to be ignored. When he described how services cooperate to complement provisions and how refugees are being referred from one to another. This was understood in exclusionary rather than inclusionary terms of reduced and increasingly standardized services.

He stressed almost cynically, like Antigoni, that service users are being treated like "*ping pong balls*" among existing services and threatened of "*being vomited by the*

system”⁹⁵ on Machis’ account. Existing fragmented services looked like a “*kikeónas*”⁹⁶ for Gregory reminiscent of “*Kafkaesque nightmare*” to Areti’s characteristic of an “*oppressive environment that disempowers people*”. This often seemed to signify what many characterized as a failure of the state to protect the refugees and whose welfare has no direct responsibility.

For Antonis the poor response of the state and social provisions were narrowly confined in a context of marginalisation and gaps in which social work substitute official protection efforts. “*I had a case where the social worker from the hospital asked me to help them with their accommodation. We helped them up the point we could. Now, they are overwhelmed too, and they sent them to other organisations as we do. Someone who has a social worker, we will do what they cannot do. [For example] We can escort them to hospital, can you deal with their medical conditions? Our capacity is limited, and I think this is how it is dealt by other colleagues too*”.

This is neatly captured in the way Antigoni referred to homelessness and how people she refers to hospitals for mental health issues are being treated there, due to the lack of a protective welfare system to ensure their well-being and long-term needs, concluding that systemic failures have led to organised non-responsibility. “*No-one in public services wants to do their work properly and what they do is throw the ball of responsibility to someone else*”.

⁹⁵ Bauman (2015:2) argues that the production of Europe is closely tied to a violent process of exclusion and assimilation since every society produces its own strangers and produces them in its own inimitable way. In this war, there are two strategies employed. One is anthropographic annihilating the strangers by devouring them by making the different, similar. The other is antropoemic: by “*vomiting the strangers, banishing them from the limits of the orderly world and barring them from all communication with those inside*”. Bauman, Z. (1995) ‘Making and unmaking of strangers’, Thesis Eleven, 43/1: 1–16. Through this strategy of exclusion, strangers are confined within the visible walls of the ghettos or are expelled beyond them. It also draws on exclusionary body politics that is to the ‘nation/state as body’ conceptual metaphor about strangers within and outside the ‘body’, that is, the nation state. Exclusion takes place through conceptual metaphors of strangers, visualized as ‘illnesses’. These lie at the core of right-wing populist ideologies also closely tied to concepts underlying racism.

⁹⁶ Κικεώνας ο [kikeónas] A chaotic jumble.

Within a broader context of institutional fragmentation and the shortcomings of the public health sector⁹⁷ “*you essentially have to confront a doctor that treats you as if you were crazy*”, Antigoni complained, despite the evidence provided around refugees’ mental health needs. Without the welfare services being able to deal with the problems that need to be addressed in a holistic manner, people are being rejected and she concluded that she finds herself being forced to put them in further destitution. “*I can’t refer someone with mental health issues in the homeless shelter if these haven’t been addressed in the first place. So, in turn, I tell them to go back to the streets and I can’t help you. And as a result, these people become aggressive- and they are right, because everywhere they go the doors are shut.*” The ‘closed doors’ was a quote that has been repeated often among participants regarding the way and how refugees are being discriminated against.

This was also evident in Nikos’ account concerning the unaccompanied minors and his relationship with the prosecutor who maintains the responsibility over them and whose welfare they have no direct responsibility.

“Closed doors. I am disappointed with the prosecutor for minors. Regardless of our good relationship and the fact that they understand the problems we have, they do not respond to our demands. This happens with delay. After two months and

⁹⁷ Resulting from the economic crisis, mental health has deteriorated significantly in Greece. From 2010 to 2015 there has been a 40 percent increase in suicides. Despite the resurgence of mental health issues, the health system is struggling to cope. It coincided with dwindling staff levels and slashed budgets, since budget on mental health was halved over 2011 and 2012, while it has been trimmed each year. Through austerity, Europe has demanded absurd cuts in the state’s protective capacities demanded hiring freezes, even as hundreds of workers retired. At Evangelismos, one of the capital’s largest state hospitals, dozens of patients were being treated in the corridors of the psychiatric ward. Union workers supported that the clinic was accommodating twice the maximum capacity, with foldout beds set up in corridors and in doctors’ offices. Dr. Nektarios Drakonakis of Dafni noted that they address social cases too, beyond psychiatric ones. “People come, they say, ‘I don’t have a home, I don’t have papers, I don’t have relatives, I don’t have anywhere to go.’” Dr. Christos Tsopelas at Dafni mentioned that two doctors typically treat 35 to 40 patients, and that there was a severe shortage of nurses. Volunteers fill up the gaps. Kitsantonis N. (2019) 10 Years into Economic Crisis, Counts the Cost to Mental Health, *The New York Times*, 3 February. [<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/03/world/europe/greece-economy-mental-health.html?fbclid=IwAR0b4WVGJeCiP9yRdDh5qZKBQuEyJdqeUKX4beW8D1ITlIMbDXV2qibA97II>]

sometimes when the child might have gone, or their case could have been closed. Anyhow, the prosecutor knows that this system doesn't work, and they simply don't want to assume responsibility." When I asked if they attribute the responsibility to you for the provisions of reception and accommodation, they said that they do that to *"get rid of an additional burden."* The existing impersonal, routine and bureaucratised processes that do not deal with participants' concerns and refugees' needs, render the latter a bureaucratic object, limited to procedural interventions, in which their rights and needs are neglected.

Nikos referred to a case when they were asked about the missing of a 14-year-old child and why he had left. While there were multiple reasons why children go missing, as he said, explaining the case to the prosecutor, the child's case was narrowed down to a single dimension- *"voluntary departure"*⁹⁸. Since this was questionable as a practice, he noted that they are 'free' to leave. Since there has been no official assumption of responsibility by the state, he stressed the fact that children live in an *"open accommodation"*, exposed to many legal protection gaps when arriving in Greece.

Working under bureaucratic pressure with overwhelming management duties and bearing the sole responsibility for the children's welfare, he came to admit that: *"When I go to the prosecutor, I do that in order for me to be protected by the law, in case something happens, and the prosecutor comes after me. [I want you to know] that*

⁹⁸ Among countries such as Greece, Italy and Germany 18,000 unaccompanied children have disappeared upon their arrival in the EU between January 2018 and December 2020. The true numbers of missing children are difficult to measure and it is estimated that it could be much higher. 90% were boys and about one in six were younger than 15. Toscano, F. from Missing Children Europe, points out that regardless unaccompanied children are considered most vulnerable to violence, exploitation and trafficking the high number of missing children is a symptom of a child-protection system that doesn't work, and raises the questions about the extent European countries are able or willing to protect them. Problems include failure to follow up when children are reported missing and insufficient cooperation between police and asylum or child protection authorities. Einashe, I. and Homolova, A. (2021) Nearly 17 child migrants a day vanished in Europe since 2018, *Guardian*, 21 April [<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/21/nearly-17-child-migrants-a-day-vanished-in-europe-since-2018>]

I told you this beforehand and you didn't listen to me.” In a similar way, the refugees being treated as a burden seemed to rise because of deficiencies in the way that protection is delivered. Concerning their referral to local public services and authorities like the police, Nikos added: *“we are a burden for them. We are dealing with services that are understaffed. We are a burden for them. They don't want us.”* Regarding particularly the care and protection⁹⁹ children are entitled to under international human rights and European Union asylum law, their rights and needs are neglected. This was emphatically put by Nadia highlighting the way services were ill-suited to their needs, and thus were deprived of the basic services and support.

“We had referred a child with blood at her genitals. We sent the child with an ambulance to the hospital, and they let her go with a paper saying that she must see a coroner. The social service did nothing. The doctor must have informed the prosecutor to request the examination immediately. This happened after 3 days. It is done by us after long processes.” (Nadia, social worker).

Due to the lack of official responsibility, while simultaneously depending on them for help, Nadia, on who should be held accountable in dealing with that situation, commented: *“Nothing. I believe for the State everything is numbers. Like the minors too. They are only numbers and nothing more.”*

The Other, as it is reflected on the refugees, can be deprived of any kind of agency, disenfranchised and marginalised with implications on citizenship and protection. In responding to refugees' predicaments and needs Chrysa and Gregory

⁹⁹ Even though not all the European Social Charter rights may be extended to illegal migrants, Children's entitlement to medical assistance is conditional within the territory of a state party to Charter. Legislation or practice which denies entitlement to medical and hospital treatment to foreign nationals and their children, within the territory of a State party, even if they are there illegally, is contrary to the Charter. Violation of Article 13 (the right to medical assistance) and violation of Article 17(part 1) that is more expansive to medical assistance (right of children to appropriate social, legal and economic protection) and inspired by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It protects in a general manner the right of children and young persons, including unaccompanied minors, to care and assist to protect children from sexual exploitation (being taken advantage of) and sexual abuse as well as being protected from all other kinds of exploitation (par. 34 and 36).

mentioned that encounters, persons and practices seemed utterly transformed into and reducible to sole ‘numbers’ as outcome metrics, dehumanizing peoples’ lives. Chrysa explaining her job and the outcomes demanded, said among other things that “*Because you run specific programmes, you are requested to get the numbers right.*” Such criteria are related to the function of the labour market and the neoliberal values of competition and productivity.

For Gregory the ‘numbers’ were understood as organisational priority driven by a concern with efficiency, even if this was the right to asylum, and ran in opposition to cover the full cost of the service users’ needs and wants. “*Here in our work, the numbers played an important role. The Organisation wanted numbers. They wanted asylum seekers... but you could see that their needs, and their response to them let in waters. Their nourishment let in waters. That was strange. You forced things out for the quality- to have activities, [services and classes], and you didn’t have a cookie after lunch.*”

Equally, the way the refugees are objectified is reflected in Nadia’s narration regarding the procedures they have to undergo.

“You have to explain to them that you are coming here in an illegal way, and you are registered by the police when you seek asylum in Greece. That there is file for you in the asylum service with a serial number which is your identity. Then the service will give you a date in which you speak with an expert in general about your life and the reasons you are in danger. According to international protocols they will make judgements if you are in need of asylum in Greece, otherwise you will have to leave. This is why you need a lawyer to guide you. Many people don’t know what all these documents are. When their interview is due for. The importance of the interview.”

In practical terms, both Niki and Chara paid particular attention to the language that is used to refer to refugees as “*victims*” among services in Greece to signify the

exploitation and oppression of certain groups. Niki mentioned that this discourse squeezes out opportunities to recognise their agency and self-determination, as independent people with the ability to make decisions, have desires and life strategies for their future and that of their families. Among others, she claims that such category misrepresents or artificially constrains our understanding of their capacities. She concluded that this practice was primarily concerned with fundraising issues for the sustainability of the provided services. Chara explains that such categories, including that of vulnerability, are purposefully constructed by others in an attempt to engage both policy makers and funders.

As she claims, *“In this system, we use terms like victims or disempowered to stress how vulnerable they are and help them”*.

Refugees in Europe are caught between powerful discussions of ‘victimhood’ constructing the migrant’s identity as a subject who has lost its human qualities and must perform “refugeeness” in order to passively accept philanthropy and ‘security’ threat to be controlled and managed. The term of the refugee signifies deprived and underprivileged people, as they are expected to function and be ‘profound’, ‘poor’, ‘traumatized’, ‘serious’ and of course ‘sad’ persons. (Lagios et al., 2018:9-11). The very concept of victimisation has been argued that for human rights advocates, it sometimes appears the only way of achieving the legal protection on humanitarian reasons of people regarded rejected or stigmatized as a security threat from public policies that are selective and unequally restrictive in providing protection and support (Ambrosini and Cohen, 2018:12). In the context of humanitarian regime of the UNHCR, major international NGOs, and human rights groups the accompanying discourse related to the refugee, is an integral part of processes of making a figure whose “abject victimage has silenced their voice and emptied their subjectivity of

agency” (Nyers and Rygiel, 2012:8). This, including refugees’ representations by governments as threats and social ills, results further in their submission and powerlessness when they claim their rights or better treatment and voicing their resentment (ibid.).

Respondents mentioned that funding was one of the biggest challenges to their practice. Another significant element cutting across the multiple schemes of representations of otherness in social work regarding especially to the treatment of minors, is the emergence of inequitable relations which perpetuate cycles of domination that do not take the complex realities of refugee experiences into account. Through what was taken for granted among other practitioners, Athena reveals anxieties about actual practice which can be deeply unsettling and often seen as violating refugees’ human rights to dignity and self-determination when they are subjected to unacceptable treatment.

“Children wouldn’t attend classes with a teacher the org. paid for. Because it was compulsory for the 30 children living there to attend these classes, the manager thought to use the snack available to them as a gift to those who attended the lessons. I was in conflict¹⁰⁰ when I saw implementing CBT techniques that are not even implemented to dogs. To make the child invest in education, we use the snack or the food as a reward.” (Athena, social worker)

Egalitarian relational interactions, and participatory inclusion seem to be compromised, as they can also reflect the interests of those holding dominant positions. Andreas expressed the manner in which the division between “us” and the subordinated “others” was manifested through certain cultural practices informed by the view of

¹⁰⁰ Ethical dilemmas were often described and experienced as *conflicts*, having, in addition to cognitive, also moral and emotional dimensions in the functioning of reason and morality.

refugee children as helpless victims- a view much in line with the neoliberal discourse of humanitarian narratives on children's rights.

“When they left from here, I felt sad. I saw children and it was fashionable to have them on our laps and take photos with them. It was as if it was cool to get refugee children in your lap and taking them pictures while uploading them on Facebook, so that friends could click “like” on your photo. We all have been through these phases...” (Andreas, programme coordinator).

Interactions and relations of care characterised by kinds of attachment and belonging seemed to be accompanied by exploitation from groups that held unequal social positions imposing their beliefs and practices as cultural imperialists and, quite simply with adherence to the moral obligation to help those less fortunate. This deliberate unequal practice of treatment reinforces racial hierarchies while casting “us” as benevolent. Identified victims, including children were seen as subordinate embodied properties prone to exploitation of aid workers and volunteers through relief efforts and not taken as persons with agency that could define care with their own terms (see Knott, 2018) let alone act in solidarity with one another.

In terms of the attitudes towards asylum seekers and perspectives about their work, this behaviour suggests that everyday practices of the staff of NGOs were largely influenced by the dominant mentality and social climate of the time concerned with prioritising and “protecting” the most vulnerable, while expelling all others.

Under the same light, Katie, elaborating on the developments of immigration policy to the reception, care and hospitality, considered the practices of exclusion on the basis of vulnerability criteria¹⁰¹ as central to the making of people deprived of their

¹⁰¹ Article 20 L 4540/2018 indicatively introduced more categories of vulnerable applicants such as persons with mental disorders and victims of female genital mutilation. However, persons with PTSD are not expressly mentioned in this list. Article 23 L 4540/2018 has also amended the procedure for certifying persons subject to torture, rape or other serious forms of violence. ‘Greek law currently excludes vulnerable persons from the fast-track border procedure, meaning a vulnerability assessment is a ticket off the islands to the mainland. Persons belonging to vulnerable groups (e.g., refugees with disabilities, pregnant women, unaccompanied minors) are detained in

human rights. These criteria entrenched in the legal discourse of national laws and state policies around refugees' vulnerability, excluded those who did not fit into certain criteria and, as a result, the rights and needs of the refugee population remained unmet.

Administrative requirements on vulnerability were an issue that has been at the heart of much of the contemporary reception and accommodation regime that was framed around deservingness. The main concern was that refugees had largely been denied, marginalised and "othered" in practice from their rights and other entitlements. The fixation with something that had something valuable to contribute, in practice was addressed to specific categories in a very narrow way with little concern about securing accessibility to vulnerable people and even less so for the wider refugee population.

In our discussion, she indicated that the same logic and organisational practice broadly underpinned the interventions of humanitarian organisations and institutions, which guaranteed needs-fulfilment for only certain "vulnerable" individuals that were primarily dependent, and therefore "deserving" and needing the assistance. Working at that time in Lesbos, Katia looked at the organizations that have managed this "crisis". By operating through processes of differential and subordinated inclusion they make difference and human suffering of needy persons the focal point among displaced people. She called the forms of marginalisation in humanitarian assistance reconfigured

practice. The identification of vulnerability of persons arriving on the islands takes place either by the RIS prior to the registration of the asylum application, or during the asylum procedure. EASO experts are also involved in the vulnerability assessment procedure. Reporting demonstrates significant delays in vulnerability assessments for new arrivals to the Greek hotspots. The average time between the arrival of the persons and the completion of the medical/psychosocial examination/vulnerability assessment on islands' RICs was between 1 and 8 months in 2019, depending on the location. Long delays in the carrying out of vulnerability screenings mean that asylum seekers remain in the hotspots and may begin the asylum procedure without a vulnerability assessment. Since September 2018, the geographical limitation of vulnerable asylum seekers has lifted at the time of the registration or once the vulnerability was identified. Following the lift of the geographical limitation, they were allowed to leave the island and travel in the mainland. The recognition of vulnerability has thus become a precondition for the transfer from camps and camp-like facilities to other accommodations operated by NGOs or in a camp or in a UNHCR-provided apartment. at Greek Council for Refugees (2019) Identification: Greece. Asylum Information Database (AIDA). European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) at: <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/guarantees-vulnerable-groups/identification/> New Democracy government passed legislation amending asylum law (L. 4636/2019), which has changed the ways in which detention, nationality assessments, and vulnerability are used in asylum and hotspot procedures.

in this context into question, which has been built on the colonial legacy by focusing only on the situation and vulnerabilities rather than their rights. In doing so, she provided the themes that are suggestive and contemplated of this practice.

“Part of your work is how to facilitate some processes and defend the rights of humans, the beneficiaries- which is, by the way, a tragic word. If you characterise them like that, then you characterise yourself as the one who provides that service. A relation that is unequal. [...]. The whole system of humanitarian aid is that: children, sick people, women. Men? Where are they? If you see one you don't know what to do with them.”

By making human suffering the focal point, Anthropologist Liisa Malkki (2016) discusses how humanitarianism and Western charity can undermine human rights by dehistoricising and depoliticising their predicaments from specific contexts. As a result, they reduce people to “pure victims” and their voices remain too often absent from public discourse and public policymaking. She states:

“The necessary delivery of relief and also long-term assistance is accompanied by a host of other, unannounced social processes and practices that are dehistoricising. This dehistoricizing universalism creates a context in which it is difficult for people in the refugee category to be approached as historical actors, rather than simply as mute victims. It can strip them from the authority to give credible narrative evidence or testimony about their own condition in politically and institutionally consequential forums (p.378)”.

By revealing the deep liberal tensions that underpin questions of a universal, ahistorical humanity and who counts as a victim, she explains how women and children embody vulnerability; they call forth the need for protection and can thus better represent the refugee figure. As Malkki observes (1996), the right of people to seek asylum and be protected is closely attached to their vulnerability. It is an idea dominant in the discourse of international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) aiming at raising awareness and funds on the plight of refugees. Refugees are on purpose portrayed as traumatised people, who have lost their families

and their possessions. Agency, as a characteristic of those who have made an extremely challenging route to Europe, seems to be undermined (Malkki,1996).

Remarkably, while women and children are portrayed as harmless and vulnerable in need for help, this is contrary to single males, such as the figures of Afghans who arrive in Europe in search of better life and are not in need of protection as less vulnerable and allegedly ‘unwanted’ or ‘undesirable’ - a pertinent discussion in Europe with focus on who appears to be a risk to the European societies (Dimitriadi, 2018: 170-171) or general fear of Muslims, who, according to Islamophobic rhetoric, are unwilling to embrace the core values of Western societies (Lucassen, 2018:392-394).

Noticeably, this logic comes together in complex and ambiguous ways that naturalises and reinforces the gendered nature of programmes by stressing their maternal roles in which women, as a selected group of vulnerable persons, are being addressed and classified as deserving on the basis of holding a core role and value in society not only as victims, but as a matter of economic contribution.

Instead of affording them protection on social rights through the government and its policies, this directly intersects with Sarah Farris’ (2017) argument concerning the 'instrumentalisation' of gender in immigration and integration laws and policies of Western Europe¹⁰² by right-wing nationalists, some feminists and neoliberal bureaucrats in context of neoliberalism and rising Islamophobia. Drawing on popular discourses of a liberal emancipated West vis. a vis. patriarchal Muslim society which were also deployed during colonial times, she pointed that gender violence is exclusively considered a domain of Muslims and racialized Others. In the national and

¹⁰² Particularly, in Italy, France, and Netherlands right-wing nationalist parties have resorted to a rhetoric of gender equality in order to advance their anti-Islam/anti-immigration political agendas.

neoliberal civic integration policies, migrant women have become of central concern as obedient passive victims.

It was argued that women's rights and equality are invoked to rescue and emancipate migrant women and stigmatise Muslim men as oppressors who protect the very patriarchal order and inegalitarian aspects of their religious traditions which seek to confine women in the domestic arena. The stigmatization of Muslim cultures and religious practices as a privileged site of misogyny and obstacle to integration comes to thus advance their own political and economic objectives on the basis of an aggressive, anti-immigrant nationalism. Thus, for the emancipatory struggle against sexism and patriarchy, Farris (2017:9) argued: "Instead of helping it to gain more visibility, the widespread resort to the theme of women's rights as a "civilizational" battle demotes it from the rubric of general societal problems and dislocates it as a "non- western women problem" only—or as a problem that affects western European women as potential victims of Muslim and non-western/non-white men."

8. Social justice-based social work and the question of refugee accommodation- housing.

Introduction.

This chapter turns explicitly to accommodation. During interviewing and observations, accommodation emerged as a key theme understood as a human right, regarded also as a foundation to service provision, in improving the wellbeing of the refugee population.

When analysing the main constitutive elements of practitioners' narratives, it appeared that social work has a political and structural commission to respond towards greater social justice and equality for refugees, since the maintenance of disadvantage

and oppression to service delivery, within existing accommodation policies, was overtly acknowledged. Subsequently, I describe practitioners' understandings of the issues related to accommodation, as being in some way inadequate, leaving refugees with unmet needs.

Framing their practice as contextual, the market ideology that ignores issues of equality and stands in tension with refugee accommodation in urban areas, was acknowledged. Additionally, the dispersal policies of accommodation, mainly in areas outside the cities or in rural areas, ignoring those who lived in these locations, were questioned. In such cases, social work, committed to its values and ideology, was identified as providing the connection with and support for refugees who had no other contact with local communities. Not surprisingly, the lack of public resources- chiefly, shortages of staff and inefficiencies within public social services, not only failed to address the needs of the most vulnerable, but also to respond to possibilities for the creation of xenophobic attitudes and mobilisations.

Having the responsibility to implement the policies of the government, accommodation provided a powerful, and, at times, difficult and ambiguous practice context for social workers. The examples that I discussed, were focused on how practitioners were affected by and how policy changes on accommodation provisions impacted their work. Some practitioners succumbed to the organisational policies to follow the rules and defined their practice in purely procedural terms. On the other hand, there were others who critically reflected on their practice and linked their commitment to service users with grassroots mobilisations and social justice causes in the larger community, as seeing possibilities for change and to prevent homelessness.

8.1. “We were there to welcome and protect”.

Issues concerning the housing of refugees (32 out of 37 interviewees mentioned this) were central to participants’ narratives, focusing, respectively, on concepts of integration, humanity, and human rights, often broadly inflicting moral values, such as dignity and welfare provision.

Katie, from her experience in Lesbos, stressed that these functions of accommodation were made clear by government policy.

“It is insane! We have filled up the country with camps. These people are going to stay here. Is this the policy you implement? And is there no one to say, guys, what are we doing here? These people are not in transit anymore. Either they will stay here or will irregularly leave. Or they will go back. Wherever that is. So, what you do is fill up the country with camps?”

In this context, where opinions were so divided, and no solid immigration and accommodation policy could be agreed, refugee’s accommodation involved strong dilemmas regarding; children’s homelessness, since it was a predominant factor in contributing to the care of children, falling short of what was necessary to meet their needs and/or protect them from harm, like smuggling (John, Machi, Georgia, Eleni); supporting vulnerable cases to access safe and adequate housing, requiring care and support due to a disability, illness or ill mental health (Alexandros); gender violence (Antonis, Zoe); that the state’s institutions were not only currently unable to provide suitable accommodation, but that accommodation provided, including camps, also presented a significant risk of harm to them, such as institutionalisation, squalor, overcrowding, accommodation insecurity (Apostolis, Athena, Urania, Andreas, Alexandros).

Participants' narratives were focused on the hardship faced by refugees, calling their situation a downward spiral, because their accommodation and housing needs reflected the social welfare system and social policy framework conditions and conceptions, such as vulnerability, that undermined common human needs, dignity and human rights due to poverty (Areti, Niki, Katie, Chrisa). Existing welfare provisions, including housing policy, were designed to exclude (Antonis). It may, beyond that, put an inappropriate responsibility on individuals for circumstances beyond their control, relying on waiting lists (Areti, Niki, Alexandros, Georgia). The number of accommodations provided depended not just on population, but on housing supply, substantially affected by the private market (Areti, Georgia) and the short-term nature of housing programmes (Antonis, Gregory). When social work was provided in such settings, it was done in a context that demanded a strong focus on housing management and tensions with local people and authorities (Gregory, John, Thalia, Iliana, Nikos, Andreas, Rea, Nadia, Urania, Melina, Caterina, Electra, Alexandros, Antigoni, Maria).

Housing was linked to unequal practices in relation to gender violence, roles and stereotypes, for example, the confinement in the home "*the motive was one. That the woman had to stay at home. Container, container! She would give birth to children*" and independence, with the aim of maximizing labour market participation (Electra) or about "*the African woman who came and told us that she was raped, and now she will go back to her apartment, where ten people live and possibly she will be raped again during the week*" (Antonis). Similarly, they did not focus on the needs of adult and men asylum-seekers, "*for example the classic case of a man, who is young, lone and doesn't have any health problems. He will never get a shelter*" (Eirini) or suitable accommodation spaces for members of LGBTI groups (Areti). They discussed how living in inadequate housing and campsites appeared to impair the quality of life with

a high prevalence of mental health problems, self-harm, trauma, and substance abuse. As John summarised, *“What I see every day, is people and children living under inhumane conditions. It is part of their lives and has become their experience. [...] they are exposed in violence, harassment, drugs”*.

Within the bureaucratic regime that governs their welfare, being homeless meant, they were not provided with documents, security, access to regular employment or welfare rights.

Athena said:

“In other countries in the EU that I have seen, when they are provided with a house, there are some responsibilities e.g. to learn the language, and there is a professional that would see their development. It is something you don’t see here. Here, they are placed in a house, you leave them there, they might be suffering from mental health issues. They also resign themselves, and you tell them, you got your documents now and you will leave. It is as if you create homelessness that way and there is no plan for their empowerment”.

On the one hand, advocating for housing was supported on the basis that everyone has a human right to accommodation, according to national constitution¹⁰³, raising issues of citizenship rights and situating human needs within a political context. The argument may also be seen to be related to the Article 1 of the UN declaration of Human Rights: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.’ On the other hand, given refugees’ precarious situation and fragile status to survive and cover basic human needs, housing was also loosely based upon Maslow’s (1943) ideas of the hierarchy of human needs. Maslow, in his theory of human motivation, proposed that higher level needs for ‘self-actualisation’ which involve developing one’s

¹⁰³ The Right to housing is enshrined in the Constitution (Art. 21 par. 4). According to this “the acquisition of a home by the homeless or those inadequately sheltered shall constitute an object of special State care”. Greece has also ratified the Revised European Social Charter, accepting paragraph 31 on the right to housing.

potential, are addressed only when the more basic needs, such as food and shelter are satisfied.

However, this notion of needs provided by Maslow, should be recognised that, does not hold in all cases and has been critiqued by many scholars on several grounds.

Objecting to psychological reductionism, Dominelli (2002a) argues this theory places the need for esteem and self-actualization above material or economic circumstances, ignoring situational, community, and/or structural arrangements, such as “race” and gender. Additionally, it could serve as a mantra for the commodification of individual needs, fuelled by consumer culture, in an outright rejection of the capitalist system and the resultant social inequalities and physical degradation. Equally, Maslow’s schema, resonated within the liberal view and having been influential in social work, provides a hierarchical definition of identified needs that could deprive service users’ voice in self-defining needs within a context of scarce resources and limited options (Dominelli, 2007:14). Reference solely to needs, implies that people are somewhat responsible for their own situation and places them in a situation of asking for help (Lundy, 2011). Emphasizing individual responsibility, the major burden for ethical decision making is shifted from the practitioner to the service user. Additionally, encouraging individualism and hedonism without boundaries and responsibility, undermines the sense of community that social work aims at, by changing societal structures (Dolgoft et al., 2012:58).

Another criticism of this perspective in relation to the political and social, comes from Ife (2009:132-134) who argues that there is an inherent positivism in this argument; that is either universal human rights or common human needs ‘exists’ in some kind of independent, quasi-objective and measurable manner. Both needs and

rights, including duties and responsibilities, Ife (ibid) notes, need to be reflexively understood as deliberate constructions of human acts and definitions within significantly different political, social, cultural and historical contexts. For, without their connection in the form of direct say in human rights and the decisions that affect them, it benefits the expert and sabotages the kind of participatory project implicit in human rights from below. In other words, a reference to the basic needs of Maslow and the ‘universal’ declaration of human rights appears restrictive if these conceptions do not include more active, participatory and bottom-up processes for determining rights through a “deliberative approach to democracy” (ibid) as a mode of associated living.

This argument for a more humanistic approach to the economic system was also reflected to Amartya Sen’s (1999) and Martha Nussbaum’s (2011) approach to justice. This approach focuses on equality and human rights across a range of domains relevant to 21st century life. By ensuring the commodities in life, to people with no entitlements for political participation due to exclusion and inequality, this results to equal “capabilities to function”. More specifically, Sen (1999) notes that one of the people’s most fundamental freedoms is the freedom to think. However, in order for someone to advance his/her general capability and thus the opportunities of exercising their reasoned agency, there are five instrumental freedoms; political and democratic freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. As he maintains, we must see individual freedom as a social commitment, that is constitutive of development. From this, he posits a strong case for the removal of various types of what he calls substantial unfreedoms that leave people with little choice, such as hunger, insecurity, homelessness and unemployment. Sen (1999: xi–xii) argues that individual agency and freedom are central to addressing social, economic and political deprivations, but that ‘the freedom of agency that we

individually have, is inescapably qualified and constrained by the social, political and economic opportunities that are available to us.’ Sen (2009:363-364) concedes that the language of rights has its valid use because frequently it functions as “inspiration for legislation” and facilitates to illuminate the “legislative route” towards greater inclusion, while due to “the importance of communication, advocacy, exposure and informed public discussion, human rights can have influence without necessarily depending on coercive legislation.” (Ibid:365). Nussbaum (2011) considers the capabilities approach to be closely aligned with a human rights approach to social justice. She (2011:32) asserts that human flourishing demands the protection of ten central capabilities that constitute the bare minimum of a life with dignity: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought, emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one’s environment. (Ibid:33-34).

Indeed, as Ife (2009:132) has argued, “by linking rights and needs we are linking the universal and the contextual”. Following this humanistic approach, practitioners will intervene on the societal level not to help individuals adjust to the existing societal order, but to challenge those social institutions and structures that constrain the growth and self-realization of individuals (Dolgoff et al., 2012:57).

In the evolution of ‘the refugee crisis’, social workers played a central role in the development of accommodation, activating opportunities and resources, meanwhile taming reactions against refugees who were feared. In the words of Ellie, a GASWA member:

“When an accommodation facility was about to be established, there were colleagues who came face to face with the reactions of residents. They had to organise meetings, and these took place with social workers who were in the local authorities or the services where women or children live, and they had meetings, so that they can persuade the locals. In this way, they did a bottom-up work that otherwise wouldn’t be possible

to be done. The social worker knew the locals, the neighbourhoods. The social worker of the local authority! It was a person of trust, and they would say, come in to see that these people are not here to bother you. They are not the danger the media describe to you”.

As confirmed by Ellie: *“these are examples that had a positive impact and happened due to the values and the ethics the profession holds. I don’t think that anyone else could do that networking, the mobilisation and the home visits. We have these tools at our disposal, we are the ones who know the other and can have access to the community. We are trusted. If we were not trusted, how could we tell them, ‘‘come and see’’? These are not those who will hurt you. They need help”.*

Social workers seemed to play an important role in connecting and encouraging, as far as possible, the social integration of asylum seekers in the receiving communities. Against the varying sentiments and reactions, what was proposed — and practised at the local level, were the politics of recognition, due to the need to reverse a negative into a positive identity, resisting to domination. *“They are not the danger the media describe to you”* (Ellie).

Social work was described not only as possessing the resources and skills, but also as having the values to perform this role in the public area. Reflecting upon media representations of their service users, practitioners employed a representational strategy in a disciplined and convincing way to gain legitimacy for the refugees within the community.

Conceived in this way, representing refugees was viewed as a means to achieve the ends of gaining integration for them. Long term and established relations of trust social workers have with local communities were emphasised. Among others, Katerina’s words, describe the intermediate position of social work with refugees,

located in-between them and local communities- between private and public worlds.

“We are more on the streets, at their homes. In between the locals and the refugees, this is how I experience it.”

In the case of Greece, the exclusion of refugees and social workers' intervention cannot be understood without considering that in general, the social context and the public discourses, had been in great part hostile towards migrants and refugees. Past narratives about the control of borders, illegal immigration, alleged security threats and the need to regulate 'immigration flows' as a possible threat to national sovereignty and security had concrete impacts on migrants and their further alienation from the Greek state and society (see Fakiolas, 2003; Kasimis and Papadopoulos, 2005; Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2019; Papoutsi *et al.*, 2019). The Eurozone financial and political crisis certainly exacerbated feelings of insecurity, surrounding competition for jobs, illegitimate claims for welfare benefits, and the erosion of cultural identity (Skleparis, 2017a). In this light, social workers' interventions were presented as opposing and delegitimizing dominant securitization and criminalization narratives. Amidst these conditions, Ellie said, practitioners *“came face to face with the reactions of residents”* fuelled by misunderstanding, bias or prejudice then rendering refugees more governable for control and containment. Nadia invoked the authoritarian interference of local people as a real challenge to the social, political and cultural protection of refugees from violence that undermined the independence of the law and the judiciary, rooted in human rights.

“Do you see social justice in Moria? Do you see human rights in Moria? It was that incident that happened one Sunday when refugees and families gathered in Sappho Square, to protest for the insufficient medical services and poor living conditions in the camp. I stayed there until 6.00 in the morning; I was searching out for our children. Back then, I used to work in an accommodation centre for minors. There were families and children among them and what they demanded was to be set free. There were rumours that*

this was deliberately meant to be happening. You could see children of ours- I mean Greek, in the age of 16 and 17 smashing the pavements and throwing them against the refugees to break their heads open. Men were holding blankets to protect the women and the children. People around them at the age of 50-60 would say "Bravo! Serves them right". Their purpose was to kick them out of the island. At 5.30 in the morning the police hadn't made any arrests and set the people who were gathered there, free to go. Because you don't know who is also there. Whose son and so on. And in the end they said the refugees were too provocative. I was shocked, and I asked myself what kind of people are we?"

Social workers emphasised the restoration of 'human dignity', as opposed to politicized accounts about refugees' dehumanisation. This is explained well by Xenia with long-term involvement in taking care of the urgent needs of refugee children.

"One of the things you need to work with, is the schools. Now things are better, but they didn't want to have children in their classes. They didn't have the knowledge or they probably didn't want it. Or parents who mobilised themselves against refugees. Things that happened in Greece. What do you do there? YOU [emphasis on the voice] are called upon to respond actively with community work. Meetings with the parents, by making reports and complaints! Somehow, you need to demand the right of the child to education! You need to find ways to ensure the right to health care!"

However, in doing this, it is practice in ways that resonate with the normative values of compassion, reproducing the exclusionary logic of deservingness. For social workers, refugees function as the "other", against which they can construct meaning and identity. Refugees should be sympathetically understood as people who "*are not here to bother you*", "*will not hurt you*", "*they need help*".

Between the 2012 and 2015 refugee 'crisis' Lafazani (2018) noted, official rhetoric and media representations supported the idea of a 'refugee Odyssey', where acts of solidarity were part of national pride. However, she questioned the power to designate someone as Other, against whom Greeks can imagine themselves in opposition. That is "between the one who hosts and the one who is hosted" (Ibid:623), where refugees are those who are unable to care for themselves, and therefore become

utterly reliant on the charity of others. In this sense, representations of a ‘non-threatening victim’ in need to be “saved” and integrated could be limited and biased, while perpetuating unequal power relations.

Ellies’ narrative illustrated that social workers’ interventions must be considered within a wider social context, which had not only been hostile towards refugees, who were increasingly scapegoated as responsible for the loss of jobs in the face of the current economic crisis, but also in relation to larger economic and social relations of a system of class rule that derives profit from exploitation.

“Because when there was the need to establish the accommodation, bear with me now, there was an opening of the real estate in the market and there were no places for example in Athens. Businesses were coming here to buy. So, where would the accommodation be developed? People were more interested in selling their properties than providing them for accommodation. There was a need to have accommodation in areas that didn’t have any relation with the refugees. For example, [NGO] had accommodation in [area] or [area], and not in an isolated place. Can you understand what it took to have all this organised, including the services and the institutions in the field of social protection?”

The narrative incubates an elevated level of political critique, since behind the suffering addressed, characterised by binary roles of helpers and the helped, there should not be a disrespect for the political, economic or other causal mechanisms at play. Ellie’s narrative intended to draw the attention to working on the contractions as well as the insufficient functioning of the state, which is disregarding the fracturing of the market and shifting its responsibilities onto everyday efforts between municipal and civil societal agents to distribute the ‘burden’ refugees within ethnically homogeneous communities.

More than a reflection, it was one of the distinctive expression and reproduction of social relations that have social, spatial, economic, environmental, and political effects. According to Harvey (2005:2-7), the role of the state is to facilitate ‘profitable capital accumulation’ and to protect private property and the market. In contrast to the refugees and migrants who are refused naturalization and residency and kept out, one-third of property sales of abandoned and low-cost housing in the city, now go to golden visa¹⁰⁴ investors and rent-seeking finance capital that purchase three or four apartments in popular tourist spots and rent them out to rent-extracting platforms such as Airbnb, leading to rents rise by 17% (Bateman, 2019). The profit was estimated at €840 million which was not taxed (Siatitsa, 2019). The monetized and commercialized citizenship was a significant indicator of the recent growth of mobility injustices that enacted inclusion and exclusion. Such differential forms of citizenship were associated with the unfettered movement of transnational capital, the free trade zones and the “offshore” financial centres and governed by regimes that control migration via detention and deaths of refugees in many borderlands (Sheller, 2018). These restrictions manifesting deeply colonial and imperial forms were reflected in everyday practices, fragmented public services, gentrified city centres that limit the right to the city and exacerbating previous inequalities by pushing the poor, the racialized minority, asylum seekers and migrants to the margins of public space (Ibid: Unpaged).

In actuality, even though Athens is one of the most ethnically diverse cities¹⁰⁵, yet racial discrimination in housing and segregation is determined by racial factors, as

¹⁰⁴ Greece to attract funds into its failing economy introduced the Migration and Integration Code, Law 4251/2014 that provides the direct purchase of residency rights and a fast-track to citizenship to third country nationals and their family members for those who can afford real estate property in Greece, the value of which exceeds 250,000 Euros. Additionally, for wealth advisory firms involved in strategic investments, the stay of their third country representatives of investment bodies and their partners is facilitated.

¹⁰⁵ According to data from the national statistical authorities (ELSTAT) Athens is a city with very high population density with around 3.090.508 inhabitants (Makrygianni, 2014). An approximate 10% of the population is migrants from East Asia, the Balkans and Africa. These populations render Athens the city of the 21st century, according to Makrygianni (2014:2-3), who through urban

well as economic. When public housing policies were mentioned in a group discussion, accommodation was identified with property values, as a source of income and real estate speculation. Conflicting agendas over protecting private property rights against providing shelter for refugees were identified. The protection of private property and investment programmes for the city, including anxieties over economic instability, stood out to be a constraint to any collective public support to demand state-funded and safe housing for all that would end exploitative and oppressive relations. It was also maintained that the rights of those who own real estate were more protected than the human dignity and the value of all human beings. In effect, the interest of economic imperatives, in a presumably free market economy, with its gross inequality, continued to inform notions of who we should live with and among, as well as housing practices in terms of the places individuals chose to live.

In Athens, during the 1990s and 2000s -the era of Greek developmental capitalism- many areas had experienced, for good or for ill, tremendous processes of gentrification and steeply escalating housing prices. Along with expensive and diverse restaurants and shopping malls, accounts of gentrification often make reference to the movement of the bourgeois strata to the northern and southern suburbs which was escalated when more than 500,000 migrants arrived in deteriorating parts of the inner city (Vradis and Dalakoglou, 2011:31; Dalakoglou, 2013a). The suburbanisation of the capital's population has contributed to the devaluation of housing in parts of central Athens which has been subsequently filled by immigrants and their families

and social protests aimed at claiming the city against austerity politics and rather break away from its inferior positions and the body of social passivity.

Makrygianni, V. (2014) 'Moving populations and emancipatory practices in contemporary Athens in a crisis era (in Greek)', *Exantas*, 24.

(Hatziprokopiou and Frangopoulos, 2016). Even in a socio-spatially porous city, this process of socio-spatial segregation (Dalakoglou, 2013b) created more socially homogeneous residential areas in the periphery of the city (Kandyliis and Kavoulakos, 2011) and generated new forms of urban deprivation and social marginality including; the construction of a marginalised ‘other’; the rise of xenophobia; stereotyping and discrimination as well as informal economy (Noussia and Lyons, 2009).

Strategies of policing, displacement and criminalisation were supported by local collective actors and the city government for the gentrification of local districts and the aesthetic deterioration and devaluation by migrant concentration (Kandyliis and Kavoulakos, 2011; Teloni and Mantanika, 2015) pointing to its lack of “commitment to urban living” (Soja, 2015).

This kind of communication, as mentioned earlier, within the existing social and political environment, therefore, implies a certain strategic dimension for facilitating their integration into the receiving community and helped to prevent segregation of accommodating refugees in apartments in the urban environment.

John raised concerns on how accessible public social and welfare services were and delivered in local communities.

“At the same time, there is the social service, these people that are engaged in this process, do they have translators? Do they have the capacity? Do they have a social service? There are municipalities that don’t have social services and they still assume responsibilities”

He stressed that they have little resources or no experience in supporting refugees, and social workers find themselves in a context characterised by a rather absent culture of welfare.

As a solution, he identified the enhancement of welfare *“that is, if we don’t invest on welfare, we will not have results; and this is related to development and cooperation of all, with the employment...”*. He expressed concerns about the rising anti-migrant rhetoric and xenophobia in the EU, but he felt optimistic, since society, *“on the level of networks, solidarity communities”*- making direct reference to the actions of social and political movements, reacted positively and accepted the different. When he referred to the reactions having taken place in schools against refugee students, he attributed these phenomena to the lack of information, lack of awareness and community-based actions.

“Prevention! Emphatically, John said. “What I told you before, democratic processes and intervention beforehand. They didn’t go”. He explained, “I believe that everything that takes place in my neighbourhood I must take part in and discuss it. Or at least get informed. There is fear everywhere. The fear of taking the political risk, so I don’t inform you and I hide it from you”.

John referred to dispersal practices, implying the movement of people back and forth across places, increasing tension with local people and people who are vulnerable could drift out of potential helping systems. Aspects of exclusion, social isolation and marginalization, attached to the institutional policies and accommodation realities of present-day society, were viewed as a complex system of oppression that reinforces more familiar forms of oppression, such as racism and exploitation. He invited me to reflect:

“... one day you have 900 people in your village who don’t want to be there, or 200. So, in a mountainous area without the needed services they transfer 200 people. And I say to you a priori we are good people, and our intentions are good. But the reality is different, and not all have good intentions, especially when it comes to racism and xenophobia. There is exploitation. Because many times, xenophobia and racism are

the vehicle of exploitation to put pressure on the poor, the desperate. So, in this case there must be proactive actions. That is to catch up, inform and ask for help for the support of these people. Unless you want to have a rise of xenophobia and racism.”

In that case John explained that policy makers did not engage with policy-making; *“you don’t raise awareness, you don’t promote programs for the educational integration of these children. Kismet¹⁰⁶!”*

John’s approach to community practice involved assessment before the intervention that would provide information to the local communities, which was something that did not happen with regards to the camps. *“Having the approval of the mayor, doesn’t mean that the community provides its approval [...] how can this happen when local authorities don’t have social services, people don’t know what a social worker is? See these local authorities [name] and [name]¹⁰⁷. In this geographical area, there are only 3 social workers. Many people didn’t know that there were social services”. He concluded, “how have we got the illusion that one day a camp might spring out, without services and everything would be wonderful? And if they are not, the blame is on certain citizens. It is there where you allow and provide the opportunities for the development of right-wing movements”.*

Such explanations expand the scope of mainstream social work, where political action is needed to engage with issues of social marginalisation and economic exploitation more effectively, aiming at inclusion and cooperation that impact on all people. Intervention explained on a cycle of planning, action, evaluation and reflection with the local communities.

¹⁰⁶ In Islam, kismet refers to as fate, is a predetermined course of events.

¹⁰⁷ 268,39 km² in total.

His narrative sought to go beyond the usual stereotypes of refugees evident in political rhetoric and expressed commitments to changing the structures which contribute to racism and oppression in Greece, including political attitudes and culture, as well as immigration policy. His narrative invited to consider how dominant ideologies or ways of thinking and societal institutions impact on all people's lives.

Racism was not attributed to 'individual' failure, rather than what John considered the material and relational aspect of power and social relations. The implication that arose from this, was the need to practise across the personal, cultural and structural levels.

He maintained hope in solidarity built in grassroots movements. Absence of vital services not only meant that refugees were unable to access the right to social services, which further added to their disadvantage, but equally to the creation of a hostile environment. Within the current political climate, covering through misinformation and secrecy, social work's political purpose and role in democracy, in informing and educating the community, is becoming clearer. In fact, social action on local communities was deemed important in coping with the far-right actors, who also make use of direct actions when dealing with immigration.

In this respect, for John, the best way to connect housing structures to the community and advancing collaboration might become reality, where on the micro level; *"We are there to welcome and protect the person who will request asylum and protection in the EU. This is your role there"*. On the macro level *"Through the international network, we try to affect developments in a positive way and for the protection of people, basically the protection of human rights"* while on the community level, he dismissed confrontational actions against the settlement of refugees and

focused on prevention by addressing some of the underlying causes, such as poverty. On how refugee advocates could avoid their entrapment in the work of new right-wing populist tendencies, and, on the other, expand refugees' claims beyond the need for compassionate treatment and humanitarian assistance, he mentioned; *“When you want to approach conservative co-citizens, you don't invoke fear and xenophobia, because this has happened in the past, and I think that this can have negative effects. I believe that you need to speak and promote the equality, the rights, transparency, the cooperation. These are [values] what you need to stress, and not the negatives ones, the fear, the competition, the criminality, and I don't know what else...”*

8.2. Evictions; An ambiguous role for social workers.

At the same time, the context in which practitioners operated was shaped by multiple external, as it were, restrictions that were dictated on them undermining their ability to act autonomously. From spring to autumn 2019, refugees were subjected, due to a governmental decision, to forcible evictions from squats in the centre of Athens by sweep operations, followed by their relocation in camps in remote mainland areas and detention centres (Alkabbani et al., 2020). These involved the pressure to “evict” refugees with nowhere to go; the numerous cases of them living already under precarious conditions; coupled with the absence of all type of housing resources.

Antonis, commenting on his participation in grassroots meetings, expressed feelings of powerlessness and frustration. He argued that he saw it as a way to improve the services refugees receive and to extend their rights to housing. Policy developments were understood as removing the “*wellbeing*” from social work and diminishing the welfare of people for whom they work.

The first-hand experience of the harsh realities of refugees was a decisive factor in motivating him, as well as Areti, Niki and Rhea to take part in campaigns against evictions. He, among many others, repeatedly denounced the precarious and difficult conditions in which refugees were living in Greece.

Regarding asylum seekers' accommodation, according to a decision¹⁰⁸ of the Greek Ministry of Migration Policy (2019), as of 1 April 2019, refugees who had entered the country two years ago, i.e., before July 31, 2017 and had been granted international protection¹⁰⁹, gradually, after an additional 6 months upon the receipt of the decision, would lose their right to accommodation either in the camps or in ESTIA apartments-an accommodation program funded by UNHCR. Within this kind of "NGO-management" of refugee needs, where the services were provided with a - permanently postponed - expiration date, the refugees had found themselves trapped in a regime of precariousness and uncertainty with three-month extensions regarding their accommodation. At the same time, they would lose their access to cash assistance. This decision adhered to the requirements of the European Union, under whose rules, only asylum seekers could have access to both accommodation and cash. As many refugees had continued resorting to makeshift accommodation or remained homeless in urban areas, the decision came to effect in order for the Government to tackle the high numbers of arrivals, the overcrowding islands and the lack of accommodation places that could meet asylum seekers' needs.

Under the new policy, refugees received notice that they had until 31st March, 2019, to leave UNHCR accommodation or camp, otherwise their cash assistance would

¹⁰⁸ Greek Ministry of Migration Policy. (2019, March 12) Regulated by the Ministerial decision No. 6382/19 on the "Determination of framework materializing the programme providing financial assistance and shelter "ESTIA." Official Gazette, 853 / B/12.03.2019".

¹⁰⁹ Refugee status or subsidiary protection

cease. Exceptions were made on the basis of criteria set by medical and vulnerability assessments and groups like women in the advance stages of pregnancy could be temporally exempted. The Greek government, including the UNHCR and its partner organizations would inform refugees about their decisions in rounds to schedule their departure from the accommodation, depending on when they had been granted protection.

Plans to assist them with their social integration and move into their own apartments had not yet been organised¹¹⁰. Beyond the NGOs' care provisions and amidst increased unemployment, a social housing scheme didn't exist, while bureaucracy and strict eligibility criteria obscured their access to social services and the national welfare system (Refugee Info, 2019). At the time of its implementation, the decision concerned an estimated 600 people– recognized before the end of July 2017 –, yet affecting roughly 15.000 people (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2019).

Following the evictions, many were offered places in Elaionas camp, while others already residing in the camp were forced to homelessness. Against the backdrop of these events, in the mid of 2019, a four-year-old Afghan boy had lost his life in a shelter provided by FILOXENIA¹¹¹ project (RSA-ProAsyl, 2019), highlighting the fact of substandard reception conditions and their impact on their residents.

¹¹⁰ In March 2019, the Ministry of Migration Policy announced the launch of the “HELIOS” integration programme, funded by DG HOME of the European Commission and implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in partnership with several non-governmental organisations. Aim of the programme was to support the integration of beneficiaries of international protection (refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection) into Greek society. The focus was on services that promote on beneficiaries' self-reliance and integration in the Greek society through becoming active members of it. The programme was expected to provide integration activities such as Greek language learning, cultural orientation, life skills and rental support for six months, upon condition they hold a rental agreement of a duration exceeding 6 months and a bank account. Refugees recognised before 1 January 2018, were excluded. Eligible candidates must have been beneficiaries of international protection and must have been in an Open Accommodation Centre, a Reception and Identification Centre (RIC), a hotel of the IOM FILOXENIA project or a form of accommodation provided by the ESTIA programme. The programme started in July 2019. IOM, Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS), available at: <https://greece.iom.int/en/hellenic-integration-support-beneficiaries-international-protection-helios>

¹¹¹ Temporary Shelter and Protection for the Most Vulnerable Migrants in Greece

Reflecting on his involvement with the movement, Antonis insisted on that when calling this process evictions, which adversely impact on social workers' engagement. *"There is a FEK that describes exactly the criteria of the processes- I call them evictions, because these are happening from the apartments ESTIA programme has"*. To his understanding, this is done by design *"in order for the people and the apartments to be reduced in lots and in order for nothing to be left in the end."* Explaining the application of the law, he said that *"recognised refugees¹¹² are being entitled to a usual grace period of six months and then must leave. There are some criteria in place for the exemption of vulnerable cases, but at some point, this will end."*

Like Alexandros, Antonis mentioned evictions had always taken place. Both, along with many other social workers, took the position that people and their needs should be treated on an individual basis.

On these occasions when evictions had to take place, Alexandros, associating the role of the social worker with that of a police officer and thus, with the very face of state authority, explained:

"Look. It is awkward because I have done it in the past myself. Not in that way. On the basis of a presidential decree. When I was I at the accommodation programme, I had told someone, look, you have to leave the apartment. But when did I do that? When they could stand on their own feet to a certain degree. Or when they couldn't cooperate. This [the law] horizontal, is terrible! And it is not only that which makes it horrible. It is that there is no integration scheme we talked about. So, there is no plan for their 'exodus'. And it is happening in that horrible, terrible, way."

Due to the fact that many state-led integration programmes did not really exist, he said that refugees' support does not work in the way government informs, and that

¹¹² Having granted international protection.

it may need at least two years in order for them to be able to move out from the provided accommodation. The law, however, set criteria beforehand, which are not defined by the needs of the refugees, so much as by other interests and goals.

Antonis explained that at the most basic level, refugees tend to be understood as ‘equals’ to Greek citizens in terms of opportunities and responsibilities according to the law¹¹³. This however seemed inadequate to ensuring integration without state institutions and support to achieve full inclusion, and hence “*they are being kicked out*”. By referring to housing, Antonis, while disavowing oppressive conditions, was pointing to a direction of redefining the framework of existing provisions, which required reviewing for safeguarding vulnerable populations. Legality, while it is important, was not yet adequate for gaining access to a whole range of social rights and social services in the receiving society.

As Kourachanis (2020:12) notes, citizenship rights seek not only to respect and recognise the dignity of citizens, but also involve the responsibility and obligations the state has to provide social support services via social rights, ensuring decent living conditions and equal opportunities.

Even though rights come with strings attached, Antonis recognised the asymmetries of oppression and marginalisation, while stressing procedural inconsistencies and inequality in existing institutions and public policy. He pointed out that “*This is not consistent with what is taking place in the field*” and saw that “*the*

¹¹³ Under the newly adopted Law 4636/2019 (art.27) beneficiaries of international protection (refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries) have access to wage employment or self-employment on the same terms and conditions that apply to Greek citizens, provided they hold a valid residence permit. The same rights were also provided by Law 4375/2016 (art. 69). Before that, they had the obligation to issue a work permit in order to access the labour market.

requirements for their accommodation are becoming strict in ways that people are meant to be excluded”.

However, as many practitioners have argued, access to housing had been a major concern for him too. He argued that it was impossible for people to be accommodated *“and many of the cases fell into the void”*. To him housing is *“a need that is connected with all other needs.”* While the organisation focused on issues regarding health, and housing should not have been one of his concerns, he came to realise that eventually housing was meant to access social rights. *“Housing is being connected with the feeling of security and health to a greater extent. That is, from someone who is diabetic and needs specific nourishment to a homeless African woman who will return to her apartment, where there are another ten people there, and she might be raped by the end of the week. And this is something that I can’t do anything about. Antonis, recalled, obviously moved “Now, pregnant women are coming here, ready to give birth in a week and they are homeless. Or they call me from the Hospital. Do you know her? She gave birth and she doesn’t know where to go.”*

In addition to the evictions themselves, the process appeared punitive, since refugees who would refuse to leave, would not receive the monthly allowance they got from the UNHCR. Shocked by the government’s ruthless treatment to destitute migrants, Antonis provided a description of the eviction process. *“Everything is against George! [...] If the refugees leave without tsabuká¹¹⁴ and do whatever they are being told to do, they won’t lose their money for the following 3 months, since they have been recognised as refugees 6 months ago.”*

¹¹⁴ Force [τσαμπουκά].

When I asked Marina how refugees see the decisions regarding their evictions, she described the accommodation as an environment refugees found themselves forced to accept. A context that was constrained, limited and fundamentally precarious. Regarding the evictions themselves, they were presented as a potential site for collision in perpetuating the subjugation of the racially marginalised. Refugees without having a place to live, appeared to resist both to their removal, as well as to the to the rationalizing strict requirements that maintain and manage the accommodation scheme. As we walked from her work to the city centre, she pointed to the offices of an NGO, monitored by security personnel telling me that *“Here you will see a person sitting outside. I don’t know if you know, refugees had been frustrated and they were looking where the offices of the organisation were. They were looking who was responsible. To know what was happening and why.”* Against the background of the evictions and on a more practical level, professionals appeared to be concerned more regarding refugees’ management of everyday life. In addition to this, and against social work, refugees themselves appeared to defend and justify their rights to housing:

“The refugees don’t see it positively. As far as I can remember, families would stand up for their cases to show you that this is not good for me or my family and that I am not going to do that. And from what I know, the service withdrew. I have also heard that they were shouting to a refugee. The refugee was shouting to the social worker and the translator. They had to leave the house because they had hosted someone without telling them. Which is happening. Many people do it. That is because they have the feeling of solidarity. (Marina, social worker).

Marina depicted the levels of service provision and that of housing in particular, as a *“vicious cycle”*. As refugees might have been evicted from their apartments, they could not be referred again to the organisations offering accommodation, from which they had been forced to leave in the first place.

Penelope explained that the government, recognising that the accommodation schemes were at their limits, found itself under pressure in implementing the decongestion of the Aegean islands. In fact, she noted that the regulatory framework for the accommodation was in the context of speeding up procedures, as part of gaining leverage in accommodation capacity on the mainland and rapidly ease the congestion of the Greek islands, for those who were legally entitled to leave, but remained stranded for a prolonged period of time in overcrowded and substandard facilities. The other prong of the strategy she considered, was on undeclared assumptions to avoid and technocratically manage the resistance of the people whom it targeted, in the absence of integration policies and adequate housing policies.

In her words, the legislative framework was designed on exclusion criteria *“because I [the state] want to recognise those living in the apartments, so that they won’t set up a fire and don’t cause any explosion. This is it. There is no logic in setting up a migration policy or an inclusion policy beforehand. The logic is how the system won’t become kougi¹¹⁵. We’re at the point where I have left them, and now that (accommodation) is on its limits, I kick some of them out, and since some of them are gone, why do I care.... They are somewhere. Maybe in Germany. So, this is the problem I [the state] am facing, this is what I am trying to solve.”*

Greener (2014: unpagged) has argued that in many jurisdictions, citizenship that codifies the relationship between the individual and the state, is not homogeneous, but is about ascribing particular rights to certain groups. While expressing a sense of assertion of rights for members and inclusion to community, new migration policies of

¹¹⁵ It refers to an episode that took place more than two centuries ago during the Greek resistance against the Ottoman rule in Epirus. During the war events a group of Souliotes, rather than being captured by their enemies, chose to blow themselves up in a monastery at Kougi Fortress. It is now referred to cases when hard line on negotiations could turn them into an explosion.

seclusion—exclusion, legal status and rights produce and sustain the disadvantage of certain groups in contemporary society, and as a result, they exclude rather than include people. Hence, people face obstacles concerning certain welfare benefits/services, and are hierarchically positioned against each other in terms of their respective economic and social resources. Within the simultaneous denial of certain rights, such policies, he argues, should be understood as malleable for the disadvantages and discriminations they create. And it is in this sense, that immigration policies are inherently racist at a structural level. They produce and sustain the disadvantage of certain groups in contemporary society for their exploitation and affect the general life experiences of those who are dependent on social work and care.

While social inclusion policy remained fragmented and lacked cohesion, the rationale of the organisations appeared to be strict on regulations with clear limits on the actions they could take, and thus did not meet long term welfare policies, but immediate and emergency needs. It was explained that after 2015, policies and practices for migration became independent from the state. Organisations contributed towards that direction by filling this gap, which was primarily associated with responding to an emergency.

She pointed out that *“this is not very clear to the people who work in the field and how this is related to the welfare. And in this, the involvement of international organisations didn’t help, because the organisations do not have the logic of the welfare. They don’t know how someone whose cash assistance¹¹⁶ ended could be further supported from the Solidarity¹¹⁷. In order for that to become understood we had*

¹¹⁶ Cash assistance to asylum seekers was included in the Emergency Support to Integration and accommodation (ESTIA) programme funded by DG ECHO and provided by the UNHCR in collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

¹¹⁷ the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity.

meetings over meetings.” In this regard, she emphasised that in welfare state interventions and regulations “*there is no logic of continuity [...]. It is a patch work over an emergency*”.

This critique of policy responses in terms of their inconsistency and their formally associated discriminatory implications was argued on and these were embodied in the inclusion and/or exclusion criteria of the accommodation scheme itself, that did not treat claimants as individuals and lacking rights-based culture. “*The accommodation of the asylum seekers starts in 2015-2016. Those who had applied for asylum in 2014 or 2013 didn’t have the right to apply [...] I am now reading the Helios programme. It is a programme for those being recognised in 2019. What about those who have being recognised in 2018? There is no logic in this. It is the logic of the emergency*”. Refugees have had their de facto citizenship rights compromised by discrimination and inaccessibility.

Ifigenia regarding the right to housing that I mentioned, pointed to the fragmented nature of provided services and the exclusionary nature of rights.

“Yes! When you are not an asylum seeker anymore, but a refugee, you have a right to housing. Where is that right? Or how have I helped them find their own house? With all these semi programmes- that are expensive by the way, you get people in the logic that they have certain rights. And of course, they demand them! And they say to you: have you helped to find a place to live? how can I do that? And all these are logical demands. [...] Now people are mobilising themselves on their own and do things. Where is social justice?

Doing justice entails drawing from principles that are not necessarily recognized in the official body of laws. Within the wider policy environment of welfare

retrenchment and control to which Antonis' status as a social worker is located, he highlighted social work's association with those practices, which were not deliberately designed to respond to socially "recognised" needs. "*Evictions should have been illegal by law for the social workers*", he explained, since they are against our fundamental aims and values as policy and practices of pivoting on providing welfare.

On this account, to say that there is a human right against evictions, is mainly to assert that there are strong reasons for believing that it is always morally wrong to engage in such a process and that protections should be provided against it. The notion of refugees' wellbeing was at odds with the ad hoc priorities of Government policies, and social work practice must transcend and override them, since its principles or ethics, outside the law were being violated. He suggested that there is a need for legislative protection and deontology as a formal code against practices that "*essentially undermine the wellbeing of people*" in order to be utilized as a basis to invoke justice.

More importantly, what was stressed, was that social workers were seeking a particular status and exceptions from certain laws in keeping with the interests of their service users, if they chose to act in defiance of any government and/or employer demands that ran counter to such rights. He emphatically said that, if you didn't comply with the legislation you were risking losing your job.

This is well captured by Areti, who asserted that it could be a backfire for social work by the organisations, in ways that ignore power and structural inequalities, where there were little resources and no protections, and which in reality have a very real impact on agency and available choices.

When I asked what this could mean for practitioners in reality, Areti described it as follows: *“Backfire to the professional. What did you do to address the inclusion of the refugee? Did you convince him to attend classes? If not, you are a bad social worker. I have heard all that.”* Her concern was that when such practices and regulatory frameworks were to be challenged, there could be an accusation to social workers, questioning: *“Why don’t you show me what you did, and we end up in this situation. [...] Many social workers have been challenged... Why haven’t you mobilised them to find work?”*.

This process is particularly potent in relation to Banks’ (2014) ‘responsibilisation’ of social work, where the individual social worker and the service users are decontextualised, are trends complicit with NPM discourse. Rather than basing problems on social policy issues, structural issues are depoliticised into personal responsibility and thus are framed from a personal perspective, obscuring the need to locating them in the wider political and social context and take political action. Following from this, and in relation to the evictions, responsibility may be attributed to the refugees themselves or the wrongdoing of those who were supposed to support them with accommodation and integration, such as social workers, rather than analysing what is wrong with asylum policy (see Fekete, 2009).

Indeed, for those who actively engaged in support of the destitute refugees, such practice of solidarity against the enforcement of ministerial decision and their consequent deprivation did not appear acceptable by their organisations. Following from this, NGOs workers’ union, by opposing to carry out immigration control and containment functions wrought and underpinned by fragmented integration mechanism, called “Against the criminalisation of workers who refuse to force refugees into homelessness” and “for support for those who resist the decision” (Svemko,2019).

With the issue of the refugees' evictions in particular, leading to punitive discourses and practices from the employees, "*especially against those [social workers] who speak against them*" as Areti told me, I wondered if this practice could be challenged on the basis of moral grounds to securing the right to housing on a professional level. It was said that "*Regarding morals, it's not something that can happen. Deontologically, a social worker can be protected [from allegations of unethical practice], because she provides certain services within limited time frame, and that it is the refugee who has signed it and disregards the agreement*¹¹⁸. *In practice, the police could be called by the manager, not the social worker.*"

Following from that, she recognised that services have their limits as guarantors of social protection. This was clearly reflected on the requirements of social justice in terms of moral values and the extent of the role of the social worker in the process of social exclusion and marginalisation of the refugees.

Listening to the account provided by Areti, Antonis and others, moral values would seem again to be expelled from consideration under very specific objectives, means, and aims, and considered separable from ethical, social, and political domains. Hence, the social worker did not appear obliged to work on what is needed on moral grounds, but to deliver what is considered preferable under the specific policy framework and basically impose obligations and expectations of the service recipients, branded as conditionality. In her view, to solve the problem of the evictions solely through reliance on GASW alone as an institution that could regulate fairness and social protection was questionable, because the legislative framework had conferred

¹¹⁸ She is referring to the documents with the terms and conditions refugees sign when they enter the formal accommodation, making known that recognised refugees are not eligible for accommodation at formal structures and spaces and if they are granted international protection in theory, they should not reside in the formal accommodation spaces.

responsibility on the services of the NGOs to deliver such policies. *“I am not sure, Areti said, how can GASW intervene? I guess not. Because evictions are being protected by the law. There is a law that includes all that; It is expected.”*

Areti, mentioned that we pay little attention to the structural conditions under which we practice social work, and their problems are considered those in the ‘here and now’. In the current broader context, she had struggled to provide to refugees, a way out of homelessness through the rental sector with no housing policies in place as a safety net and benefits that are available to them. Conversely, she pushed the conception of the evictions even beyond a recognition of the migration setting, arguing that phenomena, such as migrant detention, racial segregation, poverty; unemployment stands in some relation to each other, as well as to wider structural concerns caused by social and economic concerns.

She gravitated this approach to understating policies about the evictions as *“issues [that] have exceeded the individuals themselves and are now considered collective. This is what we do not see”*. In fact, the housing problem in Greece has become congruent with economic hardships such as poverty, overtaxation, accumulated debt, energy cost and the increased unemployment, affecting the most vulnerable social groups such as immigrants, youth (reaching 60% in 2014), low-income households (Siatitsa, 2019).

Pausing for reflection, Areti, listened to the Manic Street Preachers in *If you tolerate this, then your children will be next*, commenting on housing and care on a social policy level that remains “invisible” as a private matter for the individual family and not a matter of public concern:

“Traditionally we don’t have public housing. You keep everyone and everything in the family and someone else assumes that responsibility. This is how this society works. It is a structural matter. Only the vagabonds used to be homeless. This has changed, since being homeless is not only the one who lives in the streets. Precarious conditions of housing, including evictions for Airbnb, are also being included when we consider housing policies.”

On that account, the traditional family structure has appeared as the institution that absorbs the permanent social shocks of the post-memorandum era. In a context of injustice, the same considerations apply to and are inscribed in everyone from different vectors of class, race and gender in the wider social context. While pointing out the welfare deficit and the negative consequences of the development of urban gentrification¹¹⁹ -indicative of the sweeping policies of dispossession, as reflected in the privatization of commodification of basic human needs, such as health, care, housing and the public space in which wealthy investors take over the neighbourhoods, she made the claim that these were also coupled with the changing nature of work itself. She went on to say that the prevalence of precarious employment of short-term contracts was rising, since it appeared widespread and banal in neoliberal times of crisis:

¹¹⁹ Following the growth of urban tourism, the possibility of renting flats via online platforms appeared to provide an exodus from financial stagnancy and supplementary income to small-scale property owners. 42,000 residences in Greece are being rented via Airbnb or similar electronic platforms, with owners making in excess €550 a month and resulting in €840 million in 2018, most of which is not taxed. However, many of the problems associated with such rentals on daily life in the cities have become obvious and significant in Athens and in places popular with tourists, such as the islands. Siatitsa, D. (2019) *Anyone at Home? Housing in Greece: The impact of Austerity and Prospects for the Future*. Athens, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung at: https://rosalux.gr/sites/default/files/publications/katoikia_en_final.pdf

“Teachers on the islands live in hotels or in their own cars, because they cannot rent a property [...] I had a friend, a social worker who was living in a rented house from October until May. During summer he would live wherever he could. No one would rent him a place. He also had to do two jobs during the summer to get by.”

(Areti, social worker)

Equally, Antonis gave emphasis on the fact that an outsider lacks the knowledge of the application of the law in a concrete social situation and how to interpret these principles in reality. Given that the care deficit was not likely to be easily resolved and was likely to continue to be part of the broader immigration policies, at the individual level, he said, like Antigoni, *“that I would have say to them you, you have to leave.”*

Since such practical decisions did not occur in the void and were not arbitrary, Antigoni considered that *“most of the practitioners follow the line of their organisation, employee and ministerial decision, saying you have to leave. I cannot do anything, and they try to find ways to refer these people to other services. In fact, many services have referred people to the homeless shelter.”*

This does not necessarily sit comfortably with the role of social work to deliver and ensure access to rights as well as enhancing ‘wellbeing’ of vulnerable groups in line with the definition provided by the IFSW (2014) and reflects an essential lack of appropriate policies for social protection in general, and for safeguarding refugees in particular.

The social workers were often obliged to play a difficult role and generally accept that law and the sense of (in)justice imbedded within it, when government has abandoned its duty to protect refugees from abuses and access to fundamental services,

including education and health. From this point, Antonis presented evictions as an inevitable dilemma of the daily experience of social exclusion and the personal feelings that came with it.

“It would be difficult for me to kick people out. I have done it before, under different circumstances. That was different. You were not compelled by a law. FEK? Just to kick people out in the streets? Thank god, I am not in the accommodation- I would have a problem to evict people out. You are obliged by a FEK; it is too strong-you cannot bargain.” (Antonis, Social worker).

Under the present economic and political conditions, regarding the implementation of the law, followed by workers subject to dismissal, Antonis argued that such regulations-also restricted by categories of eligibility, effectively give little room for manoeuvre for social workers to reach their desired aims and, hence they could be prevented from ad hoc policy making.

In questioning its features posed by law, he drew attention to the limitations it posed and the order which social work was based upon, as well as the consequent loss of practitioner autonomy.

This issue of how government can influence the goals and priorities of practice given its mission to wellbeing was highlighted with his response on his professional discretion and interpretation of laws by giving certain benefits and services to refugees who were not entitled to them. In order to illustrate this further he said: *“When I was in the previous organisation that ran accommodation programmes, I had the advantage when there was a vulnerable case to discuss it internally with my organisation and accommodate it somewhere”*.

In a constantly redefining employment context that impedes human rights practice through standardised performance, Ife (2008: 209-210) assumed that frontline workers are making important discretionary decisions in their direct contact with citizens and hence, play a crucial role as actors in the context of social transformation in successfully claiming social rights from the state. Ife (2008) pointed the need for social workers who have to carry them out to extend human rights through creative interpretation of existing policies.

Against the contradictions created by legislation, the interpretation and application of those rules could be resolved for the enhancement of human rights through administrative discretion, established by informal processes of ‘office culture’ that enables workers to conform to or resist policy directives in their every-day decision making.

This undoubtedly touches upon one of the arguments about social workers’ “discretionary powers” which was identified by Lipsky (2010[1980]) by manipulating legal loopholes and the ways “policy” is shaped by their practice when governments influence the goals and priorities of actors and organizations. The street-level bureaucracy, a term coined by Lipsky (2010[1980]:xii) suggests that “the actions of most public service workers actually constitute the services ‘delivered’ by the government” and are being “part of the reality of policy implementation”(Ibid:16). In the context of policy implementation, the thesis maintains that workers are the “ultimate policy makers” who remake policy for those service users who are particularly vulnerable to the deleterious effects of structural violence. Workers, such as social workers, in terms of developing good practice, have the discretion and autonomy to modify their actions to enhance human rights against the regulations encapsulated in sets of rules, policies and operational procedures.

Antigoni saw the evictions as a carrier of so many ambiguities and complexities. She focused especially on the integration deficit, as necessary to improving refugees' status and rights as well as their capacity to participate as full members of society. The decision alone had been and would continue to be detrimental to the refugees, unless issues of integration and primarily of employment were addressed.

As other participants noticed, existing policies, irrespective of considerations of humanitarian concerns, often leave refugees out of the process of integration and assign responsibility exclusively on them to integrate. In fact, the existing framework was conducive to more human insecurity, without requesting guarantees of respecting human rights. Since, as she explained, there “*was a decision out of the blue where the social worker had to inform them to leave their apartments by the end of March, beginning of April*” and there “*was no such thing as a plan B*” to their integration, she considered the mobilisations against eviction as another response to the inadequacies of justice in order to deal with the situation that had arisen so suddenly.

Being confronted with the drastic increase of arrivals registered to be referred to the centre for homeless, due to the features of the governments' policy and with feelings of guilt to address immediate humanitarian needs in a coherent and effective way, she regarded the mobilisations as an immediate policy response to regulatory pressures in contributing to politicising this issue. According to her argument: “*And there are social workers who have organised and expressed their opposition to what is considered unacceptable- that is to inform the refugee to leave the apartment, and fight against this ministerial decision*”.

These most recent policies put forward by the government have been criticized as exclusivist in their own right, based on institutional priorities rather than on social

needs, so social action, and this was important to emphasize, was seen as functional to address new emerging social problems, such as homelessness generated by a failed approach to integration and immigration policy.

8.3. Grassroot movements and participation in the movement against the evictions.

Evictions though, did not only affect refugees under the accommodation schemes. Under populist pressure, the leftist Syriza-led coalition government with the Greek police had already evicted refugees and asylum seekers from squats in Athens (Vassilopoulos, 2019). These had previously been used due to necessity by refugees to find accommodation, have access to school, health services, employment opportunities.

In light of poor integration policies¹²⁰, such self-organised refugee housing squats had been important not only for the refugees' social life, but also for their

¹²⁰ The Migration and Social Integration Code (Law 4251/2014) is currently the basic law that regulates integration. The Code addresses issues related to residence permits and access to the labour market and establishes a protection framework of rights for migrants. In the present context, the protection of the rights of migrants are in accordance with and committed to the principles of equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, language or religion and with respect for social justice, with a particular focus on children's rights. The Law 4375/2016 which mainly determines asylum and protection issues for asylum seekers and for refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries (access to the labour market as employees or service or work providers) while the Law 4636/2019 (introduced six-month time limit before access to the labour market is granted to applicants art. 53) raises some issues related to integration of beneficiaries of international or subsidiary protection. Furthermore, in April 2013 and June 2018 for the integration of third-country nationals two National Integration Strategies were formulated. In harmonisation with the EU law and rationalisation of the existing framework (Social Inclusion Code, Law 4251/2014), followed by the increased refugee arrivals, the latter policy, introduced in June 2018 and officially published in January 2019, addresses issues associated with reception and integration of applicants of international protection and beneficiaries or international protection and migrants, respectively. Among others the strategy identifies what might establish the inclusion of migrants in the host society: in particular, access to the education system, the labour market public services, education, social participation, valid information, including basic material reception conditions (such as housing, financial assistance, access to health, etc.) for the applicants of international protection at entry points. Attention is drawn to the role of local communities and local governments in the development of integration policies under the supervision of the central government. Integration and reception are especially, but not uniquely, associated with civil society, NGOs, and UN agencies, involving migrant and refugee associations. It clarifies that the basic idea of integration is to create and maintain an open society. It elucidates some conceptual and normative dimensions, including the respect of diversity, safeguarding the rights and obligations of the persons residing in Greece. Additionally, it recognises and values interaction, collaboration and dialogue among different communities. At the social level, mutual understanding, acceptance and social cohesion is said to promote the development of the host country. (Ministry of Migration Policy, 2018).

political and social rights which could be gained only through collective and self-organised action.

In many cases, through practices based on caring relationships and mutual help for social rights, but also protests and mobilisations against policies of exclusion and dispossession, they had enforced refugees' visibility to gain acceptance in local communities and consolidate their citizenship status as examples of what Henri Lefebvre, in his socio-spatial analysis, calls the 'right to the city' (Tsavdaroglou *et al.*, 2019). The right to the city is not a legal right ascribed by citizenship of a political entity such as a nation state, but rather involves the rights of non-participant social groups who survive among the fragments of a possible society and are excluded from the city.

Following Lefebvre, Tsavdaroglou *et al.* (2019:121) in the case of refugees explain, that the right to the city includes, combines and transcends the rights of residences i) to training and education, to work, to culture, to rest, to health, to housing ii) 'the rights of ages and sexes (the woman, the child and the elderly), iii) the rights of conditions (the proletarian, the peasant), complemented by the right to difference and the right to information. As Harvey argued (2008: 23) "The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city". The right to the city is central to solidarity struggles against the urban transformations which under the name of civic improvement and renovation, has progressively been falling into the hands of private or quasi-private interests and further confined by political and economic elites that seek to colonize space for surplus production and use (Harvey, 2008).

Within an urban neighbourhood composed primarily of immigrant population, grassroots meetings were taking place in a setting where the aim was to reduce the cultural and institutional isolation, discrimination, and oppression the working class and poor people face. Issues covered at these meetings, where education was deemed valuable, involved discussions on a socio-political level, such as anti-immigration policy, racism and fascism as well as how members could better organise themselves in order to play a more active role in society and address identified problems. These were accompanied by some long conversations with certain people, which had a feeling of informality and casualness, yet, were able to provide me with those people's opinions and perspectives to contextualize the findings.

As one Greek explained to me about his participation in anti-racist struggles, being privileged was linked to the pain of the refugees who suffer racial assaults and are victimised daily. Racism was explained by questioning how our capitalist economic system itself was a profoundly dehumanizing and racializing project that perpetuates racialized inequity. Committed to justice and feeling accountable for their fate, he wanted, in large and small ways, to share resources and use his privilege to put an end to that suffering. When the privileged conservative and liberal counterparts deny disadvantage, he wanted to collide with the systems of domination that ensure the continued exploitation in which people were dehumanised.

Contrary to charity, collective organising was aimed at infusing lives with purpose and dignity, redistributing wealth or eliminating class hierarchy in ways that challenge and change class exploitation and oppression.

Activists critically questioned huge, institutionalised NGOs, identified with the ruling class and market values. One member called attention to the reality that NGOs

have contributed to saving lives. However, he argued, they were the products of the culture of withdrawal of properly funded services.

Similarly, another member also argued unfavourably, if critically, of the subversive potential of top-down funding and its capacity to appropriate progressive ideas and grassroots practices and utilise them for less than progressive ends that mute the diverse interests as these have the same political positions and interests in society. Comments on refusing private funding and European subsidies, included emphasis on the principle of autonomy and objectives laid down from the top of the institutions under a corporate plan and technically implemented further down.

Most importantly, big NGOs, which were the only ones to be given official permission to intervene in government-run camps, were often salient of the politics of class exploitation and economic injustice, while failing to interrogate their institutional relationship to capitalism, to money, to giving or supporting the elimination of welfare that distributes wealth where we live.

I also witnessed the incredible capacity that people had for hope and change despite of the pain and cruelty that could be inflicted upon people by social and institutional injustices and deficits, including fascist threats that mark the growing ethno-nationalism and racism of modern nation-states.

On a different occasion, the intersection of gender, class, sexuality and race did enter the analysis of the institutional workplace. The experience of sexual assault and victimisation by a male refugee was hidden in the acceptable organisational discourses where the social worker, despite her grievances at work, had to individually negotiate with it, act and ignore the collective weight of the event.

How do such actions fit into our work with those who are victims of oppression?

Following the beginning of the implementation of this policy and enforcing the law in practice at the micro-level, workers employed by NGOs and organised in grassroots unions in Athens and other major cities set up a movement of resistance with autonomy from public institutions to address the so-called evictions.

More pervasively, the resulting situation had been characterised as one of xenophobic politics of discrimination and exclusion under the violent EU border regime. Against the joint decision by the Greek Ministry of Migration Policy and the UNHCR to cut cash support and evict thousands of recognized refugees from their homes, the Anti-Eviction Assembly remarked by protesting their inclusion in social life of the city:

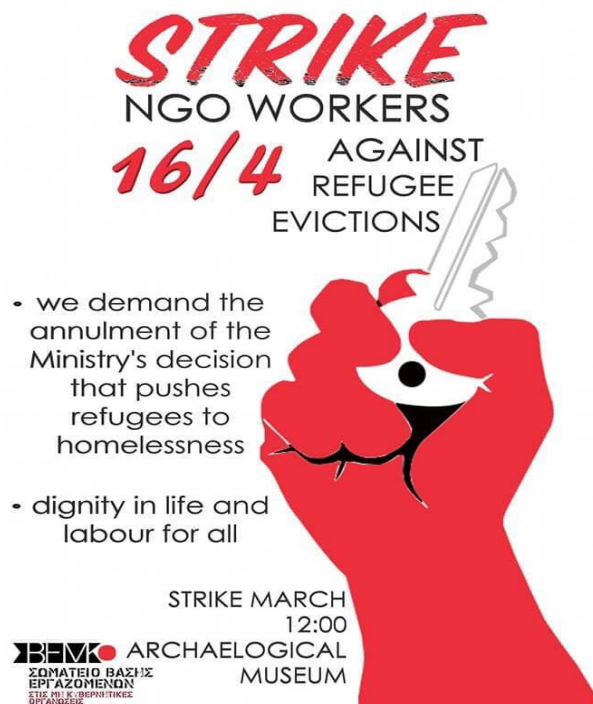


Image 5. Strike! NGO workers against refugee evictions. Source: <https://svemko.espivblogs.net/?p=1324> accessed at 8.04.2019

“As NGOs employees, we refuse to remain inactive towards the situation unfolding next to us, in the tents of isolated camps on the islands, in isolated inland camps, in apartment rentals in the city centre. Besides, our own precarious labour reality is defined by the same neoliberal regime. The precariousness in the lives of

refugees is the other facet of our own labour insecurity and, against them we project both our solidarity and common struggles. We do not accept our involvement in the appropriation of vulnerability as a tool for managing refugee flows and we do not follow instructions with the direction of depriving and controlling the refugee population. We can only once again oppose the NGOs' managements, stand firmly on the side of the refugees and show our solidarity with their struggles for life, freedom, self-determination and dignity. We have been hired in order to contribute to the meeting of the needs of the refugee population, not to force refugees into homelessness and misery.” (Svemko, 2019).”

In examining the imposition of, and opposition to, the administrative development pertaining to the social provision of services these were understood and appreciated in Foucauldian terms that try to keep refugees marginalised in camps away from urban centres. As observed in those assemblies, for some commentators, one of the characteristics of the policy doubled down on their practice, was that it was a case situated within the evocative ‘biopolitical’ framework, associated with the wider patterning of controlling, regulating, as well as categorising the refugee population at the expense of their interests and human rights (Kandylis, 2019; Papoutsi *et al.*, 2019).

Indeed, this is suggestive of Kourachanis’ (2018) description of the methods employed by the Greek state in managing the increase of migration flows to support the border functions of Member states. By investigating the social policies in Greece during the period of 2015-2017, he demonstrated how Greece has adopted social control and repression practices regarding refugees’ social and housing conditions. The housing initiatives taken by the government in the form of camps were connected to features of biopolitics. The term, firstly coined by Foucault, describes “the techniques of managing and regulating the life and death of human populations through the modern exercise of power” (Kourachanis, 2018:1154). Furthermore, as Kourachanis (2018:1153) explains, it was used by Agamben as a framework for the management of groups in poverty, whose lives are “subdued and devalued” in western societies and “are considered morally or sanitarily dangerous and must therefore be subjected to a

suffocating social control”. The expansion of destitution to the acute pressures wrought by growing inequality and poverty symbolises the growing authoritarianism of state policy, targeted overwhelmingly at the most vulnerable and impoverished.

This tension, as the end result of institutionalizing processes imposed on people who needed protection against the inhumane conditions, defined my entry into the field. Upon the announcement of the ministerial decision, solidarity groups emerging from the grassroots rejected the exclusive categorisation of refugees based on their legal status. Particularly, having been organised on solidarity principles, they sought to re-politicise the privatised humanitarian ethos and frames (see Oikonomakis, 2018) regarding the isolated and unprotected, undocumented migrants by focusing on intersectional dynamics of social divisions, such as gender, social class and origin.

As corresponding to the situation, the Refugee Movement for housing and the NGO workers' trade union assembly held demonstrations against the experience of injustice, brought by penal policies to resist the social logics of incarceration methods of the existing institutional arrangements. By protesting against the evictions urging them to stop providing services to refugees, they demonstrated their support for the refugees' rights to housing, dignity and self-determination. Repertoires of action included alliances with other grassroots communities in determining the conditions for activism, assessment of the problem and prospective solutions. In this context, as refugees had not been provided with any alternatives for their accommodation¹²¹, their

¹²¹ Based on equal opportunities for accessing housing the Presidential Decree 141/2014 (art 33) provides the framework to beneficiaries of international protection for assistance regarding housing and accommodation equal to Greek citizens. However, due to the lack of relevant housing policy in the country, until recently social housing policy and tenant protection was non-existent. At a time when the welfare has declined in responses to neoliberalism and the implications of austerity, Kourachanis (2017), discussing the development of social policies regarding the support of homelessness, argued that these were characterised by sloppiness and fragmentation, since they have been applied by various state services and organisations and thus, do not form a single social housing policy agenda. Historically, the State had always been in favour towards the private sector and small property owners. The author mentions the high levels of home ownership and the dominant discourse supporting that there were no homeless, underpinned the lack and the development of a relevant policy in the country. Housing needs were primarily supported by informal forms of solidarity, such as the family and the church as well as civil society organisations.

forms of action and initiatives, among others, were related to the most urgent issues and claims. These included acts of resistance to make evictions visible and to prevent them from taking place, as well as structure networks of collaboration between workers and migrants. Less organised forms of direct action, including at the individual level, were to inform refugees on a regular basis, where they used to gather, about their rights and policy developments.

In a context of largely hostile political attitudes towards migrants, the analysis offered, pointed at intersect in the production of oppression and exclusion and the need to unite in an anti-patriarchal struggle against the capitalist system.

It should be noted that from the start, the movement approached the question of homelessness and poverty as central aspects of complex capitalist relations that have historically emerged and increasingly gained prominence under market austerity, resulting in increasing poverty, inequity, systemic precariousness, and financial burdens. As it was observed, micro and macro social relations appeared intermingled. The core concern of analysis within was to a more participatory and equal alternative, certainly not defined narrowly on nationalistic and xenophobic grounds.

The civil society developed a highly fragmented, uncoordinated and managerial system against homelessness under the logic of philanthropy. Their strategies, service provision and delivery were focused on visible forms of homelessness (ibid,147). After the 90s, the housing programmes for the refugees from Asia and Africa were planned and delivered by international organisations and their national departments on humanitarian conceptions and assumptions. Migrants were altogether excluded from housing policies and remained in destitution, living in abandoned factories or hotels in Athens (ibid,148). In the advent of the economic crisis of 2008, there were attempts to redress residual social inequalities and deal with the worst manifestations of poverty. The housing problem emerged mainly because of the crash of the economy and the long-term recession the country had been encountering over the past ten years. In a climate of severe financial restraint without a comprehensive social safety net for those threatened by extreme poverty, homelessness was dealt in managerialist ways and simply reduced to immediate relief. Again, NGOs played a pivotal role. Social services were provided in rather more concrete and immediate ways (access to hygiene services and material support) responding to emergencies and most of these activities were financed by EU funding instruments. Importantly, there was a spectacular rise in funding by private philanthropic foundations through corporate social responsibility (CSR) to alleviate human suffering and cover state gaps in welfare provisions.

Kourachanis, N. (2017) Κοινωνικές πολιτικές στέγασης. Η ελληνική υπολειμματική προσέγγιση. [Social housing policies. The Greek residual model]. Athens. Papazisis.

Providing an additional dimension that contributes, in my view, to emancipatory practice as an effort to subvert discursive and ideological barriers was that refugees among activists were conceptualised as ‘subjects’¹²²; During consciousness raising in public action and group work, activists placed emphasis on refugees’ subjective experience, as knowers and active actors with the ability to collectively form policies in their own interests within the current context to achieve policy changes.

Importantly and consistent with these ideas, since migrants have been viewed as violating the rule of law and national sovereignty (della Porta, 2018:22-23), critical citizenship studies have pointed that protests-understood in terms of acts of citizenship, resistance and emancipation are at the basis of moral struggles for recognition from the consequences of exclusion, exploitation and oppression. As the denial of recognition for undocumented migrants violates expectations and universal rights, mobilisations are for migrants a practice through which they transform themselves into citizens. When they put forward claims in pursuance of their rights to regain power over their own lives and speak up in order to express moral outrage, they overcome silence and illegitimacy and create a sense of empowerment (della Porta, 2018:17-18). At the same time collective action, including, protests, campaigns and marches have been considered a legitimate political source of relatively powerless groups to influence decision makers and government institutions against laws or decisions considered to be unjust. By adopting such a popular form of action of unconventional political participation they are also activating other groups to be involved in challenging established norms (della Porta and Diani, 2006:166-167).

¹²² Against the migrations policies and practices that view migrants as objects and remove the subjectivity from decision-making, refugees were viewed and discursively conceived as ‘subjects.’

As I saw it, it was an organisation for both refugees and workers to express their grievances collectively. Feelings of anger, despair and hopelessness were prevalent among people, who recognised that they lack the capacity in shaping and determining their own lives. For others, it was the frustration from being excluded from the processes of decision making and a feeling of them being victims of blind social policies beyond their control.

For Areti, it was not just a sense of frustration and outrage at harsh immigration practices, but a sense of responsibility as a social worker to improve the environment in which she practiced that impelled her to join. As she mentioned during the first meeting in a crowded auditorium, refugees were experiencing full-scale rejections that violate human rights conventions. There was a hard edge of anger and enthusiasm in her voice.

Broadly speaking, people involved in this movement were coming together to take action around their beliefs about what was right and the world they want to see and, thereby, saw themselves as part of a larger collective of people who share an unjust situation with similarly-situated others. Following the strikes and marches, emphasis was given on workers' relational connections to others- the refugees who experienced marginalisation and the need for solidarity and collective organisation.

More crucially, the activists' movement did not necessarily align in terms of professionalised services of fixed roles and tasks, but did align in terms of values. Activists largely argued through reflection, that such policies were not indicative of their practice, and together, in dialogue, discussed ways to collectively refuse to implement them, perceiving such social policies to be against people who were racially discriminated and suffered from poverty.

They critically scrutinised the professional habitus built into the operations of organizations and ways of working in which values and assumptions associated with power, symbolic violence and capital were translated into practice and generally go without saying (Schritaro and Webb, 2003). One participant in particular, referred to the principles that inform the services in which they worked as “technocratic¹²³” with no political voice and limited reflection. This connection was reflected in looking at many structural factors, including the nature of programs for refugees that must operate in entrepreneurial ways due to the impact of the neoliberal agenda. Given the residual service-driven and fragmented nature of most services for refugees that had a deep tradition of hierarchy and central control, activists’ actions were largely focused on how to develop and expand a network of social support and create a sense of solidarity between NGO workers and refugees to make social action available to them.

Emphasis was given on participation in these meetings via information, the establishment of common space -publicly accessible- and dialogue, linked to the politics of transformation that an opinion can be formed through interaction, by the practitioners and recipients around social policies and acted upon. In practice, this was manifested in providing translation and valuing and validating those whose voices had not been heard. Additionally, they worked together on strategizing how to document the damages caused by events, such as evictions, and hold the more powerful (dominant) institutions in which the service user was often in the subordinate and “dependent” position, accountable for the satisfaction of human needs.

In doing this, these group meetings had been used as a forum for social analysis and challenge of oppressive conditions and practices by encouraging people to actively

¹²³ The term used was “epiteliki” to denote that services are mainly instructional sites. Practices and meanings that characterise the day-to-day workings are fixated in the discourse of administration and management.

take control over the problems they see in their lives and seek more egalitarian forms of social relationships. Activities were run in an independent and strictly self-financed way, through crowdfunding campaigns.

Refugee women, escaping the fixed and private realm of family, demonstrated their ability to resist social expectations of familial “norms” and victimisation by and within a system that was supposed to be caring for them.

In the current political environment of increased privatisation of services and following the announcement of Helios programme about accommodation for vulnerable cases, activists commenced a critique from their practice experiences about the retrogressive and punitive welfare programmes. Such humanitarian interventions, it was argued, provide a convenient ‘carrot’ to foster compliance and acquiescence to manage populations in an orderly fashion. NGOs taking on the role of the state had become the norm, compelling to further investigate the social practice implications of the deficit-focused discourses around assessment “criteria” for providing a measure for identifying “well adjusted” recipients around issues, including education and employment, despite the fact that they live without any regular or tangible state support and formal support services in often hazard-laden settings.

As part of a privatization process, especially through the growth and development of education-based and skills-centred learning programmes provided by NGOs, the employment-led and capital friendly initiatives to upgrade conditions, as opposed to benefits on rights or a solution to poverty, were debated.

These, beneath the surface, were based on the principles of personal responsibility and continued to find expression in the experiences of forced and

inequitable working relations, characterised by poverty, deprivation, injustice and oppression.

This spontaneous, emergent protest movement and solidarity initiative was subordinated to employers' repression and managerial control. On a personal and micro-level, a palpable domination was exercised by organisations over those workers who demonstrated and resisted against evictions when these were about to be implemented. Social workers were marginalized or excluded from decision-making processes, such as that of accommodation, since such tasks were relentlessly processed by the power and influence of employers and managers.

Due to this and since it was difficult to mobilise practitioners because of their short-term employment conditions and the dispersal of services across the city, resistance was organised through setting up a virtual network that provided information on the internet.

8.4. Shifting away from the offices, and taking to the streets, neighbourhoods and localities.

Solidarity mobilisations, marches and peaceful demonstrations developed throughout the central streets of Athens, reacting against austerity and neoliberal restructuring of social and urban life, as well as the above-mentioned measures for refugees.

The latter attracted and served as a gathering point for social work students and their academics. There, I chatted with Chloe until we reached the offices of the European commission in Athens, where the demonstration broke up.

In the face of scarcity of homes, and consequent homelessness, she argued that *“we resist and try to do something for these particular communities to gain recognition of basic human rights and alleviate some of the glaring gaps in health, education, welfare, political rights and job opportunities”*.

This ignited a discussion about the gendered inequalities and sexism still ingrained in social work. She challenged the social norm of seeing social work as equitable, neutral, tolerant and inclusive. Social work, she argued, is not a homogenous monolith of practice, but when the worldview is very traditional and conservative, it is likely to subordinate the interests of oppressed -economically, socially and culturally-marginalised groups, while it nevertheless takes for granted and essentialises understandings of how social inequality of vast disadvantage occurs, rather than being socially constructed.

Such actions that can enhance community practice and be organized to challenge structural inequalities, such as racism, patriarchy, homophobia and social control by institutions of the state, like the NGOs, were unusual for social workers, who had previously been seen as mostly neutral and inert (see Papadakaki, 2005; Ioakimidis, 2008; Pentaraki, 2015). In her analysis, the practitioner argued that this context was the basis for asserting social work identity linked to social justice, social change and empowerment. That was because it provided a basis for interaction, and, therefore, evoked shared understandings and acknowledgements among people, especially when socio-spatial contexts were heterogeneous. In order to argue that socio-spatial contexts shape how roles were performed, she employed, during our interview, spatial metaphors for the portrayal of social workers' positionality.



Image 6. Bad reception and forced eviction equals failed integration. Demonstration against the so-called evictions. Source: Personal archive.

“Our presence there [with direct action protest] was part of our connection with society and its movements. And of course, politics and activism. That is, demanding justice is not something theoretical, but something that takes place on the streets, and it must take place there, in close relation with the movements of “service users”. I mean the people themselves. I think it’s so simple if we want to be close to what social work stands for: social justice, social change and empowerment. This cannot be done if we are only behind our desks. It takes place in different ways. And of course, with political pressure and organised campaigns in the streets.”

Smith and Ferguson (2016) explain learning in unconventional practice settings of activism *offers opportunities for critical conscientisation and reconceptualization of social work in the current context* (ibid:197).

At the same time, identifying herself with the anti-racist movement, she revealed that political action contributed concretely by saving human lives. By highlighting the NGOs shortcomings and ability to accomplish their primary tasks, she explained to me that they were called by a social worker to act for refugees who had been locked in a container. This would not have happened without the collective trust

and confidence gained for radical activities between social workers and activists in public spaces.

Observations also had taken place in community events-meetings¹²⁴ of this year's (2019) World Refugee Day.

These were organised by refugee communities, local authorities and NGOs and involved theatre performances and participatory discussions on topics, such as homelessness and integration by learning more about one another, about what brings them together. If a neighbourhood attracted a lot of migrants, a public space hosted numerous initiatives on issues related to acceptance and recognition of the rights of migrants in the Greek society and was supported by groups and collectives, that had gained increasing visibility in recent years.

A dance was employed by African Greek women to voice their lived experiences, where various oppressions that have circumscribed their lives were identified and explicated, through information to the public with a sense of resiliency and vigilance. They reinforced the significance of consciousness-raising by asserting their identity and reclaiming their own space, while collectively seeking to challenge dominant discourses where they were easily stereotyped as “different” from the dominant population and constructed women as apolitical. This experience of collective strength and self-confidence, embedded in community life, allowed for a visibility that these women do not oftentimes experience.

Despite the attempts to create the social context for Greeks and refugees to mingle, it had also been the backdrop for a slight number of xenophobic incidents.

¹²⁴ 20-22 June at Kypseli Municipal Market and Serafio City of Athens respectively.

What became apparent whilst conducting the research, was that the viewpoint for several people from the public had been regressive about asylum-seekers with little understanding of their needs. This was a response to misinformation by mass media that deflects attention to the social reality of poverty and suggests that refugees are getting ahead economically, because it appeared to them that state benefits and accommodation were easily available to asylum seekers. Following the massive international immigration that has altered the demographic composition of the city of Athens since the early 1990s and the policies implemented during the economic crisis, there is a resurgence of moral panics and racial thinking among disenfranchised classes who were taught to blame immigrants for their economic plight and taking needed jobs (Kandylis and Kavoulakos, 2011; Dalakoglou, 2013b).

At the same time, and in the backdrop of such events and initiatives that sympathize with refugees and embrace diversity, some inhabitants of local neighbourhoods communicated their xenophobic fears and racist positions forthrightly. These were exemplified on two levels; one that concerns socioeconomic differences and inequalities; and one that concerns ethnocultural ones. Racial discrimination was fully reflected in the language used to speak of immigrants such as *lathrometanastes*¹²⁵ and deployed under the guise of cultural preservation of a nostalgically prosperous past prior to the arrival of migrants. In a debate I had with a local during a public event, he felt that such practices were of radical left-wing persuasion and provided the basis for a communist regime. Also, refugees were seen as a threat to the national security and heritage, and phrases like “Greece has been turned into a fenceless vineyard” evoked a

¹²⁵ Clandestine immigrants

discourse of a socially homogeneous and defined territorial space that only belongs to the Greeks by descent.

In the centre of Athens, when refugees appropriated the public space of a square just before one demonstration against the EU-Turkey deal took place, a local who had been fed up with the influx of migrants discussed the “ghettoization” of the neighbourhood with me and blamed immigration for its degradation, criminality and hygiene. He justified migration as a conspiracy plot against the Greek race and his vision of the neighbourhood where he lived was compared to other Western European counterparts, where refugees were concealed and kept at a distance. Additionally, he turned to the ways they benefited from welfare provisions against Greek nationals.

Conclusion.

In the absence of a strong welfare state, practitioners were experiencing a historical moment of rise in anti-humanist ideologies, threats to universal human rights and practices targeting ‘undeserving’ minorities. Additionally, they appeared to be more critical about the welfare, whose most profound feature was the erosion of social solidarity.

Whilst working within a hostile environment, they appeared to have a strong capacity in their negotiations with communities, developing meaningful interventions in setting up refugee facilities, in a respectful and ethical manner, that was not defined along an aggressive ethno-national narrative, serving the purposes of an imagined and symbolic community (Leonard, 1997; Anderson, 2006). Instead, they challenged the public nationalist discourses strengthening and perpetuating the “Us and Them” dichotomy, by adopting a stance and values in favour of refugees’ recognition and exclusion, even though some of them may be internally contested, creating unequal

relationships. In this case, too, they openly acknowledged that services, such as accommodation, were provided within a framework of deep-seated, structural divisions in society, formed out of histories of relations of domination that subject people to discrimination. In the face of specific moral challenges that communities face, along the lines of authoritarian populism, that seeks to divide populations (Noble, 2017), an emphasis was given on working at a community level to challenge oppressive practices and policies.

Policy changes in accommodation were a catalyst for refiguring the narrative of social work from a residual role of the welfare state to struggles and political practice. To get out of the dilemma and varying constraints stemming from the institutional environment, social workers through strategic litigation and engagement with solidarity movements mobilised around protecting fundamental rights, including basic needs, taking advantage of a historic window of opportunity for change.

9. Conclusions.

In this chapter, I provide summary of the main findings and I highlight the study's original contribution to knowledge. The aim of the study was to i) identify how the role of NGOs as the main provider of social services for refugees has changed during the so-called "refugee crisis". ii) Understand the varied narratives and conceptualisations of social justice articulated both at institutional and practitioner levels, and iii) explore how Greek social workers' understanding of the concept of 'social justice' informs their practice when trying to navigate complex ethical-political dilemmas.

- i) identify how the role of NGOs as the main provider of social services for refugees has changed during the so-called "refugee crisis".

This study highlights that the development of the modern welfare state in Greece, as shaped by successive national administrations in the period after the dictatorship (post 1974), has followed the key directions of neoliberal and economic globalisation, which currently predominate in "Western societies". The capitalist state is increasingly becoming an institution for safeguarding the re-production of free market and ensure the surveillance and control of the citizens. As a result of privatizations and welfare state retrenchment, the state has substantially abolished hard-won, socio-economic rights and has sought to "sub-contract" its key welfare obligations to services to a diverse range of business-like NGOs.

In this respect, it is not surprising that NGOs operating in Greece have dominated the welfare services provision, especially after the so-called refugee crisis

in 2015, taking a prominent role (if not leading) role in services aimed at responding to the needs of undocumented migrants.

All in all, within the context of the increasing needs of the Greek society and amidst the “refugee crisis”, NGOs continued pursuing the Greek state’s interests to provide social welfare services to vulnerable populations that the Greek government refused to do. However, as this study suggests the relationship between the state and NGO is contradictory. While NGOs appeared to offer a quasi-market environment within which services to refugees have been located, pockets of resistance (whether from practitioners or activists) have disrupted the narrative of “peaceful co-existence” between state and civil society. As a result, using the national security excuse, the state banned all grassroots solidarity activities, and introduced mandatory registration of all civil society actors operating close to the land and sea borders. Such securitisation of NGOs was done with pervasive purpose to regulate and constrain the type of ‘services’ that were provided within the newly established army-run refugee camps (Skleparis and Armakolas, 2016).

The Greek state developed a system that gave contrasting functions to NGOs. Thus, the initial interest in emergency relief of NGOs was progressively supplemented with a wide range of activities, such as advocacy and service delivery, such as accommodation. The amount of EU funds offered to NGOs operating in Greece, considerably increased during the “refugee” crisis.

The specific role of the NGOs in the provision of welfare was not identical across all areas visited. Some NGOs were engaged through the implementation of short-term projects in specific activities, corresponding to different needs and priorities, like education and health. Even if, at the organisational level, there was a clear

distinction between the provided services, with NGOs specializing in certain areas, this distinction was not always evident in practice.

Since there was no systematic attempt at coordination for many years among multiple stakeholders, NGOs initiated formal consultation procedures open to a variety of service providers and partners in policy implementation, including local authorities that offered ample opportunities to communicate. These consultations were considered an example of a best practice that would avoid the costs of duplication and overlapping of services or to raise the visibility of issues that would otherwise be overlooked. However, the lack of participatory approaches aiming at providing room for asylum policy formulation was reflected in less-developed consultation procedures with state institutions.

On top of this, the involvement of NGOs within the parameters of the EU's containment and deterrence policies, aimed at immobilising people without safe and legal access to protection and support was not without challenges. The provision of services particularly on the islands was a matter of controversy, due to totally inhuman treatment and systematic violations of human rights in the camps. The role of NGOs, including that of social workers was often unclear or contested, and thus were affected by a legitimacy challenge, when enabling rights for asylum seekers. Facing difficulties in coping with enhanced migratory pressures, became an important discursive argument for communities and public services for not expanding the rights of asylum seekers in view of the financial and sociocultural implications of such a step. In other words, blaming refugees for putting pressure on public finances and resources was played out in different welfare services, including holding them responsible for problems shaped by structural and material conditions, diverting attention from structural and institutional considerations. "Asylum seekers and undocumented

migrants are often forced to survive in societies where their life, rights and contributions are not officially valuable to anyone” Turtiainen (2018:194) notes. In recent decades, racism and immigration controls have been facilitated by the rise of anti-migrant populism globally about Islam, associating Muslim migrants in general, with possible security threats and alleged refusal to integrate (Kamali, 2015)

Rather than helping by providing emergency relief interventions, the above mentioned circumstances require professionals to address structural inequalities and social divisions by creating community-based forms of support in a locale and demanding resources into failing infrastructures and change initiatives (Dominelli, 2018).

- ii) Understand the varied narratives and conceptualisations of social justice articulated both at institutional and practitioner levels.

Established structural and institutional rules and norms of Greece’s abusive asylum system, such as in the detention system has created an unfamiliar landscape for social work practice to work within its own moral rules and philosophical mandate for social change. Social work is part of the NGO system and organisational context and participates in welfare service delivery by offering the professionals’ expertise and capacities.

In contrast, and beyond the political interests of governments, the system was constrained by the workload of a crisis environment, lack of coordination and trust among organisations, as well as the priorities of funders. Particularly, the temporary and fluid character of provisions coupled with the lack of adequate resources based on recent neoliberal reorganisation and cuts, appeared to have a serious impact on the provided services. It resulted in increasingly bureaucratic demands and a limited and

unpredictable time horizon for social work intervention to cover immediate needs, let alone enable refugees transition to self-determination. It appeared that this had influenced the organizations' autonomy, resulting in practices that only cover a very limited number of activities, to a marginalised population whose interests they purport to represent.

The existing service provision seemed to involve professionals and organisations, but not directly the refugees themselves. In the accounts, no mention was made of a participatory approach to practice, where service users were directly involved as agents in the development of welfare services. When consultation and participation of refugees in decision making was mentioned, it either appeared as being tokenistic, in making decisions about the activities offered, or encompassing positivist procedures for evaluation, made up of measured facts.

Such developments also had a powerful impact both terms of practice and working conditions for social workers. Practitioners did not only occupy ancillary roles, but instead were described as inexperienced and under-prepared. Throughout the years, many NGO employees faced redundancy, low wages, and poor working conditions. For others, especially women employees, a fundamental challenge was work/life balance. Even though, some of the participants explained that they earned income much higher than the average, they experienced social services as a place of exploitation and alienation.

Social justice was contextualized primarily by the participants in relation to significant issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice refugees experience, which also included harm and violence in detention centres and reception facilities within the Greek mainland and islands after crossing the

borders. However, the logic of structural change was non-existent and economic reform was rarely mentioned. Social justice was a category, best understood and explained by social workers by its opposite; that is, an inadequate welfare system that did not place the needs of refugees at its centre, in order to provide a variety of services in response. Refugees and asylum seekers were seen as victims of the insufficient living conditions forced upon them by the Greek reception system.

Due to limited visibility and eligibility towards formal welfare services, let alone discriminative practices, asylum-seekers and refugees were usually excluded from specific allowances, available only to limited number of beneficiaries. Uncertain legal status led to serious shortcomings, regarding early access to education and finding a job on the official labour market, a condition that may lead to undeclared employment, as a relatively cheap workforce or protracted unemployment. Additionally, limited eligibility and differentiated perceptions of vulnerabilities given by policy and legal frameworks reduced access to social support based on need, increasing thus, conditionality. Many lived with the fear that their asylum claim will be turned down and they will be deported. A high proportion of children asylum seekers, who may arrive as unaccompanied minors, have suffered trauma of some kind and there are high levels of mental and physical ill health within this population.

Under the principle of social justice, an emphasis on refugee agency to develop their strengths and recognition of their resilience has been considered corrective to victimising accounts and practices. It was recognised by participants that the tendency to focus on predetermined outcomes, on a basis of 'one size fits all' approach to intervention, as some participant mentioned, had denied refugees the possibility of considering them in their biographical context, having needs as complex and diverse, as the rest of the population. The welfare system's failure to consider refugees' views

about their circumstances and aspirations for the future, not only rendered the complexities and uniqueness of their lives “invisible” but had also ignored strengths and coping abilities refugees use to manage their circumstances.

These are two equally important dimensions of professional practice that had reinforced either notions about inevitable dependency or helplessness in the face of change, crisis and transition. In fact, the service users, participants argued, were expected to fit into the available services, when the services did not exist.

Social justice was related to identifying and meeting individual needs that were often not covered by the poor Greek welfare state. As part of social workers’ professional work within NGOs, it was to offer social support to vulnerable people.

It is important to emphasize that theories of practice that are congruent with social work ethics and values, offering a critique of power relations, based on domination and subordination. These were not explicitly identified. At the same time, recognition of structural factors – such as poverty or racism were considered.

Instead, social work theory and practice was presented as fragmented and unclear. Grounded on a thesis that various dimensions of social positioning intersect and interact with others, intersectionality was explicitly highlighted in only one account for providing a sense of direction in practice and insights for the analysis of refugee’s experiences of exploitation and marginalisation. Some pleaded for providing services in a culturally sensitive manner and valuing cross-cultural communication appropriate to diverse service users, such as offering straight translation. On different accounts, it was unclear how theory could best be operationalised in ethical decision making with refugees. Certain behaviours, such as physical abuse, missing school and women living in isolation in the family home, were considered as culturally different, but valid.

Additionally, in such cases, disclosure of abuse meant collision with confidentiality principle and autonomy or human rights. As an aside, it may further form of silencing and allowing potentials to preventing practitioners from intervening against abuse and injustice and accessing the safety and support that comes with the protection of human rights legislation.

These positions may fuel a cultural and ethical relativism, focusing on individualisation and suggesting that there are multiple legitimate ways to interpret circumstances and actual situations. Following the emergence of post-modern analyses, these discussions appeared innovative and progressive, adopting a position against ‘essentialism’ that sees cultural norms, applied universally, and communities as static and homogeneous (Clark, 1996; Ferguson and Lavalette, 1999). Equally, it led to a desire to explore the colonial origins of social work and encouraged the de-construction of Eurocentric ideas underpinning the profession (Ioakimidis and Trimikliniotis, 2019). The role of ethnic and culturally sensitive practice has been acknowledged within anti-racist (Lavalette and Penketh, 2014), anti-discriminatory (Thompson, 2003) and anti-oppressive approaches (Dominelli, 2002a; Clark, 2003; Laird, 2008) and documented within the codes of ethics for professional practice. For Valtonen (2008:32-34), culturally appropriate and sensitive services for refugees provide the link between the individual, culture and broader community relations. Considering the culture and norms of population in providing services “is simply basic, good, social work” (Zakour and Harrell, 2004:89).

Such discourses also touch on debates between universalism of social justice and human rights notions as moral concepts of Western liberal capitalist democracies and relativism by valuing identity, diversity and difference which have plagued the social work literature (Gray and Webb, 2008; Ife, 2008; Webb, 2009; Hugman, 2013).

From this relativization of social work practice, a second and equally important problem can be sorted out: The belief that all cultural values are equal has been accused of covering up deep-rooted and systematic inequalities, while casting doubt on universal principles, rights, freedoms and duties. In that respect, a vapid insistence on diversities of human culture fails to deliver an adequate frame of reference about social justice, since they shy away from any analyses that evoke notions of collective and class, rooted in popular struggles against oppression for equality. Such an approach leads to the development of practice that is inadequate to protect, individually and collectively, excluded or marginalised people (Dominelli, 2002b; Hugman, 2003; Webb, 2009; Ioakimidis, 2014; Sewpaul, 2016).

If social work's mission is to have an enabling effect on oppressed people's propensity for emancipatory or transformative action, I believe that the inclusion of critical approaches is necessary to complement existing approaches to practice. The latter needs to be understood within a theoretical framework that brings the impacts - of broader neoliberal policies to the core of its analysis- these have had on those populations fleeing war, poverty, and violence. In taking action against oppression, the importance of colonialism and imperialism, and their associated racism needs to be emphasised, as they serve the ends of economic exploitation (Sewpaul, 2016). Social workers should see the individuals as embedded in social relations and thus society, and they, in turn, should take these relations into account.

- iii) explore how Greek social workers' understanding of the concept of 'social justice' informs their practice when trying to navigate complex ethical-political dilemmas.

Despite social workers' efforts to remain neutral and to be strictly adherent to traditional values and principles of objectivity, it was often hard to avoid engaging with politics. In fact, the lack of state resources available to practitioners for needs which services had to respond to and the restrictions imposed on them to conform with agendas that were not their own, appeared to impede professional accountability and exacerbate ethical dilemmas. As a result, practitioners with constrained resources and inadequate services bore the responsibility of clearly communicating the appropriate information to service users about what can and cannot be achieved in the process.

On the other hand, and within an inhumane policy framework, where services were increasingly marked by conditionality, the social work role was described as one of practical tasks and assessment, often limiting possibilities for reflection, sensitiveness, empathy, and caring behaviour in practice. Due to the policy imperatives towards eligibility for services, practice aimed at gatekeeping services for the most "vulnerable", potentially leading social workers to differentiate between the deserving and the undeserving.

On different occasions, practitioners did their best to preserve their autonomy and would look for ways in which they could exploit loopholes to informally secure provisions in the interests of those they were working with. Despite the need for professionals to abide by national policies and organizations' rules, these decisions were justified on ethical grounds due to a sense of responsibility and human rights.

Challenging discrimination and supporting and assisting refugees who faced a wide range of administrative obstacles in order to obtain the necessary documents and navigate the system, were ways for the participants to operationalize their understanding of and connect their work with social justice. Attention was then turned

to specific attempts to promote access to and consultation with welfare and public institutions. As important, of course, was the role of advocacy. Advocacy practice was viewed as a means to ensure access to health care and medical and psychosocial support that matches basic human needs, wrapped up in demands to respect the refugees' right to live in dignity, treating those who were devalued in society with respect. Under the value of the respect of people, refugees' rights to self-determination and autonomy were expected to be respected, recognising their need to have freedom in decisions and choices. Some practitioners appeared to have the willingness to engage in practice that met the cultural needs of service-users in the services they offered.

There was a crucial role for social workers in contesting abuses of human rights, as well as advocating for the realisation of social justice, by emphasising the moral dignity and worth of all people and bringing conditions of injustice to both organisational and nation-state institutions, such as the Greek Ombudsman, through which far-reaching changes to legislation or social change may be realised. Action against hate crimes and violence was concentrated on receiving testimonies about racist violence, so that unjust policies and practices were documented and exposed.

Within the limited welfare state and/or the insufficient social provision by the state, social work was often depicted as an 'outward' facing activity in need for more legitimacy. In working with asylum seekers, for their accommodation in the community, practitioners stretched the boundaries of service provision in need to inform the wider communities about injustices and, more importantly, make the intervention through supporting services more acceptable by building and expanding spaces of social support, acceptance, inclusion and recognition.

The Greek Association of Social Workers, representing the voice of all the social workers in the country, did not appear as an actor for challenging socially unjust governmental policies regarding refugees. In one account, it was mentioned by a social worker that the association had not developed a platform or network of professionals about ways of working in solidarity with refugees and other oppressed groups. On the level of organisation, in a different account, social workers appeared not to constitute the collective political entity as a collective subject, capable of analysing social reality and design strategies to solve the social needs of refugees with regards to public policy. The association was contacted by professionals as part of their attempt to express dilemmas and uncertainty that infuse professional life daily, but not for a more politically oriented action, explicitly devoted to bringing about social change.

The violent dismantling of collective identities and the individualization of consciousness could be seen as a consequence of globalisation dominated by neoliberalism, leaving people alienated, under the pressures of satisfying their most basic needs, and excluded from participating reflectively in political life. Under these conditions, the development of forms of social solidarity and progressive practices towards active engagement with political community life in the public sphere - including that of social work to shape forms of collective action allowing for increased participation in policy processes, remained undeveloped and apolitical (Kallinikaki, 2010; Venieris, 2013; Karagkounis, 2017a; Petmesidou, 2019).

On the other hand, GASW advocated for policies in which social workers could play a strong social administrative role in the reception and resettlement of refugees and promote social inclusion within local communities. GASW also had to address and meaningfully respond to cases where social work roles in NGOs would be shared between social professionals, as social scientists and qualified social workers. At the

same time, it appeared to have embarked on a dialogue with government institutions for the expansion of welfare and in defence of professional disciplinary knowledge and the practitioners' right to dignity against poorly paid, insecure and unreliable work.

Yet, the progress of dialogue was determined by each government's embedded values and ideology in fostering the sorts of orientations to welfare.

9.1. Final remarks. Dissent.

From the perspective of this analysis, it is vital for social workers to theoretically appreciate, on a political and ideological level, the factors that prevent political efforts for social solidarity and generate viable resistance strategies to confront the issues of hegemonic, neoliberal policy implementation (Garrett 2013:215).

Articulating Gramsci's theorisation of 'hegemony' and "common sense", Garrett (2013) explains how the dominant culture operates for the bourgeois rule to legitimatise itself over the working class and oppressed who change their own convictions and habits, regardless of their social or economic position, in order to conform -without being conscious of it- with the values and norms of the elite. Social work as a connecting point between citizens and the capitalist state is implicated under the latter, in the economic, cultural and political processes of the ideological neoliberal hegemony that produce subjection and secure domination. To address this, Garret (2013:110-113) explains that domination is historical, and never complete, thus opposition comes from what Gramsci describes as "organic intellectuals". Related to the popular concerns of the time, intellectuals (social workers too) represent the interests of the subordinate classes and seek to disrupt hegemonic collective narratives, by developing more critical and oppositional beliefs and understandings in order to reshape the social world.

Throughout the data, it became apparent that practitioners were trying to understate social control elements of practice and promote refugees' strengths and agency in everyday practice. Equally, they stressed how refugees were treated as "invisible" and disposable by existing migration policies. This included raising attention to the ethical issues of working within detention facilities. Others stressed how the refugee "crisis" created a market value for producing wealth, which, despite the availability of employment, encouraged the exploitation and the production of forms of oppression. Due to the retrenchment of welfare under austerity policies, the participation in the labour market, opportunities, and rights to political recognition were considered important features. Some particularly showed an understanding of the current national, chauvinistic, political context which has undermined social work's institutional and organisational legitimacy and left people vulnerable to right-wing media and political manipulation. At the same time, they were critical of values that were mimic corporate sector practices, underpinned, due to economic pressures, by prescriptive provisions that are measurable and quantifiable, rather than help, welfare and advocacy. While they understated the socially regressive hegemonic discourses and narratives relating practice to philanthropy, they discursively stressed their positive roles in promoting equal treatment, civil and human rights, strongly becoming accepted as a common-sense approach to practice.

In the face of little alternatives to engage in social justice pursuits within their place of employment, some participants moved beyond a casework approach to personal support and joint networks of activists and campaigning of dissent, to use Garrett's (2021) phrase.

According to Garrett (ibid:5), forms of descending social work operate "aligned with, energised, replenished and sustained by the oppositional activity generated 'on

the ground' within trade unions, activist social movements, community organisations, progressive coalitions, 'user' networks, marches and campaigns". These struggles provided the analytical lens to consider themes and issues from fresh angles, in order to illuminate the impact of economic, political and social conditions, and generate new practices against individualistic interpretations and solutions. These sought ways to challenge the unspoken rule of silence demanded by the organisations and develop participatory social action in which refugees were conceptualised as both the agents of their lives and political actors, fighting against what they encountered.

A social work educator and students were also involved in protesting for the rights of refugees to housing, objecting to unjust policy developments. In building a conceptual picture to explain social justice for social work, at whatever level of practice and in whatever setting, the social work educator drew attention to social action as essential to emancipatory practice for social workers when contemplating how to respond to injustice, discrimination, and inequality issues, arising from neoliberal, global capitalism. Without such foundations, the quest for justice in social work will be more difficult.

From the participants' perspective, workers' right to association and organising within the NGOs was justified by participants for the betterment of social services, and against the moralising arguments and ostracising practices used in assuaging dissent for working conditions. It appeared that practitioners, as part of their required practice role, should make attempts to challenge, or at least make representations of policies opposing the ethical principles of social work in the delivery of social services to the management within the NGOs for those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

At this time of writing, many of the issues which social workers grappled with, seem to be resurfacing. The Greek Migration Ministry and Asylum and the Municipality of Athens announced the removal of refugees, following the closure of the Elaionas camp, situated near the centre of Athens for large development projects. The refugees, in a bid to stop the evacuation procedure that would send them far from the city to newly constructed detention centres, were organised, calling for the government to keep the camp open. Among the demands they announced to the authorities, was “to ensure that the support activities carried out by the organizations and the social workers operating in the camp are not to be interrupted”.

Looking at these struggles of self-organized, collective movements for solidarity and the courage of those who speak out against the established order, provides, I believe, the basis of inspiration, which could serve as a springboard for the profession’s role in unmasking the sources of social inequality, while avoiding being part of the process of capitalist racialised oppression.

Perhaps we are, indeed, entering a new phase on how to move forward in the present, that will decisively impact the boundaries of social work’s political reach, necessity and relevance for our democracy, towards a society based on peace, justice and dignity.

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hutz_e.pdf).

Appendices.

Appendix I. Participants

Interviews in Total: 37.

List of Interviews with front-line social workers.
(Pseudonyms have Been Used):

1. Eirini (23yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 2 years in total of working experience in humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens.
2. Elpida (24yrs-Albanian), BA social worker (BA) with 1 year of working experience in humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens
3. Niki (33yrs-Greek), MSc social worker with 2^{1/5} years out of 5 of working experience in human-rights NGO (social services), Athens.
4. Georgia (44yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 3 years out of 14 of working experience in philanthropic NGO (social services), Athens.
5. Maria (38yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 3 years of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services-accommodation), Athens.
6. Antigoni, (32yrs-Greek), MSc social worker with 2 years out of 5 (all in NGOs) of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services-accommodation), Athens.
7. Antonis, (35yrs-Greek), MSc social worker with 2 years out of 5 (all in NGOs) of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens.
8. Areti, (35yrs-Greek), MSc social worker with 4^{1/5} years out of 7 (all in NGOs) of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens.
9. Athena, (33yrs-Greek), MA social worker with 2 years of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens.
10. Alexandros (30yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 1 year out of 7 (all in NGOs) of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens.
11. Electra (53yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 10 months out of 4 years (all in NGOs) of working experience in human-rights NGO (youth social services at safe zone), Piraeus.
12. Machi (43yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 3 years of working experience in human-rights NGO (youth social services), Athens.
13. Marina (27yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 10 months out 2 years (all in NGOs) of working experience in human-rights NGO (social services at Elonas refugee camp), Athens.
14. Katerina (33yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 2 years of working experience in human-rights NGO (social services), Samos.
15. Melina (27yrs-Albanian), BA social worker with 8 months of working experience in human-rights NGO (social services), Samos.
16. Rhea (33yrs -Greek), MSc social worker with 8 years of working experience in human-rights NGO (social services- accommodation), Athens.
17. Sophie (39 yrs-Greek), MSc social worker with 18 years of previous working experience in human-rights NGO (social services), Athens.
18. Urania (45yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 2 years of working experience in human-rights NGO (youth social services at safe zone), Thiva.

19. Xenia (30yrs- Greek), BA social worker with 3 years of working experience in human-rights NGO (social services), Patras.
20. Zoei (28yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 2 years of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services), Lesvos.
21. Nadia (29yrs-Greek), BA social worker with 1 year of working experience out 3 (all in NGOs) of in medical humanitarian NGO (social services), Lesvos.

List of Interviewees with Management personnel

(Pseudonyms have Been Used):

1. Lydia (41yrs-Greek), manager holding BA in Social work with 17years of working experience in humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens.
2. Hera (27yrs- Greek), Legal advisor holding an MA in political sciences with 5 years of working experience in humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens.
3. Alexia (28yrs-Greek), manager holding a MSc in political sciences with 1 year of working experience in philanthropic NGO (social services), Athens.
4. Chara (38yrs-Greek), manager holding BA in Social work with 6 years of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens.
5. John (35yrs-Greek), MSc social worker with 8 years of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services), Athens.
6. Andreas (39yrs- Greek), manager, holding a PhD in political sciences with 3 years of working experience in human-rights NGO (social services), Samos.
7. Nikos (39yrs-Greek), MSc social worker with 15 years of working experience in humanitarian and philanthropic NGOs (social services), Athens.
8. Katie (47yrs-Greek), manager holding a MSc in political sciences with 4 years of working experience in medical humanitarian NGO (social services), Lesvos.
9. Gregory (37yrs-Greek), manager holding a MSc in psychology with 9 years of experience in human-rights NGO (social services), Patras.

List of Experts

1. Clio, Assistant professor at the department of social work, Athens.
2. Penelope, Deputy Director and Head of Advocacy of the human rights NGO, Athens.
3. Ellie, active member of Greek Association of Social Workers (GASW), Athens.
4. Iliana, MSc Social Policy and planning, with experience on planning and implementing programmes for refugees (National programme Officer) UNHCR and former manager of social services of national NGO, Athens.
5. Ioannis (34yrs-Greek), employee and representative of migrant community, Athens.
6. Vasiliki, President of civil society actor (Civil Non-Profit Company), island.
7. Chrispa (36yrs-Greek), Social worker with previous working experience in NGOs, active member in the Greek Association of Social Workers (GASW), Athens.

Appendix II. Information Letter



University of Essex
School of Health and Social Care
Centre for Social Work
10 Elmer Approach
Southend
SS1 1LW

United Kingdom

T.00441206 872854

Athens: 00.00.2019

From: Papaleonidopoulo Georgios
Social worker, PhD candidate

To:

Topic: Request for conducting social research in relation to Social work practice with refugees and migrants in NGOs.

Dear Sir/ Madam.

My name is Georgios Papaleonidopoulos, I am a social worker and postgraduate student at the University of Essex. From the end of 2018 until the end of 2019, I will be conducting a piece of research on social work practice in Non-Governmental organisations who respond to refugees' and asylum seekers' needs.

With this letter you are invited to participate in a study that explores the experiences and views of your role as well as investigates the dilemmas and contradictions professionals- in particular social workers- encounter in their work with asylum seekers and refugees. The focus of the discussions will be on social work and the dual role professionals have in tackling inequalities and responding to human needs on the basis of human rights.

The aim of the research is to explore and better understand social work with asylum seekers/refugees and migrants, as it tries to identify the value of social workers in the abolition of inequalities and responding to human needs, as professionals trained for supporting and committed to human rights.

Considering the above, I am requesting the permission of your organisation in order to contact its social services and inform their personnel regarding the research as well as conduct interviews with staff members that either provide or supervise the delivery of social services.

The participation of your organisation is voluntary, including the personnel. Interviews will be conducted only after permission is granted and only when the interviewee has read, comprehended and signed the consent form for his or her participation in the research. The participants can terminate or withdraw from the process at will, without repercussions for themselves or the organisation. Indeed, the choice of participation is up to the participants themselves and refusal will not cause any problems either with

their paid role or access to any kind of services you are engaged with and may be involved in the research.

By considering to voluntarily participating in the study, this will involve interviews (in-depth, walking interviews¹²⁶) and potentially focus groups. When permission is granted by the organisation and personal consent is given by each participant, interviews will approximately last from 1 to 1.5 hours and are to be arranged at the convenience of the participant and the organization. The material discussed is to be audio taped and participants may respond to questions that they want to. Additionally, they may also raise questions to the interviewer for further clarifications. It is up to them what they tell the interviewer and names (both of the participants and the organization) will not be used in the study. Data will be anonymised immediately after the interviews, prior to being put in an electronic format. In addition, the records and transcriptions of the interviews will be stored in my personal computer and will be encrypted with a password being required for access. Any data obtained during the course of the research will be destroyed after the completion of the research. The study has been approved by the School Ethics Officer on behalf of the Faculty Ethics Committee (Ref 18006).

The current study is a doctoral scholarship, funded by the university of Essex itself and leads to PhD accreditation. For this reason, the outcomes of the research would be produced as a PhD thesis at the end of 2020 and it is expected that findings will be published in relevant academic publications after, but also during the research process. Outcomes of the research will be then made available to all of the participants. The purpose of that is the educational advancement, improvement of practice and enhancement of service delivery. This is why it is important to highlight good practice, but also take into consideration critical points which may become apparent during the study. The predominant purpose is to contribute to a wealth of social work studies aiming at conceptualising social work in ways that will improve the lives of refugees by fostering a critical, reflexive, culturally sensitive perspective in practice.

The success of the research depends to some extent on the permission granted by your organization. To this, I also understand the effort in terms of time that is needed by your personnel and your agency for participating in it.

However, and given the abovementioned information, I am certain that common aim of all parties involved in the provision of social services to asylum-refugees/ migrants-including yours, is agencies valuing social work for addressing human needs and employing personnel educated in human rights. Thus, I am hoping for close collaboration towards these ends.

If you have any question about your participation terms, this informative letter or the subject of the research, please do not hesitate to contact with me or my supervisor. For any additional information you can also contact my academic supervisors, Professor Vasilios Ioakimidis and Dr Stephen Jordan.

¹²⁶ In depth interviews involve questions that allow the participant to respond freely to the interviewer aiming at giving prominence to information that can only be obtained through oral communication. They usually take the form of conversation or dialogue. Additionally, walking interviews are interviews conducted on the move. The method can afford participants a greater degree of control over the research process, deciding where to take the researcher for example. This approach allows participants to express themselves in more creative ways and contributes to familiarising the researcher with professionals' activities. The aim is to highlight the multidimensional nature and character of social work. Useful information can be found in the link below: <http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/schools/soss/morgancentre/toolkits/13-toolkit-walking-interviews.pdf>

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Dr Stephen Jordan

Your help in this would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Georgios Papaleonidopoulos

Appendix III Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project.

The social work practice in Non-Governmental Organisations who respond to refugees' and asylum seekers' needs.

Researcher: Georgios Papaleonidopoulos

Please initial box

1. **I confirm that I** have read and understand the Information Sheet dated xx for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.

3. I understand that, due to the nature of the study into the role of social workers working in refugee sector, discussions will be tape-recorded by the researcher and outcomes of the study can be published for the purposes of education and improving services. Hence, I am aware of the potential risks associated with that, if any, and I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge, I will endorse my professional commitments around data protection and confidentiality.

4. I understand that the identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the members of the research team (researcher, supervisors) directly involved in the project, and that confidentiality will be maintained.

5. I understand that data collected in this project might be shared as appropriate and for publication of findings, in which case data will remain completely anonymous.

6. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name

Date

Participant Signature

Researcher Name Date

Researcher Signature

Appendix IV Ethical Approval

11 November 2023

MR GEORGIOS PAPALEONIDOPOULOS
51A BELLEVUE ROAD
SOUTHEND ON SEA
ESSEX
SS2 4JE

Dear Georgios,

Re: Ethical Approval Application (Ref 18006)

Further to your application for ethical approval, please find enclosed a copy of your application which has now been approved by the School Ethics Officer on behalf of the Faculty Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa McKee
Ethics Administrator
School of Health and Social Care

cc. Research Governance and Planning Manager, REO
Supervisor

Appendix V Interview schedules for participants.

Indicative interview Scheme for Social Workers

What are the experiences refugees have in Greece, and what is your primary understanding of the problems they face?

What are your thoughts on the government policies around the asylum system and their access to welfare services?

What are the reasons behind their limited access to services, if there is any?

Are there any needs that you think are neglected?

What are the aims and objectives of the services the organisation provides and to what degree do they respond to the needs of refugees?

What is the role of the social worker in the service? What are the duties and responsibilities social workers have?

Do you think that the needs of refugees are met in the organisation you work? What issues arise?

Do you think, as a social worker, you are able to successfully work on these problems and meet these needs?

What challenges are you facing in your work?

Have you experienced any value tensions between your personal beliefs and social work (anti-oppressive) values? Can you describe it/them?

What impact do you think the work that you do has on these?

Have you ever experienced any kind of discrimination due to your work with refugees?

What are the reasons for you working in the NGOs sector?

What are the experiences of working in this environment?

How many years have you been working, and what are the kind of changes you have seen?

What are the positive things about working in the humanitarian sector?

How do you feel about your role and the work you do?

What changes you would like to see happening (in terms of policy and practice)? Do you have a role to play in changing things in a positive way?

Have you worked at any other services beyond the NGOs sector? If yes, what are the differences you noticed?

Are there any particular skills and knowledge that are important doing, accomplishing your role?

How did you acquire the skills you use in your practice?

What have you found most helpful and supportive, and what have been the main barriers you have faced?

Indicative interview Scheme for the management staff

What are the key values- principles the organisation holds? How are these translated into practice?

What are the services of the organisation, their aims and objectives?

What are the thoughts on the government policies around the asylum system and their access to welfare services?

What are the challenges the organisation faces in the implementation of its aims?

What are the conflicts arising in practice, and how are these resolved?

What are the priorities of the organisation now, and who defines them?

How does the organisation assess and respond to human need?

How is effectiveness measured?

How are decisions made, and what is the organisational structure?

How has the organisation changed during the so called “refugee” crisis (spring -summer 2015)?

What skills and qualifications the personnel have in the organisation, and how are services allocated?

Who are involved in the decision-making process and what are their roles in the organisation?

What is the role of the social worker in the service, and what are the expectations the organisation has from him-her?

What is the framework for the professional social work? what are the resources, skills social workers are required to have? (norms, professional standards, accepted behaviour)

What kind of training and courses are provided?

How does social workers’ participation in humanitarian programmes contribute to upholding the values-principles of the organisations?

What is the involvement of the social workers in the decision-making process and the policy-programme formation?

What is the involvement of the refugees in the decision-making process and the policy-programme formation?

Indicative interview Scheme for key informants

Do you think that the needs of refugees are met? What are the most pressing issues?

What are the reasons behind the issues they are facing?

How does the NGO sector manage these issues?

What do you think the future issues and needs of refugees will be and how should they be addressed?

What do you think the role of social workers should be?

How do you think their role can be improved to addressing current and future needs?

Appendix VI Process of analysing the data

▲ 6.Niki, Social worker

Athens, city centre, situated in a caffe.

- Before the interview the social worker, being critical about the language used for the refugees, mentioned that the narrative or the discourse is alienating. The “other” is no longer the object of an intervention #note: The social worker mentions that this is happening for accessing resources in times of deficit. It can aid people but as she mentions the purpose of the services, they provide is to empower the agency of the person to become subjects - “ all people are active subjects” - respect of freedom. free agents having to act in their own interest. “subjectivity”, who one is as an agent, the attributes and capacities one has for experience, the relations with others that contribute to one’s sense of self. Subjectivity is always particular. Race-Gender-Class are general categories. They challenge the material and ideological contradictions that are revealed through their engagement with oppressive state services and authorities (detention camps, police, welfare dependency etc). Important: the focus towards the individual agency because of the increasing individualisation of economic relations brought about through neoliberal ideologies. However, “Individuality and Autonomy.” / At the same time the social worker including other professional too were mobilised against evictions by taking part in rallies and campaigns (public interventions with those actors that are directly impacted by the policy) allowing that way the linking of the subject to broader political and social processes. This avoids the disconnection of the subject from structures of power and domination. Solidarity-action motivated by motivated by politics is understood here in more political terms as the establishment of social bonds with others for specific political goals (against evictions -housing and refugees’ rights) # Amartya Sen Capability approach. The centrality of human agency: the ability to expand human freedom of opportunity and freedoms of process an agency. People actively involved -given the opportunity, not as passive recipient of programmes. Social work does not merely concern with the ‘individual’ per se; it is part of broader processes and mechanisms that construct a ‘subject’ confined within established institutional boundaries. Overdetermined both by the socio-political bonds and workings while suffering conditions of oppression.
- **Decision-making power and ‘responsibility for their own future’.**
- Plenty of Changes since I ~~we~~ started. 2015 following the massive refugee arrivals. Social work is a “*constant struggle*”- Education and provision of housing have being improved. However, we still fight for what its should be deemed what goes without saying! Holistic approach (social work- legal support) aiming at integration.
- “*We promote their active partnership in the community. (Partnership)This is why we closely work with refuges’ communities and other NGOs. We are with them, until their can manage to stand on their own feet.*” (Value Independency-respect freedom) (Action: community work)

Appendix VII. National and European legislation on immigration.

Greece	
The Greek institutional framework of Greek Immigration and Asylum Policy.	
Following the economic crisis of 1893, during the period of 1890-1914 almost a sixth's of Greece's population emigrated to the USA and Egypt.	
1923 Convention on the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey following Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922	
<p>Law 3275/1925</p> <p>Law 4310/1929 (effect 16.8.1929) on the “<i>settlement and movement of foreigners in Greece, police passport control and expulsion.</i>”</p>	<p>Until 1991 the basic piece of legislation regulating the status of alien immigrants in Greece. It lasted for more than 60 years. Aim was to manage the return of refugees from Asia Minor. Sources of the law were the British Alien Act of 1919 and the French Decrees of 1917.</p> <p>In order Greece to maintain low wages introduced draconian measures under the pretext of fighting Communism. Refugees from Asia minor were targeted as being most of the workers in large tabaco unions¹²⁷.</p>
Dictatorship of General Metaxas 1936-1940 World war II 1945-1949 Greek civil war 1950 -1970 Greek emigration to Western Europe, the USA, Canada and Australia for economic and political reasons. Almost 1.2 million people left Greece	
<p>Greek Nationality Code Legal Decree 3370/1955 (Effect 3.10.1955)</p>	<p>Based on the principle of “<i>ius sanguinis</i>” (birth parents) in order to determine a person's origin while accepting the principle of “<i>ius soli</i>” (law of the land-birthplace) as well in order to avoid the creation of stateless.</p> <p>“<i>Greek citizenship is the active nationality that vertically links the Greek national to the Greek state</i>” (p.39)¹²⁸</p> <p>Under the Greek law it is a person's origin that determines that person's nationality. “<i>Jus sanguinis</i>” dictates that citizenship is based on family heritage or descent to grant or deny citizenship and hence people are subjected to forms of civil and social discrimination, restrictive naturalization laws and policies (e.g.vital documents, such as birth certificates and passports are denied)</p>
Greece joined the European Union in 1981 as tenth member	
Schengen Agreement in 1985 reduced border checks among five countries of the European Economic Community (EEC)	
After 1989, many immigrants arrived from the north (Albania, Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria)	
<p>The European Social Charter-1961 Charter (ESC) was ratified on 06/06/1984. The Additional Protocol of 1988 was ratified on 18/06/1998 and the Revised Charter, adopted in 1996 was ratified on 18 March 2016.</p> <p>It complements the European Convention on Human Rights which refers to civil and political rights in the field of economic and social rights.</p> <p>It guarantees a person's right to protection against poverty and social exclusion; right to housing; right to protection in cases of termination of employment; right to protection against sexual harassment in the workplace and other forms of</p>	<p>The rights enshrined in the Charter concern housing, health, education, employment, social protection, the free movement of persons and non-discrimination. It puts emphasis on the protection of vulnerable persons (elderly, migrants, people with disabilities).</p> <p>“Everyone has the right to benefit from social welfare services”. Part I (14).</p> <p>‘to promote or provide services which, by using methods of social work, would contribute to the welfare and development of both individuals and groups in the community, and to their adjustment to the social environment’ (Article 14 [1]).</p>

¹²⁷ Cheliotis, L. K. and Xenakis, S. (2010) ‘What's neoliberalism got to do with it? Towards a political economy of punishment in Greece’, *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 10(4), pp. 353–373. doi: 10.1177/1748895810382718.

¹²⁸ Papassiopi, Z. (1994) “Interpretation of the Greek Nationality Law” cited in Emmanouilidi, E. (2003) ‘Greek Immigration and Asylum Policy’, *European Migration Network Report*, (410), pp. 1–100. Available at: <https://www.google.gr/%0Apapers3://publication/uuid/1FB41695-1DB5-418D-BB49-AF99A9E88678>.

<p>harassment; rights of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and equal treatment etc.</p> <p>Additionally, amendments include the principle of non-discrimination; improvement of gender equality; better protection of maternity and social protection of mothers; better social, legal and economic protection of employed children; better protection of disable people.</p>	<p>“to encourage the participation of individuals and voluntary or other organisations in the establishment and maintenance of such services. (Article 14 [2]).”</p> <p>21 December 2018: Collective complaint ECRE and ICJ v. Greece on violations towards the unaccompanied minors and children on reception facilities¹²⁹</p>
<p>1989 Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers</p>	
<p>1975/86 Constitution</p>	
<p>Schengen Convention 1990</p>	<p>Abolition of internal controls within the EU. Establishment of a common travel area and a common visa policy. It was incorporated in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999 and became part of the EU law.</p>
<p>Maastricht Treaty 1991 Treaty on European Union (TEU)</p> <p>Asylum became part of the ‘third pillar’ of the Union’s competencies: Justice and Home Affairs.</p>	<p>“<i>European citizenship</i>” was officially introduced as the Treaty formally recognized the need for a serious common immigration policy.</p> <p>Institutionalized member-state cooperation on asylum and immigration.</p>
<p>The Dublin Conventions of 1990 “Dublin I”</p> <p>(Ratified with Law 1996/13.12.1991) until 1.9.2003 when it was replaced by Dublin II</p> <p>Convention establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Contracting States by a third-country national</p>	<p>Both stressed the responsibility among the EU states for the examination of asylum applications with the intention to harmonize national asylum policies.</p> <p>Emphasis on deterring abuses in asylum procedures: 1) “asylum shopping” to stop the lodging of asylum applications in more than one EU Member State 2) ‘refugees in orbit’-individuals whose asylum applications are not examined in any Member State because no State will admit its responsibility.</p>
<p>Law 1975 of 1991- the Aliens Act (Effect 4.12.1991) It abolished former law L4310/1929</p> <p>UNHCR played until then the major role in the refugee status recognition process, legal aid and social protection</p> <p>International Conventions- Geneva Convention of 1951 (Ratified by Legislative Decree 3989/1959) and the Protocole of New York of 1967 (Ratified by Law 389/1968) were incorporated.</p> <p>Greece endorses the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties of 1950, the United Nations Convention Against Torture of 1984 (UNCAT), the UN ExCom Conclusions No. 30 & 58, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU in which the right to asylum is embedded in Article 18.</p> <p>The legal basis of Greek asylum policy. The recognition of refugee status (ch.6, Art. 24&25.1) It was amended by, inter alia, Law 2452/1996 on the legal status of refugees (Art. 1-2) and & Law 2713/1999 (effect 30.4.1999)</p> <p>‘<i>Humanitarian refugee status</i>’ in Greece was introduced (article 25.4), as amended by Law 2452/1996 and in conjunction with article 8 of Presidential Decree 61/1999.</p> <p>The later provides the substantive and procedural details regarding the categories of people who were protected with a ‘<i>special residence card for humanitarian reasons</i>’ after the asylum application has been rejected. It is considered by Greek law as temporary. Residence on humanitarian grounds</p>	<p>The Greek legislation formally incorporates for the first time, thus, the normative order of Human Rights Conventions into the domestic legal order and immigration policy. The institutional recognition of asylum seekers in Greece.</p> <p>The Greek legislator distinguished repatriots of Greek origin by regulating their residence and work rights in a separate article.</p> <p>Aim was to combat illegal immigration based on police enforcement and policing the Greek external borders, undervaluing the importance of social integration.</p> <p>The law attempted to restrict the application field with two additional criteria i) immediately upon arrival (Art.25.1a) ii) only if he/she directly came of a country where her/his life or freedom would be threatened, according to the Geneva Convention (art. 25.1b).</p> <p>These provisions led to refoulement of asylum-seekers.</p> <p>The Greek state through the Ministry of Protection is charge of political asylum claims and examination as well as permit issue while the Ministry of Health supervises and finances (health budget) refugee Reception Centres (Art. 24.2) which provide various services (accommodation, medical support, social integration, employment search.</p> <p>All other needs are funded by the UNHCR.</p> <p>Work permits are the joint responsibility of Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Protection.</p>

¹²⁹ International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) v. Greece See <https://rm.coe.int/cc173casedoc1-en/168090390c>

granted for six months and renewable; no social rights attached.	
“London Resolutions” of 1992-European Union Council Resolution of 30 November 1992 on Manifestly Unfounded Applications for Asylum	A harmonised approach concerning host third countries. “Asylum policies should give no encouragement to the misuse of asylum procedures” ¹³⁰ Restrictionist stance towards the recognition of asylum-seekers reproducing the logic of exclusion. Objective was to discourage abuse of asylum by third country nationals (TCNs). By redefining the idea of refugee protection, it caused serious concerns to the UNHCR regarding to its compatibility with the Geneva Convention
Presidential Decree ¹³¹ 3/1993 on the procedure of recognition of refugee status.	
Presidential Decree 209/1994 on the employment of recognised refugees, asylum seekers and temporary residents on humanitarian grounds.	The Convention refugees' right to employment was recognised. Until then the Greek state held reservations against Article 17.1 of the 1951 Convention, regarding the paid employment of refugees.
1995 Council Resolution on minimum guarantees for asylum procedures	
In late 1996 when a large number (over 1,000) of Iraqi Kurds arrived in Greece due to the Kurdish conflict in Northern Iraq. In the absence of state assistance, the only organizations that were able to provide social welfare were Medecins du Monde, Greece and the Hellenic Red Cross ¹³²	
Law 2452/1996 on refugees (.. 12.1996) A third category of protected persons was introduced-temporary protection of specific groups of aliens who seek protection in Greece for reasons of <i>force majeure</i> . (e.g victims of armed conflict). They remain in the country provisionally.	On issues regarding the refugee status determination procedure and refugees' right to employment. Article 2 of Law 2452/1996, followed by Presidential Decree 61/1999, abolished altogether the conditions of admissibility provided for in Law 1975/1991.
Joint Presidential Decree 358-359/1997 (effect on 1.1.1998) Series of political measures for the labour market to regularize their residence and work and combat the black-market economy. They tackled political refugees separately (Art. 6 & 8)	Regularize illegal entry and employment of those foreign illegal immigrants who had been residing and/or working illegally in Greece, while excluding others, discouraging mass influx of new migrants. White Card (short stay card) and Green Card (limited duration or Long-term Residential Permit)
Schengen Agreement and Convention-European Union by Law 2514/1997	Gradual abolition of checks at the EU common borders
Ombudsman's Office by Law 2477/1997 National Committee for Human Rights (NCHR) by Law 2667/1998 established according to the <i>Paris Principles</i> .	Independent administrative organs whose role is <i>inter alia</i> -among other things to control state authorities' conduct towards Greek citizens as well as aliens residing in Greece on whatever basis.
Law 2646/1998 Regarding the development of the ' National Social Welfare System '. Greek state is obliged to provide social protection equally to every individual who is lawfully on Greek territory and in need of that protection. The special role of NGOs in welfare has been reinforced.	It provided by the Welfare Ministry specific services for the social protection of vulnerable social groups. These programmes planned to cover recognized refugees, asylum-seekers and humanitarian refugees. The aim was to assist the integration of refugees and provide socio-economic assistance to the other two categories.
Presidential Decree 189/1998 (effect 16.6.1998) replacing Presidential Degree 209/1994) on work permit, refugees' employment, 'humanitarian (de facto) refugees' and family reunification. The EQUAL initiative with European Social Fund (ESF): Social and vocational integration of asylum seekers in	Asylum seekers have had access to temporary employment (Art.4). Asylum seekers may undertake employment on the condition that after searching the labour market, no Greek national, EU citizen, recognised refugee, or person of Greek descent expressed interest in the particular post. Among

¹³⁰ Council Resolution of 30 November 1992 on Manifestly Unfounded Applications for Asylum ("London Resolution") at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3f86bbcc4.html>

¹³¹ Presidential Decrees and Ministerial Decisions that are subject to no parliamentary scrutiny, however they constitute the main body of Greek refugee law.

¹³² Sitaropoulos, N. (2000) 'Modern Greek Asylum Policy and Practice in the Context of the Relevant European Developments', Journal of Refugee Studies 13(1): 105-17.

<p>combatting all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with the labour market</p>	<p>others, humanitarian refugees, <i>in order to cover their immediate life needs</i>. Self-employment of humanitarian refugees is not allowed. Employment was recognised but was subject to an extremely strict legislative regime. Greek law excludes asylum seekers resident in the Lavrio centre. The law also provides for the participation of Convention refugees in the vocational training schemes of the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) on the same terms as the Greek citizens (Art.3.1) The Greek state does not provide any special financial assistance to asylum seekers or refugees.</p>
<p>Law 2622/1998</p>	<p>The formation of a special border control guard.</p>
<p>Law 2713/1999 (effect 30.4.1999)</p>	
<p>Presidential Decree 266/1999.</p> <p>The Greek state started, extremely cautiously, to acknowledge its welfare responsibilities towards forced migrants. NGOs which, until the late 1990s, were exclusively responsible for refugee welfare provision in Greece. In 1997, two small reception centres had established in Attica funded by the EU and managed by the Hellenic Red Cross and MeAdécins du Monde-Greece.</p>	<p>On refugee's reception and social welfare. Urgent medical, pharmaceutical and hospital services for asylum seekers were to be addressed by state institutions. (Articles 15-16) Asylum seekers were being unable to benefit from all social protection schemes and other regulations concerning social protection except those relating to emergency health care. Health and Welfare Ministry took over responsibility for the permanent, state-funded asylum seekers' reception centre established Lavrio (south of Athens) with capacity of 300 persons. Social services in the centre were provided by two NGOs acting as 'implementing agencies' of the Greek Health Ministry: the Hellenic Red Cross and the International Social Services. Priority was given to vulnerable individual cases, such as unaccompanied minors, elderly people and persons with special needs. In 2003 there were eight (including the two permanent) reception centres in Greece with a total capacity of 1 300 persons.</p>
<p>Presidential Decree 61/1999</p> <p>(effect June 1999, replacing PD83/1993) regarding refugee status determination procedure. Refugee Reception Centres, Family reunification (art. 7) Humanitarian refugees (art. 8)</p> <p>The duration of Convention refugee status in Greece is five years, renewable (Art. 3.2.)</p> <p>It is objectively impossible for the asylum seeker to be removed or to return to her/his country of origin or habitual residence due to <i>force majeure</i> (eg. serious health, human rights violations). The fulfilment of the requirements of the principle of <i>non-refoulement</i> (Article 8.2) as enshrined in article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), or in article 3 of the UN Convention against Torture (CAT). In case the Convention refugee status application is rejected, the refugee applicant may appeal. (Art. 3)</p>	<p>On the refugee status recognition procedure and makes a direct reference to article 1A of the Geneva Convention, as well as to the New York Protocol. It also involves anybody who <i>in any manner whatever asks not to be deported to another country on the ground of fear of persecution</i> on any of the five Geneva Convention grounds.</p> <p>Cases of an unaccompanied minors (under 18) are to be referred by the police to a public prosecutor who is authorised by the same statute to act as the minor's guardian (Art. 1.4).</p> <p>Asylum seekers undergo routine medical examinations to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. These examinations do not include HIV testing. Asylum seekers who report that they are victims of torture are to be referred to specialist medical institutions by the police.</p> <p>Female asylum seekers should be interviewed by female staff, including interpreters, if appropriate due to their cultural background and experiences.</p>
<p>The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty was ratified by the Law 2691/1999</p> <p>A common European system for granting refugee status by determining the Member State responsible for the examination of an asylum application.</p>	<p>EU countries attempt to progressively establish <i>'an area of freedom, security and justice'</i> within the European Union (see consolidated Article 61 of EU Treaty). The Union acquired a direct remit in the fields of civil liberties and human rights. The EU member-states through common political and policing measures (e.g. Frontex, the European Border Police) created a tight and common border between themselves (p.183).¹³³</p>

¹³³ Dalakoglou, D. (2016) 'Europe's last frontier: The spatialities of the refugee crisis', *City*, 20(2), pp. 180–185. doi:

<p>Common European Asylum System (CEAS).</p> <p>Ensuring the implementation of the UN General Assembly (1951). The standards and provisions include access to protection and deterring unauthorised entry.</p> <p>(2013/32/EU) laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection. Efforts to improve asylum procedures. Emphasis on the protection of unaccompanied minors, disabled and victims of torture.</p> <p>(2013/33/EE) Reception Conditions Directive. Efforts to improve asylum seeker's situation by setting minimum standards of reception in order to give safe and humane living conditions for them and their families; Detention should be considered as a last resort</p> <p>(2011/95/EE) It straightens status determination outcomes across the EU. It involves measures for the access in inclusion (Dublin III)</p> <p>EURODAC (Unauthorised entry and asylum fingerprint) all asylum seekers as well as persons arrested for illegal entry into one of the EU Member States are finger-printed and their data enter a centrally managed computer system. database for those entering in the EU.</p>	<p>While founded on humanitarian concerns, human rights and protection for common asylum practices, reception conditions and integration-related measures, it focuses on surveillance, monitoring and control of migrants' movements. It aims at i) reducing "asylum shopping" of asylum seekers applying for asylum in several states ii) member States deal with individual asylum cases in a coherent way regardless of where they were made iii) stop applicants from drawn towards countries that offer better social benefits.</p>
<p>The Greek Constitution was amended on 17 April 2001</p> <p>Accordingly, the new Article 25.1 of the constitution expressly provides that the '<i>rights of man as an individual and as a member of the social entity as well as the principle of the social rule of law are guaranteed by the state</i>' giving emphasis on the social role of social protection of the modern Greek state by guaranteeing civil rights to every person (p.438).¹³⁴</p>	<p>Asylum seekers and humanitarian refugees, who may fall into one or more of the above invalidity categories (such as disability allowances), were excluded from the above-mentioned allowances.</p>
<p>Law 2910/2001 (effect 2.6.2001)</p> <p>Rights and obligations of foreign immigrants-third country nationals, TCNs (ch. 9, Art. 39-41). The rights (art. 39) are those guaranteed by the Greek Constitution. The obligations (art. 41) include: (a) the obligations of foreign immigrants defined by LD57/1973 on Social Protection (b) mandatory nine-year education (as for the children of Greek citizens) (c) compliance with the Greek Constitution and the Greek law and order (d) mandatory insurance cover (e) clear tax status (f) compliance with any General Secretariat of the Region restrictive order.(p.36)¹³⁵</p> <p>It excludes: EU nationals, refugees and persons of Greek origin irrespective of whether they reside in Greece.</p> <p>Special Detention Centres, Expulsion, Unwanted entrants list (ch. 10, Art. 44-49).</p> <p>General provisions (Art. 58-62). Equality of the rights of the two sexes – L1483/1984.</p> <p>Legal residents (Art. 65). Illegal residents (Art. 66). Family reunification (Art. 67)</p> <p>Modernisation-most of Law 1975/1991 and joint PDs 358-359/1997 were abolished.</p>	<p>It conforms with European immigration law and the requirements of the EC summits.</p> <p>Greek naturalization law was reformed.</p> <p>It provided temporary residence permits, on humanitarian or <i>force majeure</i> grounds, to aliens (immigrants) who have not entered at all the refugee status recognition procedure (Art. 37.4)</p> <p>The Ministry of Protection, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour maintain authority in asylum matters while the main jurisdiction in immigration matters transferred to Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization and local regions.</p> <p>Foreign nationals are granted legal access to the national system of justice and social protection and their equality of treatment is guaranteed.</p> <p>Law 2910/2001 (Art. 40), the children who were born in third countries and live in Greece are obliged and have the right to attend school and complete the years of compulsory education.</p> <p>The law guarantees schooling for all children, citizens or foreigners, from the age of 6 to the age of 15.</p>

10.1080/13604813.2016.1170467

¹³⁴ Sitaropoulos, N. (2002) 'Refugee welfare in Greece: towards a remodelling of the responsibility-shifting paradigm?', *Critical Social Policy*, 22(3), pp. 436–455

¹³⁵ Emmanouilidi, E. (2003) 'Greek Immigration and Asylum Policy', European Migration Network Report, (410), pp. 1–100.

Available at: <https://www.google.gr/%0Apapers3://publication/uuid/1FB41695-1DB5-418D-BB49-AF99A9E88678>.

Amendments Followed (Law 3013/2002,3074/2002, 3103/2003, 3146/2003) abolishing most of Law 1975/1991 and joint PDs 358-359/1997.	
Presidential Decree 366/2002	A second permanent state reception center for asylum seekers with capacity of one hundred persons was established in Athens on 12 December 2002
Greek asylum policy The Dublin Conventions of 2003 EC Council regulation No. 343/2003 or “ Dublin II ” from 1.9.2003 – European Union On the allocation of the responsibility to examine an asylum application.	Regulation 343/2003 ‘establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national’
Law 3226/ 2004 on legal aid (effect 4.2.2004)	First statute on comprehensive legal aid scheme (Article 1.1) as a civil right established in contemporary international and European human rights law. In practice legal aid for aliens and asylum- seekers was non-existent in Greece. The above Law's scope covers only criminal, civil and commercial litigation. The sole legal assistance to vulnerable cases in need of protection with no means had come from NGOs, the UNHCR and the Bar association.
Law 3386/2005 The first law recognizing the reality of immigration as a long-term and permanent phenomenon. Equal participation of migrants in the country’s economic, social and cultural life. Provisions on the basis 1) of rights for migrants 2) their obligation to respect the fundamental norms and values of Greek society. (Articles 65-66)	Basic knowledge of Greek language, history and culture were determined as prerequisites for acquiring long-term residence status (Article 66, parag. 4). It clearly constrains migrants from accessing services provided by Greek public entities, local government bodies, and social security organizations (Article 84)- emergency health care and health care to minors by hospitals and the enrolment of all children in Greek schools are exempted. It introduced highlighted the principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment of migrants, along with respect for their cultural and religious identity.
Presidential Decree 220/2007 ¹³⁶ Articles 12 & 13 It was transported into the Greek legislation the 2003.	The Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity was assigned with the responsibility with the reception and accommodation of asylum seekers. It guarantees reception, housing, maintenance in “adequate” accommodation in Greece capable of ensuring their subsistence and protect their fundamental rights’. Financial allowance was foreseen. The funding was through state budget and co-financed by the European Refugee Fund (ERF). NGOs run facilities were insufficiently funded and the State-run reception centres were funded through the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Greek state. Referrals due to limited available places were prioritized on the basis of vulnerability. There were no uniformed standards and operating principles and rules.
Since 2008 more refugees and migrant arrived from Africa and Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bangladesh etc.).	
Law 3838/2010 (effect 24.03.2010) Extending political rights at the local level and social integration in Greece with the right to vote and stand as candidates in local elections. In 2013 the Council of State decided the law was unconstitutional.	Children born in Greece with parents residing legally in Greece for five consecutive years, could acquire nationality at birth. (Art.1) Provisions for “ius soli” acquisition of nationality of the second generation introduced, allowing second generation migrants to apply and gain Greek nationality having attended six grades of Greek school (Art. 1, par.2). Seven years of legal residency are required for someone to apply for naturalization (Article 5A, par. 1d). Provisions for ius soli acquisition of nationality of the second generation were suspended.

¹³⁶Presidential Decree 220/2007. Available in Greek at <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/inner.php/kat-allodapoi/prosphuges-politiko-asulo/pd-220-2007.html?print=1>

Greek government received a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU), and the European Central Bank (ECB)	
Law 3850/2010 (Art. 78)	Integration of immigrants at the local level "one-stop shops" of the Foreigners & Immigration Services assist third country citizens who reside within their territorial jurisdiction, throughout all the stages of the procedure, i.e. from lodging the application for a residence permit, to the acquisition of their biometrical data and the service of the decision or the residence permit, as per each case.
European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) (GC) MSS v Belgium and Greece (2011) The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) recognised the severity of the Greek asylum system crisis and the treatment of asylum seekers not in accordance with "basic human standards" over the period 2000-2010.	The Court decided the suspension of all transfers of asylum seekers from other member states to Greece on the basis of impairments in the operation of the national asylum system, the inhuman and degrading detention conditions in the country and deprivation of asylum seekers' rights.
Law 3852/2010 (effect 2011) <i>'Kallikratis Project'</i> The Migrant Integration Council (MIC) aim at the integration of the migrants in the local government and policy-making structures with recommendations regarding their integration.	The Migrant Integration Councils (MIC) operate as a municipal advisory body of the City Council providing a network between the elected representatives, the migrants' communities and the local society. Migrant communities that participate in the MIC must be representatives of associations or representatives who are elected from their respective community. They have no decision-making powers and lack the legal framework on issues of integration and reception.
Law 3907/2011 ¹³⁷ (effect 26.01.2011) Third-country nationals should be subjected to first reception procedures upon entry. The competent authority to provide such services was the First Reception Service (FRS). The National Centre for Social Solidarity (NCSS-E.K.K.A.) under the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity, coordinated the management of requests in accommodation facilities for asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors. It establishes the child's best interest as a broader-range interpretative guideline for all decisions concerning it (Article 20)	Under the Minister of Citizen Protection, the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority and the First Reception Service (FRS) were established, independent from the police. Its operation did not begin until 2013 and even then, with major problems. Among other services necessary care and psychosocial support as well as information about newcomers' obligations and rights were included.
Official unemployment was increased dramatically, from 10.3 percent in January 2010 to 27 percent in winter 2012	
European Union receives Nobel Peace Prize in 2012	
Golden Dawn gained 400,000 votes (approximately 7%) in the elections of 2012	
Operations Aspida (Shield) and Xenios Zeus at the Greek-Turkish land border and in mainland Greece respectively in an orchestrated attempt to combat both irregular entry and stay of third-country nationals.	
In October 2012, the government extended the detention period of migrants and asylum seekers by up to twelve months (i.e. 18 months in total)	
In December 2012, the construction of a 12.5km-long barbed wire fence was completed at the Greek-Turkish land border.	
Greek Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management 2013	Renewed annually i.e. see 2011, 2013 and 2015 revisions.
The first National Strategy for the Integration of Third Country Nationals in 2013. ¹³⁸ Integration Strategy It gives emphasis on the importance of in local communities and the legal framework for long-term residence and education. Measures include service provision, introductory courses, employment, health, housing, political participation, anti-discrimination, and intercultural dialogue, but most emphasis was put on training and skills development for both	Social services are provided under the principle of subsidiarity and social responsibility in order to replace the obsolete of public services and uncritical provision of welfare services. It aims at supportive services assisting service users back to a level of independence through their adjustment to the needs of the national economy (p.28) ¹³⁹ . Social services aiming at social integration through education and employment. Focus

¹³⁷ Law 3907/2011. Available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4da6ee7e2.html>

¹³⁸ Greece: 2013 National Strategy for the Integration of Third Country Nationals at <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/index.cfm?action=furl.go&go=/librarydoc/greece-national-strategy-for-the-integration-of-third-country-nationals-23/04/2013>

¹³⁹ Εθνική Στρατηγική για την ένταξη των πολιτών τρίτων χωρών at https://www.ypes.gr/UserFiles/f0ff9297-f516-40ff-a70e-eca84e2ec9b9/ethnikisratig_30042013.pdf

<p>Third Country Nationals and public employees dealing with migrant issues.</p>	<p>on anti-discrimination. For this reason, more emphasis was put on their adjustment and support to be developed accordingly (p.64-65)¹⁴⁰.</p>
<p>Ministerial Decision 92490/2013 of the Minister of Health It lays down the age assessment procedure in the context of reception and identification procedures.</p> <p>It established for the first time in Greece an age assessment procedure applicable within the context of the (then) First Reception Service (FRS). It was based on macroscopic features (i.e. physical appearance, hair and body features) considering body metric data. If the assessment cannot be determined psychologist and the social worker of the division will follow in order to evaluate the cognitive, behavioural and psychological development of the individual. Medical examinations such as dental or wrist X-rays are considered as last resort. It should be carried out only if there are reasonable doubts about whether a person is a minor. If a person's minor status is still uncertain, he or she should be given the benefit of the doubt. It should also be based on a presumption that the person is a minor, and not based solely on a medical opinion.</p> <p>Joint Ministerial Decision 1982/2016 provides for an age assessment procedure for persons seeking international protection before the Asylum Service. It foresaw in case of a doubt, the minors must be referred to social services regulated by the Ministry of Health (Article 2) or when it is not available by a social worker from NGOs (Article 5) in order to evaluate the cognitive, behavioural and psychological development. Medical assessment (x rays and dental examination) was considered to be the last resort due to the questionable accuracy of the exam.</p>	<p>The Greek law foresees a step-by-step and holistic assessment by the medical and psychosocial support unit. Referral to the hospital is conducted as the last step and only if the medical and psychosocial assessment is not conclusive.</p> <p>In practice, there were cases e.g. in the RIC of Fylakio where psychosocial assessment was omitted for an x-ray assessment in which the child is assessed as an adult¹⁴¹.</p> <p>Equally, the guardianship system also hinders the enjoyment of procedural rights guaranteed by national legislation.</p> <p>These decisions do not extend age assessment of unaccompanied children under the responsibility of the Hellenic Police due to lack of legal framework.</p> <p>The Law (including Law 4636/2019) provided the applicant with the benefit of doubt but the lack of qualified personnel, erroneous implementation of the age assessment procedure and of legal guardianship undermined that right.</p>
<p>Law 4172/2013¹⁴² and Law 4249/2014¹⁴³</p> <p>Confirmation of the Law 4048/2012. The Law supplements the First Reception Service's (a central office/board and regional offices, including mobile units). It will be renamed Reception & Identification Service.</p> <p>The Greek state in its effort to abide to its international and national obligations should provide interim care, protection, reception and accommodation of all asylum seekers, and thus of unaccompanied minors too.</p>	<p>The first reception services, known as 'first reception centres' provided housing in open accommodation facilities (for asylum seekers and vulnerable groups) and nutrition, information of the residents about their rights and responsibilities in the host country, services for their psychosocial support, while facilitating their access to health services. Additionally, basic personal hygiene products, clothing and footwear and learning the Greek language as well as access to training and skills development programmes were foreseen.</p>
<p>Law 4301/2014</p>	<p>Permit for informal mosques to operate as places of worship.</p>
<p>Law 4251/2014 (Migration and Social Integration Code) It was replaced by Article 8, parag. 23, of Law 4332/2015</p> <p>It established a comprehensive protective framework for third country families and children in line with the principle of non-discrimination.</p> <p>Provision of shelter for hiding: (a) by a maximum penalty of 10 years of imprisonment and a fine of €10,000 up to €30,000 for every transported person Articles 29–30</p>	<p>It substituted immediate nationality acquisition for the second generation with a) the promotion of long-term residence status who have successfully completed six years of Greek schooling and b) a special permit for the second generation upon reaching 21 years of age. They are excluded from various professions when Greek nationality is prerequisite. Qualified of long-term residence permit after long-term legal residence (over 5 years). The code requires applicants must meet "the conditions for integration into the Greek society" and can prove a level of language proficiency and knowledge of history and civilization (Art. 67 Law 3356/2005). Articles 69 to 77 of the Code provide for the right to family reunification of working third-country nationals, their spouses and their children.</p>
<p>Law 4285/2014</p>	

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ see AIDA, Country Report Greece, 2019 Update, p.45

¹⁴² Law 4172/2013. Available in Greek https://www.kodiko.gr/nomologia/document_navigation/250460/nomos-4172-2013

¹⁴³ Law 4249/2014. Available in Greek at [Νόμος 4249/2014 - ΦΕΚ 73/Α/24-3-2014 \(Κωδικοποιημένος\) - Ίδρυση - Λειτουργία Υπηρεσιών \(e-nomothesia.gr\)](http://www.kodiko.gr/nomologia/document_navigation/250460/nomos-4249-2014)

On combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law recognised the racist motive behind criminal actions as a specific aggravating circumstance. More severe sentences for hate motivated offences were foreseen (Article 81A)	
2015-2016 Migration challenge	
The unfolding humanitarian emergency on the Greek islands, and the increasing pressures and tensions in other EU member-states	
The first open hospitality centre in Elaionas, Athens, welcomed its first guests in August 2015 after the Municipality of Athens agreed to hand over the land.	
The Hotspot approach to managing exceptional migratory flows ¹⁴⁴ (15.07.2015)	The Europeanisation of migration controls in response to the exceptional migration flows.
It was set by the European Commission in the European Agenda on Migration to contribute to identification, registration and fingerprinting as well as debriefing of asylum seekers, as well as return operations.	A development for the containment of migration that takes over states' functions such as border controls, asylum claims, welfare provisions and introduces a new chapter in the nature of citizenship and territory-related rights. ¹⁴⁵
Greek Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management 2015	
Law 4332/2015 (Effect 9.06.2015)	
Amended the Greek Nationality Code (Law 4521/2014). Articles 1 & 2	Nationality acquisition for the second-generation immigrants was reintroduced (not automatically for migrant children who are born in Greece) and enabled migrant children who attended school in Greece to apply for nationality. School attendance was increased (from 6 years to 9 years) and increased the length of parents' residence in order second generation immigrants to obtain Greek nationality. Equally, graduation of a Greek University, under the condition of being a graduate of a Greek Secondary school allowed the acquisition of Greek citizenship.
The European Directives 2011/98 and 2014/36 were translated into the Greek legislation	It provided residence permit for those undocumented and living above five years to forge bonds with the host society. Formerly undocumented migrants eligible for legal status on the basis of exceptional reasons (<i>ekseretikous logous</i>) or on the basis of subsidiary protection (Art 8.23).
Law 4320/2015	
Social and Solidarity Income Scheme to face the 'humanitarian crisis'	It was introduced to ensure provision of basic goods and services to people and families living in extreme poverty, including free electricity, rent allowances and food stamps.
The opening of the 'Western Balkan route' in September 2015	
EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 and the closure of the 'Western Balkan route' ¹⁴⁶ which caused the blockage of thousands of migrants at the border crossing point of Eidomeni.	
Decision 10464/31.5.2016 issued by the Director of the Asylum Service	It was applied to the islands, prohibiting asylum seekers from moving from the islands to the rest of the country imposing geographical restrictions.
Presidential Decree 123/2016 ¹⁴⁷	

¹⁴⁴ The Hotspot Approach to Managing Exceptional Migratory Flows access at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_hotspots_en.pdf

¹⁴⁵ Painter, J. et al. (2017) 'Hotspot politics—or, when the EU state gets real', *Political Geography*. Elsevier Ltd, 60, pp. 259–260. doi: 10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.02.012.

¹⁴⁶ Readmission agreements and cooperations between the EU and other countries such as Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova are considered to be part of externalisation policies of migration management and control systems. Most recent for the management of irregular migration are of those with several African states such as Libya, Niger and Chad as well as the joint Way Forward agreement with Afghanistan. Greece due to its position has since the 90s signed bilateral readmission agreements with Turkey, prior to the large influx of asylum seekers in 2015. For a detailed discussion on such policies regarding Greece see for example Apostolou, K. (2004) 'Immigrant and immigration policy-making: A review of the literature of the Greek case', *Imiscoe Working Paper*, pp. 1–11 and Triandafyllidou, A. and Dimitriadi, A. (2014) 'Governing irregular migration at the margins of Europe. The case of hotspots on the Greek islands', *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)*, pp. 75–96 and Skleparis, D. (2017) 'European Governments' Responses to the "Refugee Crisis": The Interdependence of EU Internal and External Controls'. *Southeastern Europe* 41(3): 276–301.

¹⁴⁷ Presidential Decree 123/2016. Available at <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kubernese/proedriko-diatagma-123-2016.html>

<p>The establishment of the Ministry of Migration Policy, mandate, and structure, separating it from the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform.</p>	
<p>Law 4375/2016¹⁴⁸ (effect 04.2016)</p> <p>(It modified PD 104/2012 and was amended in March 2017, August 2017 and May 2018)</p> <p>It concerns with the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement and the “Hot spot approach”.</p> <p>Provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC were incorporated into the Greek legislation.</p> <p>It concerns the organization of the Asylum Service, the Reception and Identification Service (R.I.S.), and the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception (Article 26). Additionally, it concerns with the Open Temporary Reception Structures for applicants for international protection (Article 11). The Ministry of Migration Policy is responsible for the overall management of the reception system and the supervision-operation of the facilities. It established open temporary reception and accommodation facilities for persons subject to return procedures.</p> <p>It provides a legal basis for the establishment of different accommodation facilities from different governmental authorities: Reception and identification camps, temporary reception centres for asylum seekers like Mobile Reception and Identification Units (Article 8c) where hotspots(RIC)¹⁴⁹ were established (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos), and temporary accommodation facilities for people “who are under a return, removal or readmission procedure” (Article 8d).</p> <p>It Introduces the criteria of vulnerability (Art. 14.8); Unaccompanied minors, persons suffering from a severe disability or a terminal disease; victims of torture; rape or other forms of physical, psychological or sexual violence; persons with PTSD and victims of human trafficking. The Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (KEELPNO), a public entity under the Ministry of Health since the mid-2017 until 2019 was undertaking the medical screening and psycho-social assessments.</p> <p>It established that all international protection beneficiaries and applicants have equal access in terms and conditions to wage employment or self-employment with Greek nationals</p> <p>Centre of Disease Control and Prevention KEELPNO developed a ‘<i>vulnerability assessment</i>’ tool in co-operation with UNHCR and IOM to provide guidance to medical and psychosocial teams. Until March 2019 medical screening and psycho-social assessment was undertaken by KELPNO within the framework of reception and identification procedures.</p> <p>On full and automatic access to the labour market for recognised refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries under the same conditions as nationals, without any obligation to obtain a work permit. (Art. 69)</p>	<p>After the EU-Turkey statement, “a temporary and extraordinary” asylum regime was established with different international protection procedures on the Greek islands and other border areas with Turkey. Asylum claims lodged in Evros (Turkish-Greek land borders) were not examined under the fast-track border procedure</p> <p>Asylum claims by Syrians could be dismissed as inadmissible on the basis that Turkey is a safe third country¹⁵⁰.</p> <p>Hotspot facilities turned into closed detention centres. Approximately 13.000 people lived under detention-like conditions with limited access to formal/informal reception facilities (tents, toilets) and services.</p> <p>Those who arrived in Greece before 20 March 2016 fall under the ‘<i>normal</i>’ international protection procedure and were transferred from the islands to the Greek mainland to various accommodation facilities.</p> <p>Those who arrived in Greece after the activation of the statement fall under the <i>exceptional fast-track procedures</i> (Article 60(4) in force until end of 2019) of the new asylum law. According to the law, all international protection applications are deemed “<i>admissible</i>” or “<i>inadmissible</i>” based on the applicants’ interviews with European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Greek Asylum Service officers or the Police and Armed Forces. For each case the authorities determine if Turkey is considered a safe country for the applicants. Admissible applications allow people to stay on the island until the end of procedures. Inadmissible cases if the appeal is rejected are returned to Turkey. The concept of “<i>safe third country</i>” is applied within the framework of this procedure for applicants belonging to a nationality with a recognition rate over 25%, namely Syrians.</p> <p>Only vulnerable groups were exempt from these procedures and redirected the claimant under the regular procedure as absolute priority. No state-funded free legal aid is provided at first instance. Financial and bureaucratic concerns including lack of qualified staff for undertaking vulnerability assessments hampered the assessment. (1 to 8 months in average). Still they, including unaccompanied minors are detained in practice in prison like design under “<i>restriction of liberty</i>” or in “<i>protective custody</i>” due to lack of in age-appropriate reception facilities.</p> <p>Those who live on the islands in a state of limbo were excluded from labour market and social welfare provisions.</p> <p>No state-funded free legal aid is provided at first instance, nor is there an obligation to provide it in law. NGOs provide assistance depending on the availability and presence. The cost of the Registry’s lawyers for appeals were raised from €120 (in 2019) to €160.</p> <p>It reintroduced the issue of refugee integration into the Greek society; access to wage employment or self-employment on</p>

¹⁴⁸ Law 4375/2016. Available in English at [Refworld | Greece: Law No. 4375 of 2016 on the organization and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, the transposition into Greek legislation of the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC](https://www.refworld.org/docid/5d9d9d9d.html)

¹⁴⁹ The Joint Ministerial Decision No 2969/2015, Gov. Gazette 2602/B/2-12-2015 had provided for the establishment First Reception Centre (FRC). They were succeeded by the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) which operate within the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) premises. RIS previously outsourced medical and psychosocial care provision to NGOs until mid-2017 and then by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity.

¹⁵⁰ Council of the EU (2016) EU-Turkey statement, 18 March 2016. Press release 144/16. Available at: [EU-Turkey statement, 18 March 2016 \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/pressroom/articles/000144_en16031814416.htm)

	<p>the same terms and conditions with Greek nationals, provided that they have a valid residence permit.</p> <p>High unemployment rates, bureaucratic obstacles, and competition with Greek-speaking employees deter integration to labour market. Access to informal economy with no social security provisions.</p> <p>Out of the 40 camp-like facilities established and operated by the Greek army after 2015 only three were covered by the Law 4375/2016¹⁵¹. There were 50 structures for UAM across Greece in 2019.</p>
<p>UNHCR accommodation scheme and ESTIA programme ('Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation').</p> <p>In November 2015 UNHCR started implementing an accommodation scheme dedicated to relocation candidates. In July 2017 the accommodation scheme was included in the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA) programme funded by European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO). Accommodation spaces were funded through the EEA financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.</p> <p>The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was involved in the management and coordination of accommodation camp sites and reception sites. It implemented "Filoxenia" (hospitality) project providing temporary shelter and protection for the most vulnerable migrants. (1 October 2018 – 30 November 2019)</p>	<p>UNHCR accommodation scheme receives and processes relevant referrals for vulnerable asylum seekers eligible to be hosted under the scheme. Its operational framework and procedures were developed by the UNHCR and its partners (NGOs and local authorities).</p> <p>26,526 places were created from ESTIA and since 2018 1,530 places, of which 1,101 for unaccompanied children, were available in 58 reception facilities</p> <p>In April 2017 a cash card assistance mechanism was introduced as part of the programme funded by the European Commission. (€90 for single adults in catered accommodation and €550 for a family of seven in self-catering accommodation).</p>
<p>Law 4389/2016 (Effect on 02.2017)</p> <p>Social Solidarity Income (Κοινωνικό Επίδομα Αλληλεγγύης, ΚΕΑ)</p> <p>It was intended to temporarily support people who live below the poverty line in the current humanitarian crisis, including beneficiaries of international protection.</p> <p>Solidarity programme connected to supplementary services, such as access to social services that may provide cheaper electricity or water</p>	<p>There is no provision of state social support for vulnerable cases of beneficiaries such as victims of torture.</p>
<p>Law 4368/2016¹⁵² (Effect 02.2016)</p> <p>On universal and free health care. All uninsured persons, those who have lost their insurance coverage and are not entitled to health benefits due to debts to the pension funds, and vulnerable social groups (Article 33).</p> <p>The legislation was also applicable to migrants, including refugees, asylum-seekers (from the moment they express their will to apply for asylum) and minors irrespective of their legal status, including unaccompanied children and children without legal residence in Greece.</p> <p>A coordinating role was assigned to the Ministry of Defence regarding the transport, accommodation, catering and healthcare of refugees and immigrants.</p>	<p>Entitled international protection beneficiaries and applicants to free access to pharmaceuticals and healthcare in medical centres and hospitals, and to social security and welfare services (social benefits, such as unemployment allowances etc., provided that they have at least one year of work experience with social security).</p> <p>Before the law and amid the crisis, Greece was falling behind nearly all EU countries in health insurance coverage and a growing proportion of poor people reported unmet health care needs due to cost.¹⁵³ Administrative obstacles about the issuance of a Social Security Number (AMKA) by Citizen's Service Centres around Greece ("KEP") or the offices of the Agency for Social Security ("EFKA") also impeded access to health care which was a prerequisite (Article 33 para. 3). Since 11 July 2019, when the Ministry of Labour withdrew the circular that regulated how AMKA was to be granted to non-Greek nationals, situation had worsened. There was an absence of standards and monitoring mechanism on how the law was meant to be implemented.</p>

¹⁵¹ Dimitriadi, A. and Sarantaki, A.-M. (2019) 'National report on the governance of the asylum reception system in Greece', CEASEVAL Report, (20), pp. 1–39. Available at: http://ceaseval.eu/publications/WP3_Greece.pdf%0Apapers3://publication/uuid/7C596838-2AC9-47FC-8180-E55D2DF399D8.

¹⁵² Law 4368/2016. Available in Greek at <https://www.taxheaven.gr/law/4368/2016>

¹⁵³ D. Mijatović. *Report of the Commissioner for human Rights of the Council of Europe 2018* available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/report-commissioner-human-rights-council-europe-dunja-mijatovi-following-her-visit>

	Children born in Greece by parents irregularly residing in the country are also excluded from being able to access the public health system.
Law 4415/2016 It Introduced separate preparatory reception classes (DYEP) in public schools.	<p>Organisation of reception classes for refugee children in Greek public schools. Children aged between 6 and 15 years old were now able to enrol in afternoon classes from 14:00 to 18:00 in local public schools.</p> <p>All refugee children have the right to access school education provided that they are vaccinated. It should be noted, however, that all these provisions exclude those who remain on the islands.</p>
Law (Effect on 08.2017) On primary health care, which aims at establishing people-centred primary health care services through the creation of local units called Topikes Monades Ygias (TOMY)	
Law 4540/2018 ¹⁵⁴ On the material reception conditions (suitably adapted public or private buildings, managed by public or private non-profit organisations or international organisations) that may include, inter alia, a financial allowance. (Directive 2013/33/EC was incorporated in the Greek legislation). The most recent legal document that structures the formal governance of the reception system. The UNHCR and different NGOs under the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity, were charged with the accommodation of minors and asylum seekers. It introduced in the context of reception conditions more categories of vulnerable applicants such as persons with mental disorders and victims of female genital mutilation (Art. 20). People with PTSD were not mentioned in this list. On the procedure for certifying persons subject to torture, rape or other serious forms of violence (Art. 23) The accommodation requests were managed by the National Centre for Social Solidarity (NCSS-E.K.K.A.) (under the Ministry of Labour) It provides that applicants for international protection shall have access to the labour market	<p>It provides that unaccompanied minors shall be referred to accommodation centres for unaccompanied minors or to other accommodation centres where there are areas suitably adapted for this purpose, for as long as they stay in the country or until they are placed with a foster family or in supervised lodgings.</p> <p>No public health structures specialised in identifying or assisting torture survivors. As a result, NGOs running relative specialised programmes undertake assessments and support. Due to funding restrictions services provided were fragmented.</p>
Law 4554/2018 ¹⁵⁵ (on effect 18.07.2018) A regulatory framework of Guardianship of unaccompanied minors was established for the first time. Enter into force by 01.09. 2019. The State (the Directorate-General for Social Solidarity of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity), with the support of the National Center for Social Solidarity (NCSS - EKKA), shall bear the responsibility for such minors. The guardian of the minor shall be selected from a Registry of Guardians (Article 16). A supervisory Board for the Guardianship of Unaccompanied Minors was to be established. The Best Interest of the minor is to be assessed and determined (Article 21) A Register of Professional Guardians shall also be kept at NCSS (Law 3961/2011 Article 8). A Directorate for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors should be established under the NCSS involving Social	<p>The Courts automatically appoint the Public prosecutor for minors in each prefecture as 'guardian' of the minor (Art. 14). In practice, NGO personnel is usually appointed as temporary guardian by the Public Prosecutor.</p> <p>It was still not in force at the end of May 2020 as was introduced by Law 4623/2019 Article 73(1).</p>

¹⁵⁴ Law 4540/2018. Available in Greek at <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-allodapoi/prosphuges-politiko-asulo/nomos-4540-2018-phem-91a-22-5-2018.html>

¹⁵⁵ Law 4554/2018. Available in Greek at <https://www.e-forologia.gr/lawbank/document.aspx?digest=B25AD742DB55E490.1D031AEA53&version=2018/07/18>. Regarding the Guardianship of unaccompanied minors see <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5d47e08b4.pdf>

<p>Workers (Article 27). The responsibilities of a guardianship were outlined with regards their integration e.g. reception conditions, care, behaviour etc. (Article 18).</p>	
<p>Law 4636/2019¹⁵⁶ International Protection Act/IPA (effect on 01.01.2020)</p> <p>It introduced major changes to asylum procedures, the rights and obligations of asylum-seekers as well as detention, among other things.</p> <p>Persons with a post-traumatic disorder were deleted as category of persons belonging to vulnerable groups.</p> <p>The following groups are considered as vulnerable groups: children; unaccompanied children; direct relatives of victims of shipwrecks (parents and siblings); disabled persons; elderly; pregnant women; single parents with minor children; victims of trafficking; persons with serious illness; persons with cognitive or mental disability and victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence such as victims of female genital mutilation (Articles 39(5)(d) and 58(1)).</p> <p>Any authority detecting the entry of an unaccompanied or separated child shall take the appropriate measures to inform the closest Public Prosecutor's office, the National Centre for Social Solidarity (NCSS) or any other competent authority for the protection of unaccompanied and/or separated children (Article 60(1))</p> <p>NGOs working with refugees to obtain certification in order to access reception and detention centres.</p>	<p>Aiming at reducing the number of arrivals, increase returns to Turkey and strengthen border control measures. The government announced the creation of closed facilities with entry/exit controls across Greece¹⁵⁷.</p> <p>Freedom of movement was restricted through assignment to a specific place. i.e. an obligation not to leave the island and reside at the hotspot facility, which is imposed indiscriminately to every newly arrived person.</p> <p>It was criticised for lowering protection standards, safeguards (e.g. lodging appeals) and obstacles for people seeking international protection since cases can be rejected as "manifestly unfounded". As a result, people in need of international protection are subjected to arbitrary assessment, detention and refoulement.</p> <p>It increases the maximum time limit for the detention of asylum seekers to 18 months and it may reach 36 months in view of removal.</p> <p>When the draft of the law was intruded, shortcomings were identified on the guardianship system by the Greek Ombudsman regarding the competent services provided and protection to the minors.</p>
<p>The Ministry of Migration Policy has been repealed and subsumed to the Ministry of Citizens Protection following the elections (2019). It was re-established in the beginning 2020.</p>	
<p>Emergency Legislative Order (02.03.2020) for the suspension of the reception of asylum applications for those who arrived "illegally" between 1 March 2020 and 31 March 2020.</p>	<p>Access to the asylum procedure had been suspended for persons entering the country during March 2020. People faced prosecution due to "illegal entry" while others were detained without accessing to the asylum procedure.</p>

¹⁵⁶ Law 4636/2019. Available in Greek at <https://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/resources/internationalprotectionact.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Amnesty International, Annual Report 2019, Greece, available at: <https://bit.ly/2LDT5L6>.

Appendix VIII Reflections

From the perspective of the practitioner myself, I ignored the complexities of the entire social strata, let alone the nature of oppression and I had often become too complacent with procedural practice. I couldn't know that this was ideology at work and even made social justice commitments more impossible.

Emphasizing the practical and experiential aspect of social work means that there is not enough space for societal theory and critical reflection both in education and in practice. Any emphasis on reduction to "standardized" techniques should be considered as a neoliberal onslaught that is seeking to privatize public education and eliminate meaningful action on the world to change it.

What it means to engage with theory and activism in social work services? That is how to use theory as a social worker with political commitments to affecting a more just and equal reality in a capitalist order and challenge neoliberalism and nationalism in the context of Greece? I am looking for predetermined practices to be employed! Apparently, social workers are needed to re-create and rewrite its theory and practice for their own context.

Social justice work could involve practice that engages the personal as political in praxis-oriented ways. This could involve efforts that facilitate understanding and theorising societal structures and society as well as the ways in which existing systems of exploitation and social control de-humanise by narrowing their full potential as human beings. It also entails practices that invite others into dialogue and learning.

How I understand social justice? I don't know. There is no justice. However, injustice can serve as to define for us what to do and how we can serve the interests of the great majority of humanity.

How professionalism undermines justice efforts and has been culpable in supporting neoliberalism? Are there any market logics in social work? Who is privileged? and Who is left out? How politics shapes and plays out in social services? How ideology operates on social work?

There are myriad of pressures and limits on social workers practice, and I find it difficult to articulate normative questions or ask questions of the political actions taken by social workers.

No practice is without theory- a reasoning and justification or any kind of premeditation.

All social work is political. It means; intentionality; an attitude of inquiry of political acts and all human interactions; It must entail commitments to democracy and attempts that will abolish class difference, racism, and xenophobia.

I struggle with complex ideas and problems, let alone of our present political reality. I find difficult to articulate our aims for justice in both philosophical as well as political language, e.g., solidarity or emancipation and being positioned in power relations.

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Deconstruction: A critical method for the analysis of the meaning of behaviours, narratives or encoded in texts better understood as discourses within postmodernism that organise cultural practices. It attempts to break down the constitutive parts of the texts, thoughts and language and interrogate their implicit meaning and contradictions by exposing the dominant and hidden ideological or cultural assumptions (or oppositions) which they are based on (Braun and Clarke, 2013:25; Roscoe, 2019:251). To understand and resist these relations of power deconstruction is important component of Anti-oppressive social work /Anti discriminatory practice. Reflexivity in critical reflection also draws on the term “deconstruction”. As Pease and Fook (1999), Fook and Gardner (2007) and Fook (2012, 2016) have pointed out deconstruction, among other methods, is important to get to more open-ended understandings of dominant social discourses of knowledge and “truth” which value hierarchy of fixed categories, binary opposites, totalising identities, and homogenous ideologies of normality. These, through the workings of power relations in all exchanges by society, result in identifying certain subjects as inferior to others, while ignoring or silence the diversity and fluidity of lived experiences, perspectives and beliefs. That said, deconstruction as critical reflexivity (Fook, 1999) is one strategy such as resistance, challenge, and reconstruction that enables social work to engage critically with privileged practice or taken- for-granted meanings, ideologies and systems, while advancing ethical aspirations and emancipatory practice by constructing positions of resistance. For example, postmodern feminist social workers through deconstruction unearth and interrogate constructions of women’s experiences (Wendt, 2019:363). Additionally, deconstruction of use of language about asylum seekers has been important for understanding social and power relations, including underlying ideologies (Masocha, 2015). Deconstruction attempts to recognise the implicit meanings of a message in a communication to a particular situation by concentrating also on how communication and analysis are carried out in a setting, including the meanings about the nature of the setting itself represented within which communication takes place (Payne, 2014:255). Radical social work cast serious doubt on deconstructive methods due to the relativistic nature of all social reality purported by postmodernism (see also Blackledge, 2012). Postmodernism not only has shaken the political and collective efforts to resist the hegemony of corporate capitalism and achieve progress in an emancipatory social environment but also rejects that society has an objective character that is non-textual and non-discursive. Leonard (1997:xiv) has argued that “on its own, postmodernism is unable to provide an intellectual or practical basis for the kind of politics necessary to a new welfare project: only as linked to feminism and Marxism with emphasis on interdependence does it realize a capacity to move from deconstruction to reconstruction in achieving welfare.

Discourse: Discourses or cultural representations are a way of constructing meanings which lay down and organise our actions and conceptions of ourselves as well as the conditions under which actively involve us as ‘subjects’. How language is used, written and spoken as a social practice that is unified by common assumptions,

facilitates and restrict choice (McCrone, 1998). Importantly, as systems of ideas which are dialectically related to the wider cultural, social, institutional, political forms, arise from existing social relations, taking into consideration the material conditions of the capitalist production processes (Vickers, 2019a:7). In social work, discourses, largely inspired by Michel Foucault's ideas are structures of knowledge, claims and practices that are used to understand and explain phenomena deciding their responses to them (Dominelli, 2012:106). They involve various ideas, theories, policies, strategies, concepts and laws based on power relations, which inform a single system of formation of taken-for-granted practices, such as the "child's best interest" (Mcgregor and Hoikkala, 2014). It is important to stress that even discourses may coexist or reinforce each other, they may conflict. Additionally, the identification of dominant discourses allows to identify and challenge dominant world views that support hegemony by maintaining the structures of power and class relations. Modern and economic discourses conditioned by neoliberalism, and which are inherently connected with individual responsibility, austerity, new public management (NPM) and cutbacks of the public sector have resulted in eroding social work aimed at progressive social change. Against these, Dominelli (2012:9) places social work in liberationist moral discourse concerned with social justice that challenges dominant neoliberal discourses. In the everyday life of social work this entails structural changes in the local, national and international sphere on the basis of interdependence, reciprocity, solidarity and agency. Additionally, it involves challenging dominant discourse of professional practice, such as the case work that pathologized or objectify clients as "undeserving" and blame the victims of oppression for their own struggles, without addressing economic justice, immigration and race, or providing justification for the oppressive systems themselves created around axes of oppression race, class, or gender. Strong forms of the concept argue that the world is a text, constituted and determined by discourse. It has been criticised for its relativism against universal standards or generalizable ideals and individualism by social work theorists, aligning themselves to Marxist-inflected theories and explored the implications postmodernity on social work, since it does not deal with social relations of exploitation and structural dynamics and structures which perpetuate issues such poverty and inequality (Ferguson and Lavalette, 1999, 2004:309). When critical educational researchers and/or practitioners from diverse social spaces and places tell their own stories, they produce counter-narratives, which not only resist the deficit identities that have been constructed in the dominant discourse (Delgado- Gaitan, 1994), but also develop new practices, epistemologies, and social theories (e.g., Collins, 2002; Duncan, 2005). These new understandings have the potential to help people engage in new forms of social justice activities.

Commodity Fetishism: In Capital I (ch. 1, sect. 4), Marx understood that not only the commodity itself becomes a way of understanding the whole of the capitalist system but also the commodification process "fetishized" human relationships (Choonara, 2017). Having identified the appropriation of surplus value as the source of capital accumulation, commodity fetishism refers to the process by which the products of human labour as they are exchanged on the market come to appear as an independent and uncontrolled reality apart from the people who have created them as if "they take on a life of their own" (Ferguson et al., 2002:89). It is the simplest and most universal

example of the way in which the economic forms of capitalism make invisible the underlying social relations and nature of production. Relationships between people take on the appearance of a relationship between things as the source of profit which result from exchange, distribution and consumption (Choonara, 2017; Lavalette and Ferguson, 2018) From this point of view people view capital/labor relationships within capitalism as just, efficient, and egalitarian. Commodity fetishism Lavalette and Ferguson (2018) argue that provides the essential basis for a materialist dimensions of ideology which generates the an illusionary representation of the social order as neutral and objective, while working-class people fail to see the inherently human quality in all things that are produced. So, they are prepared to accept, sometimes grudgingly, sometimes enthusiastically, the continued existence of an economic system and the political institutions which accompany it and ruthlessly exploits them. As a theory of relations between things it has application to the theory of alienation in which humans under capitalism lose control of their labour and reification whereby the human relations and social consciousness come to be identified with the physical properties of things, acquiring a universal appearance of naturalness and inevitability in capitalist society.

Hegemony: Antonio Gramsci (1971:14) defines hegemony as the process through which hegemonic powers and political government try to maintain “the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group”.

Ideology: The belief in ideas used to promote action. “Ideology refers to the body of ideas reflecting the interests of a group of people” (Collins, 2000: 5). That means, the way we understand our daily life experiences is influenced and shaped by messages that we have been given as part of our socialization. In Marxist sense it has been primarily concerned with relations of domination, which are seen as natural, normal, and inevitable, used to justify oppression. Oppressive ideologies range from capitalist exploitation and racism to hetero- sexism and patriarchy. Social work operates within a particular context and worldview, meaning that it has a political dimension. Being itself part of an ideological state apparatuses (see Althusser, 2008:23) it participates in and with ideology and exercises control in an oppressive reality.

Neoliberalism: has also shown itself to be a remarkably adaptable ideology – mutating inside a variety of discourses including the underclass, social exclusion, communitarianism, the Third Way, and so on (Carey, 2008:359). The preference is for private forms of welfare services which are considered as the most efficient way of providing freedom, consumer satisfaction and choice (Penna and O’Brien, 2013). Additional to the belief in individualism and the superiority of markets came the belief in a small state – sometimes referred to as the ‘night watchman’ state, since all the liberal state should do is only to enforce contracts, keep the peace and protect private property (see Nozick, 1974). State intervention is an intrusion into the formally free choices. Penna and O’Brien (2013) capture the sense in which neoliberal policies embracing concerns for cost reduction, efficiency, and competition, are translated into marketisation and performance management; consumerism and personal responsibility; and risk, counteracting values of fairness and social justice while disregarding social inequalities(Ferguson, 2008; Banks, 2014). Additionally, neoliberal

values undermine the feminist ethic of care and shared social responsibility (Levitas, 2017:12) which focus on the relationships between people, interdependency and the particular responsibilities inherent in special relationships (Banks, 1995; Dean, 2015).

Oppression: Critical black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins (2000:4) defines oppression as “any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society”. In the US, major forms of oppression among other constitute the interdependent dimensions of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity.

Residual or marginal welfare state: In the view of liberal individualism and ideological privileging of the market, residual welfare state provision of capitalist profit-making industry is considered to be a “safety net” of last resort, available only to those defined as being most in need – a residuum, usually when the market or family is unable or unable to make the necessary provisions (see Titmuss, 1974). Social welfare institutions are characterised by low levels of social provision, geared primarily to the alleviation of poverty and the reintegration of vulnerable groups into society. Residual social policies, in most cases, are often profoundly stigmatising and socially divisive while the services which would be likely to be minimal and temporary are failing to reach the people they were intended for (Fraser, 1997:42). In the context of social welfare provision, the discourse of the residuum gave rise to the discourse of the “underclass”, “culture of dependency” (Leonard, 1997:52), ‘social problem groups’, ‘troubled families’ or the socially excluded (Garrett, 2018b) which are stigmatising conditions (Spicker, 2014). The ‘institutional model’ that is encompassing and egalitarian, pandering to the idea of universality, stands in contrast to the ‘residual model’ (Spicker, 2014). The impact of neoliberal globalisation on national welfare policies towards minimalist protection and labour market deregulation followed by market-oriented austerity reforms, implemented under continued pressures by international lenders have pointed to residual system of social protection (Karamessini, 2015; Kourachanis, 2021) as in the Anglosphere.

Reification: Reification, among mystification and commodity fetishism, is an element that structures bourgeois domination (Behring, 2018), since it confers upon the dominant ideology an appearance of neutrality and objectivity (Harms Smith, 2017:7). Social relations are transformed into “unrelated fragments that are understood in a partial and naturalistic way” (Callinicos, 2021:97), where individuals cannot experience or understand society as a whole but as a medley of disconnected parts. Being completely objectified within production individuals’ beliefs about society are shaped by their specific position in a social structure constituted by class antagonism (Callinicos, 2021:96-97). Reification reflects the fetish character dominant in a monetary commodity capitalist economy which generates fetishism. At times this universalization of reification is equated with the extension of the patriarchal family as an irreplaceable structural component in contemporary capitalism and the natural and legitimate agency of social well-being (Jones and Novak, 1993:200) or treating a diverse group of people as if they formed a homogeneous whole, ignoring important variations within groups (Thompson, 2003). Elsewhere, it has been identified with the replacement of social work methods and theoretical perspectives accompanied by the ascendance of computerisation of care management, resulting in the automation of

routine administration, rationalising and surveillance (Harris, 2003:70-71). Additionally, the reification of the market lays the foundation for the meritocratic legitimisation of class inequality and neoliberalism (Jones, 2001:561). These simplifications are certainly mystifications that disguise exploitation but through the practice of class struggle the structure of reification can be disrupted (Callinicos, 2021:98).

Social wage is the sum of public goods and welfare services such as state education, social services, distributed by the State's policies, benefitting all members of society, but especially those of the middle class and below at bottom of the income distribution against adverse situations, such as unemployment.