

Towards a Pedagogy of Philoxenia (Hospitality): Negotiating Policy Priorities for Immigrant Students in Greek Public Schools

Vicki Macris

University of Alberta, Calgary, Canada

Abstract

This paper reflects and supports the focus of my doctoral research that aims to identify, underscore and examine some of the key challenges and policy barriers that are shaped or hindered by socio-political, ethno-cultural and economic factors that subsequently impede immigrant students' transition and future academic and social success in their new school environments. I begin with an overview of the discourses of hospitality (philoxenia) and xenophobia – how these two notions relate to Greece's responsibility toward the emerging and (in) flux of immigration, and how citizenship education can be instrumental in the fight against xenophobia, racism, aggressive nationalism and related intolerance in Greek public schools. My interest in this research topic has evolved from my own experience as a repatriated immigrant student in the Greek public (state) school system. My personal experience as a child of repatriated immigrants entering a highly homogeneous and exclusionary (to “foreigners” or “xenoï”) school environment with few, if any, non-Greek students in the mid-1980s and the lack of support from the public school system and community, has prompted me to further investigate and focus on the learning experiences of immigrant students and the implications for immigration, citizenship policies and school-level policies, at a time where immigration poses challenges that call for immediate policy action to ameliorate the crisis impacting immigrant subjectivities¹. The paper mainly identifies and reviews existing literature documenting prior research activity in this area, but contains no actual data or results at this time, since data collection will begin in the summer of 2012.

Introduction

Immigrant students experience marginalization, exclusion, isolation and invisibility in dominant culture-normed schooling environments (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008; Dei, Butler, Charania, Kola-Olusanya, Opini, Thomas, & Wagner, 2002); as such, improving the educational experience of immigrant students should be a policy priority for immigrant receiving countries in the European Union (EU) states. The case of Greece is considered particularly important because of the sudden and massive influx of foreigners into the country, not to mention the largest percentage of undocumented immigrants compared to any other EU country in recent times (Kasimis, 2012). This influx appears to have caused a severe national identity crisis that has

¹ I argue that immigrants or “immigrant students” are not and cannot be construed as singular, fixed entities and will not be placed in unidimensional, prefigured and uniform categories. Throughout the study, I will interrogate assumptions about the constitution of subjectivities, namely, how immigrant students' subjecthoods actually emerge in specific contexts in intersectional, fluid and heterogeneous ways (see Bao, 2008) in an effort to recognize and legitimize their heterogeneities.

radically challenged the self-perception of Greek nationhood, subsequently altering long-standing, monolithic, highly intolerant and increasingly exclusionary citizenship policies (Spinthourakis, Karatzia-Stavlioti, Lempesi, Papadimitriou, & Giannaka, 2008). Educational policy initiatives in Greece have not been meeting both the short and long-term needs of immigrant students who continue to struggle in schools as reflected in the high drop-out rates, which may, in part, be related to cultural marginalization in the dominant mainstream Greek school system (see Matsaganis & Gavriliadi, 2005; Paleologou, 2004; OECD, 2010). The EU and Greek state identify malintegration of immigrants as “a problem” primarily because immigrant students have more restricted access to quality education, leave school earlier, and have lower academic achievement than their native peers (OECD, 2010). However, explanations for these failures are often attributed to prejudice or bias because of race, ethnic, or cultural discrimination as well as immigrant status (whether these immigrants are “citizens” or “non-citizens,” “refugees” or “unauthorized immigrants”). Consequently, immigrant students continue to lack viable learning opportunities when compared to Greek pupils (Paleologou, 2004).

Over the past two decades, there has been a highly visible increase in the number of immigrant children recorded in Greek public schools that mainly started in the early to mid-1990s, which is a result of Greece’s “toleration of the undocumented status of their parents (as required by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)” (Baldwin-Edwards Report, 2005, p. 18). While Greece has more recently (in the late 1990s) started to move into a new phase of immigration – where family settlement is becoming more permanent, rather than transient – the unprecedented number of immigrant students entering state schools found the Greek education system unprepared to deal with their educational needs, thus creating major challenges for teachers, administrators, policymakers and, not to mention, politicians. Greek policymakers and researchers have been trying – since the influx – a teaching framework that was, initially, intended to address the multifaceted and complex needs of the new and ever-growing “multicultural education” reality (Emke-Poulopoulou, 2007; Korilaki, 2005).

More specifically, in 1996 the Ministry for National Education and Religious Matters (also referred to as Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs) laid the foundations of a system that was designed to meet the educational needs of social groups with a particular social, cultural or religious identity by adopting “cross-cultural” education (the Ministry’s term) – which is a new and rather unfamiliar form of education in Greece – as part of this policy (Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Matters, n.d.). According to the Greek Ministry, the aim of cross-curriculum education has been “to set up and run primary and secondary classes that provide education to young people with a specific educational, social or cultural identity” (<http://www.minedu.gov.gr/>). To date, a total of 26 cross-cultural schools have been set up throughout Greece since 1996. These schools (which are projected to increase in number) seemingly “guarantee equality of opportunity to every student in the country, while the cutting-edge approaches to teaching and learning utilized in these schools have a positive knock-on effect on the Greek educational system as a whole” (see <http://www.minedu.gov.gr/>). Furthermore, the Ministry states that educators in these schools “receive special training, and are selected on the basis of their knowledge on the subject of cross-cultural education and teaching Greek as a second or

foreign language” (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, para. 4). Contrary, however, to the Ministry’s official announcement, there is sufficient evidence to support that cross-cultural schools have not adopted or created special curricula, nor have they enriched the standard curriculum, nor have they added alternative lessons to cater to the specific educational, social, cultural or instructional needs of the students that the law (Law 2413/96) provides (Mitakidou, Tressou & Daniilidou, 2009). In everyday praxis, these schools basically administer “an education of charity, according to which the needs of their students are dealt with smaller or bigger reductions of the educational good” (Mitakidou, Tressou & Daniilidou, 2009, p. 65). For example, students attending both primary and secondary classes are often promoted from class to class without real assessment of their academic gains in each year, creating a situation where culturally and linguistically diverse students fail to acquire the knowledge corresponding to their age, and most certainly not at the level of their Greek peers, which makes the goal of tertiary education and the subsequent pursuit of social and financial aspirations quite remote for them, if at all attainable, while their personal experiences in their school environments are not addressed at all (Mitakidou, Tressou & Daniilidou, 2009). Since cross-cultural schools have, essentially, failed to cater to meet the specific educational, social, cultural or instructional needs of immigrant students, it is important to question how “regular” or “mainstream” state schools meet their needs, if at all.

To date, the actors involved and the levels at which policies are made in Greece is a topic that appears to be largely ignored by the academic community, while research on the process of policy-making and policy analysis is largely underdeveloped. In sum, the increase of immigrant students in Greek schools, coupled by the lack of focus on immigrant students’ education needs, underscores the importance of exploring immigrant students’ learning experiences because there is a lack of current nationally representative research and data in this area. My upcoming research aims to contribute to current formations and practices of citizenship education and lend particular insights into the symptoms and causes of exclusion and the denial of substantive educational and citizenship rights to immigrant students, by creating a space for their voices to be heard and their contribution to society recognized and affirmed. The research encounter is a potential site where some of these (unheard) voices could emerge, or furthermore, be enhanced and legitimated.

The challenges brought forth by economic globalization have had a profound impact on international migration patterns, citizenship laws and immigration policies. Indeed, the “politics of immigration²” have taken centre stage around the world, particularly in (many) EU countries – and especially in such times of economic adversity – where immigration has become a highly controversial and politically sensitive subject that not only (in)forms an essential part of home affairs and internal security matters concerning

² The politics of immigration is a highly complex multi-dimensional topic of concern and cannot and will not be generalized. My research excavates the political dynamics of specific aspects of immigration policy and school level policies for immigrant students in Greek public schools. Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between migrant (who is temporarily on the move) and an immigrant who comes to a country with the intention to stay. While my thesis focuses mainly on immigrants, I will be using the terms “migrant” and immigrant” interchangeably in this proposal.

host countries, but has become a matter of urgent and moral concern, topping current political agendas as a key issue that has dominated the debates and policy initiatives in European election campaigns not excluding, of course, the (snap) election campaigns in Greece (in October, 2009) and the “revisions,” thereafter, in immigration policy.³ Immigration invariably poses a threat to what constitutes national identity and subsequently weakens the (purported) self-contained territorial autonomy of the traditional nation state – which has, in part, served as a rudimentary compass to orient people economically, politically, culturally, ethnically, and socially in a “homogeneous” society. Greece’s historical stake of an (supposedly) “undisturbed” national homogeneity has imposed certain representations as well as diversity management policies, of the kind “we all are (or should be) Greeks” (Kandylis, 2006). The assimilating patterns that have emerged following the wave of immigration in the early 90s (often referred to as “a new form of transnational migration”), however, are being challenged, leading to other forms of symbiosis which do not take (undisturbed) assimilation for granted (Kandylis, 2006).

Furthermore, “the replacement of the historical assimilative approach takes the form of an unprecedented ethnic hierarchy in respect to positions in the labour and housing markets, political participation and the rights to the city” (Kandylis, 2006, p. 161). Finally, there are inherent contradictions and tensions in European immigration policies which result from “the clash of principles that primarily arise from the counterposing of universal principles, on the one hand, and national interests and the preservation of national identities, on the other” (Kofman, 2005, p. 457). And this is, perhaps, one of the greatest challenges facing many EU states. European identity (let alone Greek identity) is a rather confused identity. While there has been a seemingly strong commitment throughout most of Europe to create a “tolerant” and “pluralist” political identity, European identity remains something that “comes from the head rather than the heart” (Fukuyama, 2006, p. 13). Yet, as Fukuyama (2006) reveals, “Europe’s old national identities continue to hang around like unwanted ghosts. In each member state, people still have a strong sense of what it means to be French or Dutch or Italian, even if it is not politically correct to affirm these identities too strongly or to engage in public discussions of what they mean” (p. 14), and this is because national identities in Europe remain far more blood-and-soil based, and ultimately “accessible only to those ethnic groups who initially populated the country” (p. 14).

Globalization and Immigration in the EU

³ Former Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou (immediately following his election in 2009) maintained that his government was committed to granting citizenship to all immigrant children who have been born in Greece – given that an estimated 125.000–175.000 of children born to immigrant parents do not have permanent residence rights and many end up (for various reasons) without any citizenship at all. Responding to statements made by two of the opposition parties – that Greece is sending the wrong signals to potential immigrants – the Deputy Minister of the Interior responsible for migration, Theodora Tzakri, issued a statement clarifying that the government’s intent is to grant citizenship to children of legal immigrants. But the “clarifying statement” has required more “clarification”: how is a legal immigrant to be defined in a regime where people become legal following ad hoc and post hoc procedures which are so complicated, expensive and long winded that more often than not immigrants lapse into illegality before their residence permits are handed to them (Global Forum on Migration and Development, p. 8. See <http://library.panteion.gr:8080/dspace/bitstream/123456789/1481/1/GREEK%2520MIGRATION%2520N EWS%25201.pdf>).

The rapidly increasing tensions, that are directly linked – though not exclusively so – to the combination of mass migration and/or immigration, escalating cross border crime and ethnocentric, homogeneous and exclusionist nationalist ideologies, have led to new challenges that threaten to undermine the purported stability of the nation-state, which is closely connected to notions of “homeland” or “motherland,” mainly defined by ancestry (while notions of citizenship are related to blood, based on the principles of *jus sanguinis*). Such notions are fundamentally incompatible with mass immigration – since it inherently contradicts the idea of belonging and loyalty to the social group represented by the state and its particular boundaries, the nation (Migdal, 2004) – and subsequently pose tremendous challenges to notions of democracy that have long emerged from within the confines of the nation-state, ultimately leading to a state of confusion and defence for many countries now playing host to immigrants. Controversial political theorist and philosopher Carl Schmitt (1983) argues that national homogeneity is a necessary precondition for the democratic exercise of political authority and, therefore, makes the “norm of equal treatment” contingent on the fact of a uniform national origin (see Habermas, 1998). Hence, the assumption of a compulsory collective identity, according to Schmitt, necessitates repressive policies, which ultimately means forced assimilation of “alien elements” (immigrants) (Habermas, 1998, p. 141). Schmitt, then, recommends the “suppression and expulsion of heterogeneous elements of the population” (Schmitt, 1983, as cited in Habermas, 1998, p. 142). For Schmitt, democracy requires exclusion; it requires “homogeneity,” which serves as a bleak reminder that the distinction between friend and enemy cannot be abolished (Mouffe, 1999), and most particularly when nation states, today, are deluded in seeking to defend an “ethnic homogeneity” of sorts.

Professor of political science and author of *Migration and Refugee Policies* Myron Weiner (1996) writes:

Many destination countries are in a state of confusion over how they ought to treat their immigrant communities. They are not sure whether they want their immigrants to stay or go home, assimilate or retain their cultural identity, nor whether the migrants and their children should be encouraged to feel patriotic toward their new county or maintain loyalty to their country of origin (p.128)

Traditionalists and nativists, in particular, fear that immigrants – unwittingly so – contribute to the destruction of national survival and long standing notions of democracy that, essentially, construct the notion of citizenship within a nation state; for, ultimately, the notion of citizenship (which is inherently about membership, and can never be fully open, which makes it, more often than not, used as an exclusionary device) has been the glue that has held the nation-state together in a seemingly natural community authorized to exclude Others (Baines & Sharma, 2002). Francis Fukuyama (2008) maintains that Europe’s failure to better integrate immigrants and minorities is a ticking time bomb that has already resulted in terrorism and violence, consequently provoking an even sharper backlash from nativist or populist groups many of whom feel that the European Union “is rapidly destroying the territorial jurisdictions and national loyalties that have, since the Enlightenment, formed the basis of European legitimacy, while putting no new form of membership in their place” (Scruton, 2002, para. 9).

More recently, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, in the name of national security, blames immigration for all the social ills, stating that, as head of the French state [he] cannot let [his] nation be insulted (Casert, 2010). Mr. Sarkozy insists that France suffers not from a social crisis, but rather, a “moral crisis” and that “denigrating the nation is at the heart of that crisis” (Lerougetel, 2007, para. 18). Respectively, former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi had flat out rejected the vision of a multi-ethnic Italy, winning praise from far-right allies and accusations of racism from the left (Babington, 2009). Moreover, Mr. Berlusconi has not been shy about lending his full support to France’s controversial decision to forcibly repatriate thousands of Roma people to Eastern Europe (Day, 2010). German Chancellor Angela Merkel has blatantly declared that any attempts to build a multicultural society “... and live side-by-side and to enjoy each other... has failed, utterly failed” (BBC News Europe, para. 9, 2010). The statements reveal particularly chilling, xenophobic, some may even go so far as to say “fascist” anti-immigrant sentiments that are present and are sweeping across the EU, rendering immigrants as an alien force invading nations across the globe. In fact, the tremendous growth in electoral support for radical right wing parties across Western Europe that are clearly defined by their positions in opposition to immigration have been characterized as exclusivist, nativist, and xenophobic (Williams, 2010). With this kind of outlook from three of the most powerful political leaders within the EU and a profound shift to right-wing and nationalist politics, I question whether humanistic immigrant policies are even possible and whether monolithic constructs of citizenship can even change to make way to new constructs of citizenship. The magnitude of immigration flows and the changes in the ethnic composition of the nation’s population, therefore, urgently requires a re-examination and critical (re)evaluation of the current notion(s) of citizenship, beyond the traditional and monolithic conceptions that link citizenship to the territorial borders of the nation-state.

Indeed, and while some might argue otherwise, “the process of globalization has increased integration of economies, politics and cultures, producing a tendency toward uniformity, thereby upsetting the ability of individual nation-states to regulate economic activity, to extract and redistribute surpluses, to harmonize conflicting interests and to control political processes, as well as cultural values and practices within national boundaries” (Ardıç, 2009, p. 20). These emerging changes, (demographic) fluctuations and tendencies toward integration and ethno-cultural uniformity have signaled a paradigm shift; in fact, globalization, in and of itself, gives ample cause for a paradigm shift toward a deterritorialized world. This paradigm shift is certainly reflected in educational systems and policy reforms which, too, find themselves in the midst of political and ideological struggle, across Europe; across the globe. The implications of this paradigm shift are enormous and highly intricate. Professor of political science Daniel J. Elazar (2001) asserts that [w]hereas before, every state strove for self-sufficiency, homogeneity, and, with a few exceptions, concentration of (sovereign) authority and power at the center, under the new paradigm all states must recognize their interdependence; their heterogeneity (Elazar, 2001). European nation states must, therefore, rethink the hyper-nationalized conception(s) of the “homogeneous nation

state,” which ultimately necessitates a profound socio-political shift from an ideology of homogeneity to an ideology of heterogeneity and difference.

The Hellenic Exception

Like many European nations, Greece is currently undergoing a dramatic transition and seems to be in a state of confusion, feeling threatened that Greek national identity is becoming obsolete. Greeks are struggling over the dilemma of “how to modernize without letting go of the essential “Greekness,” which ultimately implies to let in other ethnicities. Moreover, many Greeks blame the EU for diluting their identity and question whether they truly want to be “European” at all. As Kathimerini newspaper put it: “Every institution, every group and every individual will have to redefine itself with regard to society as a whole” (Pine, 2010, para. 10), while talk of “the rebirth of a nation” is becoming more widespread. But how will such “rebirth” look like? Will Greece be able to move forward and “risk” leaving many aspects of “Greekness” behind? This poses a tremendous challenge for Greeks who are the “most reluctant of the southern states to recognize that it has become a country of immigrants” (Greek Helsinki Monitor, 2005, para. 4). Consequently, “a kind of a quasi-social citizenship emerges for migrants, which is constantly undermined by restrictive migration legislation, and the narrow stance taken by the Court of the European Communities (ECJ)” (Konsta & Lazarides, 2010, p. 7). Restricting opportunities for full inclusion and citizenship of minorities ultimately undermines their legitimacy; they thus become marginalized in a so-called “democratic limbo,” trapped in a zone of liminal legality – being kind of, but not really “citizens.” Tim Allen and Jean Seaton (1999) in their book *The Media of Conflict*, note that despite the hopes of a deepening democracy in Greece, ethnocentrism and nationalism have constituted serious obstacles to the process of democratization, as they perpetuate constitutional nationalism and the mechanism of exclusion this entails (Allen & Seaton, 1999, p. 177). There has, unfortunately, been a complete lack of action by the government and public bodies to overcome these obstacles. Xenophobic attitudes have increasingly been blamed for the absence of a civil society in Greece and the “lack of anti-racist education in a country where children are still taught to take immense pride in their “ethnic purity”” (Guardian News and Media, 2010, para. 14). The paralyzing fear of endangering national sovereignty, coupled by a highly politicized cultural anxiety has come to haunt individual and collective imaginaries in the public life of Greece (Athanasίου, 2006). As anti-immigrant and anti-foreigner sentiments fuel, they reveal a rather stark, deeply divided and polarized society that propagates politics of exclusion/inclusion through emphasizing immanent, deep rooted distinctions between hosts and “strangers,” while creating a seemingly irreconcilable gap that separates the two, rather than fostering conditions of reconciliation.

Such processes have blurred and distorted historically demarcated boundaries, shaking up the very foundations of sovereignty that many nation-states, including Greece, wish to uphold, thus tampering with long-standing notions of “citizenship.” Furthermore, “Jekyll and Hyde⁴” approaches employed by governments add to the situation’s complexity;

⁴ Such “Jekyll and Hyde” (my characterization) approaches are very characteristic of Greek government “actions,” whereby seemingly “good intentions” are followed by negative actions, or inaction.

approaches that are (for example), on the one hand, aimed at “filling the gaps” in labour markets, while on the other hand, ignore or fail to adequately and genuinely address the settlement, integration and educational needs of immigrants, which ultimately leads to increased fragmentation and manifests as xenophobia, racism and related intolerance. Exclusionary politics have created an urgency to address a range of humanitarian, ethical and economic issues that are central to the raging immigration debate. Foreign policy columnist for the Washington Post Anne Applebaum, describes Greece’s bureaucracy as coming “straight out of a Kafka novel” (Applebaum, 2010). She is not too far off from the truth. The Wall Street Journal points out that – extraordinarily – Greece, practically alone among developed economies, for one, does not have a centralized and computerized land registry which means, for example, that farmers can surreptitiously cultivate public land and eventually become de facto owners (Balz, 2010). To make matters worse, census records are not well-kept in the general registry and migration flows have been/are recorded (if at all) in a highly fragmented way. Hence, there is no easy way to distinguish between migrant, legal or illegal immigrant, asylum seeker and refugee. Greek immigration policy is haphazard and largely incoherent, while the lack of public records on the duration of the stay of migrants makes the entire situation very confusing. Greece lacks coherent policies and this is reflected in the current “messy” political and economic situation. For years voters swing from one party to another, while governments seem to always be in transition and confusion, leading only to corruption and chaotic governance.

Lastly, but central to understanding the “Hellenic exception” (Kouvelakis, 2011) and what perhaps makes the Greek case rather unique, is Greece’s historical development and the country’s particularly brutal transition to capitalist modernization (Kouvelakis, 2011). Professor Stathis Kouvelakis (2011) in his recent article “The Greek Cauldron,” provides a succinct overview and coherent timeline highlighting the crucial events and political developments of Modern Greek history. In fact, Greece is, at the present time, the Eurozone’s “weakest link” because of key historical events that have played an integral part in shaping Greece’s political economy and subsequently leading the country to financial disaster. The fall of the Greek Junta in 1974 brought an end to a repressive cycle that initially begun with the start of the civil war in 1946, producing a sense of liberation that was far out of proportion, followed by a *metapolitefsi* (regime change) – a particularly effervescent change that radicalized Greek society in very distinct ways, unlike the post-Franco transition in Spain, or the Carnation Revolution in Portugal (Kouvelakis, 2011). Greece also possessed nothing comparable to the social compromise forged elsewhere in Europe in the 1950s and 60s; that is, there was no welfare state, no social democratic party, and wage labour continued to be very low. Workplace regimes were very repressive and unionization was impossible in the private sector, while unions kept on a very tight rein in the public domain. Such events precipitated outward migration. The social compact, on which Greek governments had rested on, excluded the working class and peasantry and relied on the support of the petty bourgeoisie family-run businesses. Because of this compact, the Greek class structure has preserved a “distinctive peculiarity” compared to other European states: the relatively large petty bourgeoisie meant that wage earners came to constitute a majority of the population only in the 1970s. The narrow tax base, complemented by the lack of social welfare systems also

reinforced another peculiarity: the reduced size of the Greek state, especially small if we leave aside its hypertrophied repressive apparatus. Greece's struggle to attend to the well-being and needs of its own citizens has, historically, posed enormous challenges. Hence, without a coherent immigration strategy or policy in place, it is difficult to imagine how Greece will attend to its immigrant population; to non-citizens.

Hospitality and its limits

Greece carries (amongst other things) a heavy legacy: the legacy of hospitality. However, cementing such legacy necessitates a “duty” in welcoming the stranger, foreigner, “xeno,” not only to integrate them, but to recognize and accept their alterity. But is it possible to even speak of an ethics of (absolute, unconditioned) hospitality into a politics of “law of hospitality” for Greece (and other EU nations for that matter)? Greek cultural values are historically rooted in a profound sense of hospitality (philoxenia – compound word⁵). The notion of “philoxenia” – that dates far back to the Archaic Age, followed by the Classical Age of Pericles⁶ – “expresses a concern about how to provide the stranger with full access to the Greek polis” (Verma, Kalekin-Fishman & Pitkänen, 2002) and continues to be one of many fundamental elements that characterize modern Greek society, manifest in the all-encompassing openness and, in extension, friendliness to strangers. Furthermore, philoxenia is central to the Christian⁷ faith and bears biblical significance, while the virtues of extending hospitality are extolled. Philoxenia is, perhaps, one of the most widely mentioned and frequently encountered qualities in many different places in the New Testament,⁸ whereas the act of showing kindness to strangers revealed through benevolent deeds on behalf of those in need, is a non-optional command of Biblical Scripture. To this end, the “religious” significance has almost transformed the notion of philoxenia into a quasi-sacred ritual for the Greeks, whose national identity is found upon a strong identification with the distinctive elements of the Greek Orthodox faith and tradition. “This mentality, vis-à-vis foreigners has been perpetuated for centuries through the oral tradition and popular culture of rural Greek populations” (Verma et al. 2002, p. 134). For example: Pindar (522 BC - 443 BC), one of the most praised and prolific lyric poets, known for his choric lyrics and triumphal odes, praises the “xenoι,⁹” as well as the victorious citizens. In Greek mythology – whereby mythology reflects, reaffirms and legitimizes the core societal values and beliefs of a period – Zeus, for instance, is often referred to as “Zeus Xenios,” the patron of hospitality/philoxenia. The principle of philoxenia, therefore, was so important, that Zeus

⁵ I will be using the notions of “philoxenia” and “hospitality” interchangeably throughout the paper.

⁶ Pericles was proclaimed “the first citizen of Athens” and turned Athens into an empire.

⁷ The notion of hospitality is a vital element of many traditions, cultures and religions. I am, however, particularly focusing on the Orthodox Christian tradition, which is closely intertwined with Greek culture and moreover, linked to the state.

⁸ Though the word “hospitality” is not necessarily encountered in the Old Testament, the concept runs throughout it. For example in the passages Exodus 2:20.

⁹ Xenoι ξένος, *xénos*, plural *xenoι* in Greek means stranger or foreigner. Xenos can be translated to both a foreigner (in the sense of a person from another Greek state) as well as a foreigner or traveler brought into a relationship of long distance friendship. It is also important to mention that from Homer onwards, the word has a wide gradient of meaning, signifying such divergent concepts as “enemy stranger” as well as “ritual friend”. (Wikipedia)

was ready, at any given moment, to avenge any wrong done to a stranger. Lastly, we cannot ignore the overpowering themes of hospitality in the Homeric epics, “The Odyssey” (n.d.) and “The Iliad” (n.d.), as the poems contain numerous elaborate scenes of both positive, as well as negative connotations of philoxenia/hospitality.

And while philoxenia – or so it seems – continues to be a prominent element of Greek society, it is certainly a far cry from Derrida’s “pure,” “unconditional,” “transcendental” even “radical” deconstruction of hospitality, whose impossibility is acknowledged (by Derrida himself) (Derrida, 2000). For Derrida, “hospitality is at the core of relationality”; in fact, the great law of hospitality requires unconditional welcome and demands that the borders be open to each and every one, to every other, to all who might come, without question or without their having to identify who they are or whence they came (Derrida, 2005). In the West, however, hospitality lingers, undoubtedly, closer to Kant’s “conditional” model, whereby “one cannot flatter oneself into believing one can approach this peace except under the conditions outlined...” (Kant, 2007, p. 12). In “Perpetual Peace” (1795) Kant extends the rights of hospitality by establishing conditions (of perpetual peace) that limit the (cosmopolitan) right of universal hospitality, to the right for foreigners to visit, but not to reside in the foreign soil, while the residential right remains to be determined by the law of the sovereign state. In this respect, argues Derrida (2005), an unconditional hospitality is, to be sure, practically impossible to live; one cannot in any case, and by definition, organize it (Derrida, 2005). In other words, the “other” is fine, but only insofar as the “other’s” presence is not intrusive (Žižek, 2008). In actuality, the chasm between Derrida’s notion of hospitality and hospitality as conceived by the Greeks today – as well as other nations – cannot be bridged; it remains irreconcilable, for neither sovereignty nor globalization can provide it unconditionally.

As one of the most popular holiday destinations for millions of tourists each year, Greece has managed to “live up” to its “hospitable” reputation on an international level, as visitors will frequently comment on the warmth and uniqueness of Greek hospitality. And while good citizenship is commonly reflected in the hospitality of individuals and communities in Greece, there appears to be a “selective,” even capricious philoxenia that on the one hand, confirms the endurance of Greek tourism, while on the other, separates the temporary tourists and visitors from foreigners, who seek refuge or permanent residency in Greece. But such philoxenia, which is rooted in opportunistic acts, is socially threatening, disruptive, arrogant, almost hubristic, while the implications of lifestyle concepts in the marketing of hospitality mainly commodify culture to promote tourism in Greece. The review of the literature on xenophobia in Greece suggests that xenophobia (as well as this “selective,” highly conditional kind of “philoxenia”) severely influences Greek behaviours and casts a dark shadow on the positive character of philoxenia.

Restricting opportunities for full inclusion and citizenship of minorities ultimately undermines their legitimacy; they thus become marginalized in a so-called “democratic limbo” –being kind of, but not really “citizens.” Tim Allen and Jean Seaton (1999) in their book *The Media of Conflict*, note that despite the hopes of a deepening democracy in Greece, ethnocentrism and nationalism have constituted serious obstacles to the

process of democratization, as they perpetuate constitutional nationalism and the mechanism of exclusion this entails (Allen and Seaton, 1999, p. 177). The widespread frustration (both at the national level and among European Union member states) with the Greek government's inaction, or unwillingness⁸ to take active responsibility to construct workable, coherent policies and programs for immigrants (whose ever-growing presence has become a major economic and social destabilizer), coupled by a (latent) ethnocentric, monoculture political agenda that almost functions as a retrospective defence against "multiculturalism," has fostered deep suspicion and antipathy toward immigrants, predicated on this overarching, illusory myth of preserving Greek "ethnic purity." To make matters worse, Greece's burdens mount when an estimated ninety percent of the European Union's illegal immigrants use Greece as the "back door" to gain access to "fortress Europe" (Spiegel, 2011), which essentially brings us to a tremendous void that exists in the "total" approach to this country's increasingly insurmountable problems (RIEAS, 2011). Unfortunately, immigration problems (and other problems) in Greece are very much like the Lernaean Hydra – chop off one head and (at least) two more grow in its place. There has, unfortunately, been a lack of action by the government and public bodies to overcome these obstacles. Xenophobic attitudes have increasingly been blamed for the absence of a civil society in Greece and the "lack of anti-racist education in a country where children are still taught to take immense pride in their "ethnic purity"" (Smith, 2008).

Citizenship Education in Greece

Citizenship education accompanied by a holistic approach is necessary in order to provide an environment in which a child can develop his/her full potential (Green Paper, 2008). While Greek educators (and citizens) may be sympathetic to the plight of immigrants, there appears to be a lack of specific knowledge of the laws – perhaps even a lack of consistent laws – that protect immigrant youth in this country. The Greek institutional and legal system remains ill equipped to deal with violations, while there are tremendous gaps in policy implementation mainly because rules and regulations are seldom adhered to. Consequently, public schools are also ill equipped to confront the structural and systemic role of the education system in Greek society, which continues to be based on exclusion, rather than inclusion; on ethnocentrism rather than interculturalism.

With few prospects of gaining citizenship (state membership) – since citizenship legislation obviously remains blurry and "conveniently" (un)defined in spite of (haphazard) citizenship reforms that have recently taken place, which in the end, reveals that "Greece remains faithful to its identity as a culturally homogeneous nation" (Hess, 2010, p. 25) – immigrant youth in schools (and much more so, immigrant youth not belonging to EU member states¹⁰) are often left to struggle, not only to assert their dignity and otherness, to restore and possibly even reclaim their own sense of agency in schools and classrooms, but moreover, they are left to grapple with the many uncertainties, conflicts and tensions engendered by mainstream or dominant culture within their (often isolated) communities. Surely, there is an urgent need for educational policies and

¹⁰ Less (economically) "desirable" immigrants.

programs that promote awareness and greater sensitivity towards the struggles experienced by immigrant youth in schools and that echo the plurality of voices that make up the complex fabric of civil society (Blades & Richardson, 2006). It is, therefore, imperative that states provide, or at the very least, actively consider more inclusive frameworks for immigrant students; frameworks that transcend ethnicity, race and national boundaries. Perhaps it is time to re-think and re-assess the conception of “ethnic origin” and seriously reinvent or refashion Greek citizenship into a citizenship that would regard both the ideological nucleus of nationality and greater access to social and civil benefits for excluded and minority social groups.¹¹ Perhaps introducing elements of *ius soli* to temper the absolute domination of the *ius sanguinis* ought to be considered (Kalekin-Fishman & Pitkänen, 2007).

Attempting to understand or to conceptualize the notion of citizenship education in the context of multicultural, polyethnic¹² and conflict-ridden societies invokes an explicit re-examination of the prevailing or currently accepted liberal and national discourses that have long dominated the conceptualization and practice of citizenship. Our world is clearly and undeniably driven by capitalist and corporate interests, regulated capitalism and ultra conservative and subsequently exclusionary policies which hold fundamental ground and strengthen the foundation for globalization, which is ultimately aimed at serving the privileged few. However, we cannot and must not remain in a state of passive submission to the global injustices that take place before us, but must learn to look them in the eye and beyond; for it is not techno-scientific capitalism, nor bi-partisan politics, nor politico-religious fundamentalism(s), nor the nation state – alone – that drives humanity towards its own destruction; rather, it is the inability to extend philoxenia (hospitality); to extend an olive branch towards the other, to accept, even embrace the “otherness” of the other that allows for injustice and unimaginable human suffering to continue. Before we become political, we must first become personal. It is through the lens of personal experience that my research begins to reveal itself.

What I have provided is a brief snapshot of the political and social situation in Greece today vis-à-vis the issue of immigration. Greece is on the receiving end of massive attacks from other European countries who want to hold Greece accountable for neglecting immigrants and particularly for violating European asylum laws. All in all, Greece is presently on the cusp of a paradigm shift, which is not yet fully realized, particularly with regard to the mode of “state building” and its relationship to the collective perception of the ongoing paradigm shift from a mono-cultural society towards a multicultural society (Papadakis, 2006).

Conclusion

Immigrant subjectivities have always (and throughout history) had to struggle to assert their presence in the sphere of constitutional interpretation, and thereby, recalibrate the interpretive frame (Means, 2007). Making their presence known and legitimated allows

¹¹ See Kymlicka, 2004.

¹² Polyethnic (as opposed to multi-ethnic) denotes historical routes that feed into the construction of ethnically diverse societies.

them to become a part of “the people” but, perhaps, never entirely part of the “us” (this seems to be what many EU member states are resisting: immigrants cannot truly be part of the “us.” For instance, a Somalian can immigrate to Greece and become part of “the people,” but s/he will never be Greek; will never be “us”). When, however, they make their presence known in ways that undermine constitutional self-understanding, instead of engaging it, they are “not us” (Means, 2007). Immigrant subjectivities are, by definition, unprivileged in Europe today, while their identities have constantly been shaped, reshaped, changed and eventually altered. Furthermore, rights are granted to, rights are taken away and rights are suspended according to the interests of supranational or national entities. As a consequence, education systems, too, are having great difficulty addressing and subsequently meeting these enormous challenges. Given the ongoing tensions surrounding immigration, the immigration experience most certainly deserves a space in the literature so that the voices of immigrant subjectivities can be heard and possibly inspire considerations in shaping policy.

Author Details

Vicki Macris is a schoolteacher and a PhD student at University of Alberta, Calgary, Canada.

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