"Migrants' Nights": Subjectivity and Agency of Working-Class Pakistani Migrants in Athens, Greece

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This paper draws from Jacques Rancière's study La nuit des proletaires: Archives du rêve ouvrier *(Paris: Fayard, 1981) and approaches the alternative narratives that members of a migrant community who settled in Athens (Greece) for the last twenty years develop as a discourse of resistance against a marginalizing reality. With material collected from participatory observation and migrants' interviews and life stories, it argues that the Pakistanis of the specific community use their everyday experiences and the cancellation of their aspiration for upward social mobility through their working identities as a basis to cultivate an alternative approach to reality during their leisure time. In such a context, they adopt roles from an imagined utopian version of their life courses and actively question their devaluation and marginalization. They therefore form communities of memory and intimacy that promote the production of a "home" in the place of their "diasporic settlement."*

Current political and sociological studies on migration draw attention to the way it structurally becomes part of the technologies of govermentality and therefore the produced perceptions of immigrants are tightly connected to ethopolitics.[1] Immigrants are constructed as ethical threats to the host country, mainly based on the "illegal routes" they followed during their trip, their need for jobs in a society that suffers from unemployment and their benefits from welfare services. Far from concerning only the immigrants, this kind of ethical constructing of the new social category of illegal migrants becomes central to the exercise of government and power in post-social politics.[2] In the new context, technologies that activate self-managing capacities and prudent conduction of the self appear hand in hand with technologies of containment and incapacitation for individuals deemed as unethical.[3] These subjects are collectively constructed as anti-citizens and the

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[1] Nikolas Rose, "Inventiveness in politics," *Economy and Society* 28, no. 3 (1999): 477-478.
[2] On the concept of post-social governmental politics, see "The death of the social? Re-figuring the territory of government," *Economy and Society* 25 no. 3 (1996): 327-356.
[3] On the way undocumented migrants are constructed as essentially anti-citizens, with severe flaws related to ethical and responsible conduct of their lives, see Jonathan Xavier Inda, *Targeting Immigrants: Government, Technology, and Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006). esp. 63-66, 108-112.

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power imposed on them through technologies of enumeration and surveillance is legitimated through a narrative that preserves the general population's safety and well-being over protection of the anti-citizens' rights.[4] By this token, whole communities (which are frequently racialized as well) are excluded from enjoying privileges such as welfare services and access to jobs with high symbolic status.[5] Their choices are as a result confined to jobs at the limits of legality or jobs that lack chances for upward social mobility.

This paper aims to elucidate migrants' agency towards the above-mentioned marginalizing hegemonic discourse that constructs them as anti-citizens. Among the most interesting forms of resistance elaborated in this context is the narration of alternative life-stories. Through such life-stories and the subjectivities they embody, the hegemonic discourse is substituted by a discursive system which reflects their expectation and which they develop within their communities. Theoretically, the arguments draw from the late sixties' problematization of the "transformation of structuralist approaches into active ideologies, in which ethical, political and historical consequences are drawn from the hitherto more epistemological 'structuralist' positions."[6] Responding to scientism, Rancière argued for the equal ability of subjects, regardless of their class or social group, to shape their worldviews and act towards the improvement of their lives without the need of enlightenment from bourgeois intellectuals who, in their vast majority, aim to reproduce existing power relations.[7] Even more, by bringing Rancière to the forefront, the multiplicity of interpretations and the differences in the elaborations of narratives among what was homogenously perceived as "the working class" underlines the impossibility of interpreting this culture as diffused and adapted from the hegemonic one and requires us to approach it on its own terms.

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[4] On the concept of "anti-citizen" and the way it serves as a referential point for the development of new strategies of management, see Nikolas Rose, "Government and Control," *British Journal of Criminology* 40 no. 2 (2000): 331-337.

[5] On migrants' racialization, see Nadine Naber, "Look, Mohammed the terrorist is coming," in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*, ed. A.A. Jamal and N.C. Naber (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008); Lina Ventoura, "Indigenous/Migrants: Definition and Shifting of Social Boundaries," in *Migration and Social Boundaries*, ed. Lina Ventoura (Athens: Nisos, 2011). The latter is in Greek.

[6] Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s," *Social Text* no. 9/10 (1984): 186.

[7] Oliver Davis, *Jacques Rancier* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 16; Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Stanford CT: Stanford University Press, 1991); Jacques Rancière, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

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The working lives of Pakistani migrants: Research methodology

The data upon which this case study is based was collected through participatory fieldwork in a Pakistani community settled in Nea Ionia, a suburb of Athens with a refugee and a working class past of its own. It was conducted between the years 2006-2012 and consists of oral interviews and observation notes. The research can be divided in three phases: the first phase (2006-2008) was preparatory and was conducted as a side-project of the education-management program of "Greek as a second language" courses for which the researcher was responsible. During this phase, the necessary bonds of trust with members of the community were created and relationships with community members that served as interlocutors were established. Furthermore, the ability to easily approach a considerable number (about 70) of migrants in the structured frame of the courses allowed for the completion of open and closed ended questionnaires that shed light both on the migrants' attitudes and the silences they kept. Actual research was conducted during the second phase of the research (2008-2009).[8] During this period, concrete amounts of time were spent living with the members of the community and participating in their daily lives – especially weekends. Gradually entering the women's world and establishing bonds with the friends of my research-assistant's family was extremely helpful for the research. Nevertheless, this research lacks the perspective of women, and therefore what follows focuses on male migrants. This limitation is due mainly to the relatively small numbers of women living at N. Ionia. Significantly fewer than male migrants, female migrants usually enter the country when their husbands are economically relatively well-off, taking advantage of the law that permits family reunion. They tend to stay in the privacy of their home and socialize with other women only as family or neighbors. Furthermore, when employed, these women work strictly at their houses, mainly as seamstress, while their main goal is "*to keep their households happy and to be satisfied with what their husband can provide*" (Ashia, teacher, 32). Their relative absence from the labor market combined with difficulties tied to the lack of a common language to communicate (as neither their command of English nor of Greek allowed for a discussion) discouraged me from undertaking the task of interviewing them thoroughly. As a result, our interaction remained in the "kitchen and baby care fields", giving me nevertheless valuable insight to cultural values of their community.

    Participatory observation shed light on gender roles, management of time and space, leisure and work time. Most observations were made during discussions accompanying the commensal culture of the community and by

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[8] This part of the research was conducted in the frame of a postdoctoral research program, funded by Latsis Foundation.

participating in its public activities (such as protests or sports), all activities that were ritualized in a way that reinforced the migrants' cultural identity.[9] Only by being present in the community life was I given access to the narration of life stories. The main issues discussed, around which a sense of co-belonging developed, were structured and spontaneous narrations of migration routes and the difficulties of the initial time at Greece, constant re-narrations of experiences and memories, and elaborations on personal and shared memories of home and migration. Unfortunately, none of these narrations were recorded, mainly because of the informants' objections related to constantly emerging problems with the authorities. Thus the working method chosen was to make notes during the interview and reconstruct the dialogue as soon as possible afterward. Photographs and other visual material were collected with the migrants' active assistance, as they themselves either indicated the shots or took the photographs themselves. The last phase of the research (2009-2012) consisted mainly in follow-up visits sketching the way the community is affected by the changing economic, social and political situation in Greece.

The field

Nea Ionia was built during the interwar period (1923) to provide shelter and employment to refugees from Asia Minor, especially the Turkish-speaking orthodox population coming from Anatolia.[10] Its inhabitants were mainly working class refugees employed at the newly established textile industry. Through their settlement at a refugee town, they were conveniently kept apart from the bourgeois population of Athens.[11] Nea Ionia is itself a site full of memories,

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[9] On commensality as a field of producing cultural identity, see L. Giard, M. De Certeau, and P. Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life: Living and Cooking*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). 151-169; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984). On the significance of food for migrant identity, see Marta Rabikowska, "The ritualisation of food, home and national identity among Polish migrants in London," *Social Identities* 16 no. 3 (2010): 377-398.

[10] On the historical background of the population exchange, see R. Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey*, vol. 12 (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003).

[11] Olga Bogiatzoglou, "Η βιομηχανική εγκατάσταση στη Νέα Ιωνία: μια παράμετρος αστικής εγκατάστασης [Industrial settlement in Nea Ionia: a paramentre of urban settlement]," in *Ο ξεριζωμός και η άλλη πατρίδα. Οι προσφυγουπόλεις στην Ελλάδα* [*The Uprooting and the Other Homeland: The Refugee-Cities in Greece*] (Athens: Etaireia Spoudon Neoellinikou Politismou kai Genikis Paideias, 1999). This work is in Greek.

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where narratives of exclusion and discrimination were constantly renegotiated, until the immigrants' settlement became part of the national narrative.[12]

Although the community's foundation myth refers to a Pakistani invited by the municipality at the 1950's, the first massive wave of Pakistani migrants settled at Nea Ionia at the early 1990s.[13] Today the district counts between 2000-3000 Pakistani migrants (total inhabitants approximately 67 000), and most of them hold some kind of documentation. Most live in ground floor apartments or terrace-rooms, both of which were used in the past to shelter the poorer non-permanent inhabitants of the city (students, single workers).[14] Due to their long presence in the suburb, Pakistani migrants have relatively well-established networks that ensure regular access to the labor market. Most perform manual work and are employed at gas stations, industries, crafts, warehouses, or they work as machine operators (mainly in the region of Nea Ionia, although some commute outside Attica).[15] Despite the fact that some find themselves frequently between jobs, due to networks, the process of job seeking is not an adversary with which they are unable to cope. Schematically, three main groups can be discerned as far as their working lives are concerned. The first group consists of those who have been settled in the suburb longer than the others and therefore are regularly included in the labor market. Migrants who, despite their established networks, are in between jobs and work on short-contract jobs form the second group. And finally, the third group consists of the newcomers who have not yet built their networks and are in the process of finding their first job in the country. This latter group is temporarily supported by the other two groups of the community.[16]

Despite differences, however, a common difficulty seems to mark the way they experience their working lives: the jobs to which they have access meet neither their skills and expertise nor their expectations. Despite mainstream representation depicting migrants as unskilled and undereducated, a considerable percentage of qualified artisans and university degree holders can be found among them. Nevertheless, they rarely work at jobs where their vocational skills are even

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[12] Antonis Liakos and Emilia Salvanou, "Citizenship, Memory and Governmentality: A Tale of Two Migrant Communities," in *Citizenship and Identities: Inclusion, Exclusion, Participation*, ed. Ann Katherine Isaacs (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2010), 163.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] For a description of their living conditions, see Nelli Kampouri and Emilia Salvanou, "Culture, Identity and Movement: A Study in the Social Anthropology of the Everyday Life and Popular Representations of Migrants From Pakistan in Nea Ionia," (Athens: Latsis Foundation, 2009). This work is an online edition: http://www.latsis-foundation.org/.

[15] Anda Stamati, "The economic and social integration of immigrants in Greece," *Euroline: European Industrial Relations Observatory on-line* (2004), http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2004/10/feature/gr0410105f.htm.

[16] Muhammad Anwar extensively elucidates the dynamics of Pakistani immigration to Britain and their network dynamics. See Muhammad Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

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slightly utilized. Pakistani migrants in Athens work mainly as unskilled workers and only a few of them are self-employed, running Asian-food shops or driving taxis.[17] In other words, although they are not excluded from the labor-market, it is practically impossible for them to pursue a job that might serve as a path to upward social mobility and personal fulfillment.[18]

While for the majority of Pakistani migrants in N. Ionia migration was a choice that would help them escape poverty and communal conflicts, it is not unusual to come across migrants belonging to their country's middle-class: well-educated and relatively well-off economically, migration for them was a choice that both challenged and reinforced their middle class and masculine identity. On the one hand they were occupied in jobs that they could not have envisaged themselves doing in Pakistan due to their family's social status. On the other hand, by undertaking the challenge of migration, they proved their passage to manhood.[19] It is due to this ambiguity between the way migrants planned their futures and their need to establish a social and gender identity in a context that changed dramatically in the time span of a generation that second thoughts on the migration process appeared. Although rarely admitted to oneself, it was when discussing co-migrants that migration appeared as a choice rather than a necessity: *"Do you want the truth? The young ones, the ones coming now, could have stayed back there. It is the migrants that have left years ago that go back there and get their hopes up. They come here because they know that women are freer and because they assume they will have money. They have the dream of being modern."* (Talha, 46, teacher/worker). Such admissions, though, encapsulate not only the challenge of masculinity as such, but the entire migration challenge. For Pakistanis, as for other South Asian migrants, their home country (*desh*) is imagined as poor but as morally superior to migration destinies (*bidesh*), where all kinds of temptations of modernity lurk. Migrants who succeed in overcoming such temptations, become economically successful, establish

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[17] Stamati, "The economic and social integration of immigrants in Greece." For the case of N. Ionia, see Kampouri and Salvanou. For a discussion of "brain waste" and the reasons leading to underutilization of migrants' skills in the host countries in an international context see, among others, Aaditya Mattoo, Ileana Cristina Neagu, and Çağlar Özden, "Brain waste? Educated immigrants in the US labor market," *Journal of Development Economics* 87 no. 2 (2008): 255-269; B.R. Chiswick and P.W. Miller, "The international transferability of immigrants' human capital," *Economics of Education Review* 28 no. 2 (2009): 162-169.

[18] On the contribution of working lives to subjectification, see Yannis Yannitsiotis and Dimitra Lambropoulou, "Introduction," in *Rhetorics of Work*, ed. Yannis Yannitsiotis, Dimitra Lambropoulou, and Carla Salvaterra (Pisa; Pisa University Press, 2008). On the working conditions of Pakistani migrants in Britain, see Ali Nobil Ahmad, "Dead men working: time and space in London's (`illegal') migrant economy," *Work, Employment & Society* 22 no. 2 (2008): 301-318.

[19] Adina Batnitzky, Linda McDowell, and Sarah Dyer, "A middle-class global mobility? The working lives of Indian men in a west London hotel," *Global Networks* 8 no. 1 (2008): 63.

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households, and are generous to their kin are perceived as having succeeded in their choice to migrate. Those who cannot resist such temptations are condemned to social (and communal) marginalization.[20]

The recent economic depression in Greece, especially after the austerity measures that followed the Memorandum between the International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank, and Greece, aggravated migrants' working conditions. The deregulation of the working relations proposed by advanced and rapid economic neo-liberalization (namely low payments, insecure working conditions, flexible jobs, short term contracts and black labor market that deprives the worker of social security) affected the entire working class, but had an additional impact on the migrants' living conditions.[21] This impact is mainly due to the migrants' obligation to provide official proof of their employment and their social security annual contributions in order to renew their permit of residence. Under such pressure, in order to keep their jobs, migrants are often forced to settle for substantially lower wages or pay the total amount of their social security contributions (instead of splitting the cost between themselves and their employers).[22]

Facing such challenges, the main effort of these migrants seems to be to secure their position in the labor market rather than pursue an improvement in their social status through their jobs. Their narratives, however, militate in favor of a more complex image.

The city and Pakistanis' leisure time

While in Nea Ionia Pakistanis do not reside in some kind of special district but have their homes scattered all around the city, it seems that Pakistanis and Greek do not share their routes of experience nor their mental geographies. Leisure time seems to be the "preferential space" where such difference is engraved. Despite their twenty-year presence in the district, Pakistanis seem to be in constant ambiguity between visibility and invisibility during their leisure time. They cannot be seen in the spaces of performative consumption, which Greek inhabitants use in order to reaffirm their symbolic social status. Pakistanis rather

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[20] K. Gardner, "Desh-Bidesh: Sylheti images of home and away," *Man* 28 no. 1 (1993): 1-15; José Manuel Fraga Mapril, "The patron and the madman: migration, success and the (in)visibility of failure among Bangladeshis in Portugal," *Social Anthropology* 19 no. 3 (2011): 288-296.

[21] Petros Linardos-Rylmon, "Αντί επιλόγου: Αδήλωτη απασχόληση και μεταναστευτική πολιτική" [Instead of an epilogue: Undeclared Employment and Immigration Policy], in *Αδήλωτη απασχόληση και "νομιμοποίηση των μεταναστών". Η πρόκληση της μεταναστευτικής πολιτικής* [*Undeclared employment and immigrants legalization*], ed. Apostolos Kapsalis (Athens: ΓΣΕΕ-ΙΝΕ, 2007).

[22] Stamati, "The economic and social integration of immigrants in Greece"; Linardos-Rylmon, "Instead of an epilogue: Undeclared Employment and Immigration Policy"

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spend their leisure time socializing with friends (almost always fellow Pakistani migrants) in houses, visiting the apartment that serves as a mosque, or (if young people) practicing sports at the city's open spaces.[23] It is during their leisure time that they establish places of intimacy, where "culturally specific practices of gender, sexuality and intimacy can be maintained" in a way that such practices contribute to the overall formation of a viable diasporic space.[24] Pakistanis' abstention from consumerism, though, can hardly be attributed to economic or cultural reasons. As Harriss has underlined in his study on Pakistanis in Britain,

> whilst they declaim competitive consumption as a socially divisive 'rat race,' the majority of East London Pakistanis see nothing problematic in consumption per se. Rather, their consumption practices make complex negotiations as they interact simultaneously with multiple regimes of value, competing to achieve distinction in Pakistan; alongside the Pakistani community in Britain; and alongside their other neighbours in Britain too.[25]

Furthermore, Pakistani migrants seem to spend a significant proportion of their earnings both on consuming commodities that are exchanged with their families in Pakistan and in remittances, in order to establish their families and their own social status in their deriving communities.[26] In this context, abstention from performative consumption can only be understood in relation to the development of other forms of competitive socialization.

Mohammad is 38 years old and has lived in Greece for 15 years. He has a wife and two sons (a toddler and a teenager) in Pakistan. He works mainly in the construction industry as a glazier (a craft he learned after his migration, since he was a clerk in Pakistan). He is well off economically, compared to other

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[23] On the connection between participating in agonistic sports and identity, see A. Appadurai, "Playing with modernity," in *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Pnina Werbner, "The Lion of Lahore': Anthropology, Cultural Performance and Imran Khan'," *Anthropology and Cultural Studies* (1997); C. Valiotis, "Runs in the Outfield: The Pakistani Diaspora and Cricket in England," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26 no. 12 (2009): 1791-1822.

[24] On practices of intimacy among Pakistanis in diaspora, see T.M. Walle, "Making places of intimacy: Ethnicity, friendship, and masculinities in Oslo," *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 15, no. 2-3 (2007): 151.

[25] Kaveri Harriss, "'What's not spent is lost': Consumption practices of Pakistani Muslims in Britain," in *Religion, Consumerism and Sustainability: Paradise Lost?*, ed. Lyn Thomas (Houndmills UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 171-72; For a discussion of the way Pakistani migrants conceptualize remmitances and balance between what is spent in their host country and what is sent back to Pakistan, see F. Osella and C. Osella, "Migration, money and masculinity in Kerala," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6 no. 1 (2000): 117-133.

[26] Gardner, "Desh-Bidesh."

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Pakistanis, and he recently bought a car. However, he made clear to me from our first meeting that we were not to meet in places where consumption is involved – the square's benches seemed a better choice: "*No, it's not a good idea to sit for a coffee – not in a shop. We are migrants you know so we have to live sparingly. We only spend for what is necessary – it's not like you guys. You have your homes, your families here. When you come to Pakistan, you'll see how hospitable we are.*" Another migrant couple though, whose entire family settled in Greece, had a different approach: "*The only reason that we don't hang out at places like these (restaurants) is because of the food. How can we dine out – eat what? Kebab, pizza... all include pork. And we only eat halal anyway. We are more than happy to have you for dinner in our home though.*" The same people, however, spent regularly to buy presents "from Pakistan." Through such presents they were reaffirming the relationship of trust in the ethnographic field, connoting at the same time that it was not the economic aspect of consumerism that they were rejecting. Rather than a result of financial limitations, they used abstention from consumerism in order to show their discontent with something much more complex.

When they refuse to participate in the dominant discourse that defines the way leisure time is invested and the status symbols it produces, migrants create their own space of freedom. While during their working days they conform to the systematic reality that marginalizes them, during their leisure time they step out of that context and create the conditions that allow the development of self-fulfilling identities. They therefore inhabit a rather liminal space, a "heterotopia", formed within the limits of the city, which at the same time puts into question its certainties and reorganizes its spatiality in a different combination of time and space.[27] By doing so, this leisure time functions as a capsule for the migrant group to craft its collective identity and as a space of mirroring inadequacies of the dominant discourse.[28]

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[27] Foucault defines heterotopias as every space between real spaces and utopias. Heterotopias contest and invert real places of society. They are either material or conceptual spaces where reality and its ideal conceptualization intersect. In the form of both crisis and deviance heterotopias, such in-between spaces remain localized and timeless at the same time, maintaining precise functions within the society. See Michael Foucault, "Of Other Spaces (1967)," in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (Routledge, 2008).

[28] Maureen Heyns, "Rubbing the magic lamp. Heterotopian strategies in London's eastern City fringe," in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), 227-28.

Utopian realities

Marginalization of social groups on the basis of imposed hegemonic discourses is by no means an innovation of neoliberalism and post-social economies. Marxist and especially post-marxist scholarship has thoroughly analyzed the multiple ways hegemonic ideologies are imposed on working classes ensuring the system's stability and maintenance.[29] Furthermore, by coining the concept of governmentality, Foucault has argued that modernity's threshold is the passage from the conduct of territories to the conduct of populations. Modern governmentality, rather than imposing discipline through surveillance, aimed at conducting the subjects' agency, thus ensuring the system's stability and reproduction.[30] Foucault also argued that resistance is inscribed to power, as an irreducible opposite, serving at the same time as a confirmation of the dominating discourse and a challenge for its defeat.[31]

In his archival research on Saint-Simonian workers of nineteenth century France, Jacques Rancière focused his historical interest on a group of exceptional worker-poets who devoted their nights to intellectual production (verse, prose, song).[32] His core argument is that turning upside down the days' time-zones and proceeding to cultural production was a revolutionary act in itself (more radical than claims for better working conditions), because it delegitimized the hegemonic discourse of predefined social roles and labor divisions (both inscribed into the acceptance of the normality of the working days' time-schedule). It therefore set the basis for challenging reality through utopian thinking.[33] Similarly, Roy Rosenzweig, in his study on the working class in nineteenth century Massachusetts, is interested in the construction of leisure-time as a time of freedom and choice under waged labor.[34] He explores the struggles of the workers to retain control of their leisure-time, transforming it in a field of political significance and resistance. By resisting the moral discourse of the bourgeois (who in the meanwhile had become the social elite and had deprived the workers of the control of their working environment), they gradually consolidated a

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[29]Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 12.

[30] Michael Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977–1978* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 144, 222; Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 45.

[31] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1978), 96-97.

[32] Jacques Rancière, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

[33] Antonis Liakos, *Αποκάλυψη, Ουτοπία και Ιστορία* [Apocalypse, Utopia and History] (Athens: Πόλις, 2011): 348-349.

[34] Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

distinct working class culture and politics and shaped relationships among the class's different ethnic groups.[35]

Similarly, although in a different context, Pakistani migrants of Nea Ionia articulate in their leisure time alternative fields of resisting their construction as "undeserving" anti-citizens and the cancellation of their expectations because of their exclusion at the margins of the labor-market. Among friends, during their afternoon socializing, they develop narratives that reverse the negativity of their experiences at work and substitute it with alternative narratives that are in accordance with the horizon of the expectations that shaped their decision to migrate. The home chosen for socializing is usually that of a Pakistani male who has already brought his wife to Greece, situating himself in that way as a "succeeded migrant."[36] There is usually some kind of shared food (although not dinner, which is usually served before the gathering takes place) and the discussion starts with reference to the most trivial of subjects and with mutual friendly vexing. During these meetings, silence and uneasiness about the details of their actual working conditions give their place to a lively exchange of codes that affirm the professional identities (and the social status that accompanies them) around which they have built their expectations. They thus bridge their current lives with their dreams before migration. The nights of the Pakistani community are devoted to constant elaboration and cultivation of alternative life stories. Through the way they narrate their everyday experiences and their plans for the future Pakistani migrants of N. Ionia re-inhabit the space of the city, transforming it into "home." In other words, what they renegotiate is the relationship between themselves, who have left "home", those left behind and their aspirations for their lives in their new "home." Home, in this sense, becomes a complex and contingent space of inhabitance.[37]

Narratives are much more than stories. They are rather stories made out of signs that reflect the psychic reality of the individual that, by constructing the private space of the subject, determine the way it inhabits the public space.[38] By selecting experiences and memories of the past and organizing them into a meaningful way in the present, narratives are simultaneously ways of dealing with the past and creating a future. In this context, narrativizing their experience of migration is part of everyday life for Pakistani migrants. They constantly renegotiate realms of what can be said and what is kept in silence, of what is

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[35] S.J. Douglas, "Mass Media: From 1945 to the Present," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, ed. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 86.
[36] Mapril, "The patron and the madman."
[37] S. Ahmed, "Home and away," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2 no. 3 (1999): 340; Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting identities* (Oxford: Routledge, 1996).
[38] Russell West-Pavlov, *Space in Theory: Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 96-97.

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public and what is private, as well as the language in which the narrative is articulated, depending on the audience and the community's experience at the present. Therefore, experiences which they fear fall under different codes of value systems, communications and eventually discourses of life management (such as details about the "illegal" routes they followed during their journey towards the country) are usually discussed only within the community and are silenced in the presence of outsiders: "*You'd better not ask for such details [about the migration route from Pakistan to Greece]. All of us have paid to come here. And all of us came through Turkey – usually a flight to Turkey and then by car (bus, truck). Of course we had casualties. The first time was difficult. Then things got better – we found jobs and then, there were the two acts that gave us documents...*" (Tariq, 43).[39] On the other hand, narratives about their hopes and dreams, about the adversaries in their home country and the reasons that shaped their decision to migrate and about their experiences as a migrant community in the host society are often performed without consideration of who might be in the audience: "*Look, this is our house back in Lahore. It is beautiful, isn't it... You think I would have left it if it wasn't for a serious reason? Things got difficult and I came here so I could assist my parents and my younger siblings – a brother and a sister.*"[40] The choice of the language used to narrate such experiences defined (and was defined by) the different groups to which these narrations were addressed, forming cycles of insiders and outsiders respectively. Furthermore, the preferable language is defined by the temporal tone of the narrative: in a very sketchy way, when referring to the past and to issues concerning communal bonds and their renegotiation, the chosen language was Urdu. Oppositely, when planning a future in Greece, when talking about the prospect of obtaining citizenship and being incorporated in the Greek society, Greek is more frequently used.[41]

The informants' working lives are among the main themes that are repeatedly narrativized during such meetings. Disappointment with their everyday working experience is contextualized in a re-evaluation of the choice to migrate

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[39] On silence because of incompatible codes of communication between two parties, see Jean-Francis Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), xi, 13. On "communities of suffering" and the role of a heroic past in the bonding of the community, see P. Werbner, "Rich Man Poor Man: Or a Community of Suffering: Heroic Motifs in Manchester Pakistani Life Histories," *Oral History* 8 no. 1 (1980): 43-48.

[40] On migration as a family strategy for ascending socially, see A. Gardner, *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain* (Ithaca NY: ILR Press, 2010), 60-62.

[41] On the difficulty of adopting the language of a host country in the context of migration because it is seen as an affirmation of the magical effect of the language, see L. Grinberg and R. Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (Yale 1984), 111; P. Good, *Language for Those who have Nothing: Mikhail Bakhtin and the Landscape of Psychiatry* (NY: Plenum Publishers, 2001). 8. On selecting different languages for memorializing future life after a traumatic event, see S.L. Gilman, *Inscribing the Other* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 293 ff.

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and ambiguities about whether the difficulties and exclusion they experience are temporary or not at the core of their discussions:

> *We can understand that they don't like us there – we can understand Greek as well. People think that because we are migrants, we are stupid. Well, we aren't. We know that we will not become equal (although we pay taxes) and that's why we practice patience. But it isn't fair not getting the promotion you deserve. It is not fair not being paid either. But we are used to hardships, anyway.* (Shahzad, 35)

Idealization of humble beginnings is common in Pakistanis' narratives, connecting them in a "community of suffering" against hardships of the present.[42] On the other hand though, such hardships are extremely difficult for the migrants to bear, especially if not in the context of a family life (which is the situation for the majority of them – what they usually experience is an all-male constellation of uninvited workers).[43]

But acting out is rarely the shape this procedure takes.[44] Instead of negotiating the particular conditions of their working situation, migrants turn reality completely upside down, claiming for themselves the realization of their dreams – even in the limited frame of their communities – during their leisure time. Rather than being a way to spend their leisure time among friends without being exposed to the public gaze of distrustful "citizens", this type of socializing – coming together on a regular basis with extended groups of friends and acquaintances – is a performative act constructive of a new, intimate reality.[45] Through commensality and joking, through the inversion of the contradictions of their realities to a context of communal solidarity and joy, their agency is elaborated through alternative routes. Meeting after meeting, a reality parallel to the experienced one during the day takes shape and outbalances their experienced marginalization.

In the reality constructed during these meetings, first names give their place to nicknames drawn from their working identities. But it is not their current

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[42] Although this observation is opposite to what is stated for Pakistanis at Britain, it is not incompatible, as in Greece it is the first generation of migrants who are at this stage, so they are still more or less facing the hardships of settling in the local communities. For the case of Britain, see Harriss, "'What's not spent is lost'," 157. On communities of suffering, see Werbner, "Rich Man Poor Man".

[43] On the working conditions of Pakistani migrants in London (especially those at the margins of "documentation"), see Nobil Ahmad, "Dead men working."

[44] On the way acting out both opposes and complements the process of working through trauma, see Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss," *Critical Inquiry* 25 no. 4 (1999): 696-727.

[45] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (NY: Routledge, 1993), 139.

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occupation that defines their "working identity." Pakistanis draw the working identities of their leisure time from an expected life course that seems to have been cancelled: A current construction worker is "the teacher," a clark driver "the accountant," the imam "the doctor," a currently unemployed migrant "the community's connector." All of these people are between the ages of 28-43 years, and settled in N. Ionia for over 10 years – with the exception of the "old uncle" of one member of the group, aged 55, who is the "wise one," remaining outside the cycle of socializing. The ways they address each other creates a stable and unique link between the subject and its working identity, which in its turn draws not from the present, but from memory or expectation – in other words from an alternative reality. These identities, although at use strictly during leisure time, shape new types of subjectivities, which are strikingly different from those occurring at the frame of their marginalized and excluded present. The subject's working identity is opposed to his experienced working condition and becomes a safety valve for the elaboration of an identity that favors inclusion rather than exclusion. Each member is titled with the social status that the migrant community judges he deserves. At night, Pakistanis have representatives of every middle strata occupation, challenging in this way their experienced daytime reality.

Although practiced in the realm of leisure, these alternative identities become much more than symbolic substitutes of their disappointing lived experience. They are practiced and praised within the community. Migrant leisure-time professionals offer their knowledge and expertise to members of their community in need. Through their regular performance, these alternative working identities gain so much in significance that they often substitute in the communal imaginary the day's underpaid and fragile working identity.

"The least I can do for my co-patriots is to offer them my help, God willing. They come to me when they have nowhere else to go and with God's will and medicine we bring from our country, they become healthy again. Last week, I helped a kid suffering from his ears." The "doctor" from Gujrat is well known among the members of the community as their exclusive doctor – the one to whom they refer when medical science fails to heal their diseases.[46] Despite his professional medical knowledge, he uses in his therapies prayer and metaphysics as well, combining in a unique way science and religion. Dealing with the tension between the experiences of the present and the traditional faith of the community, he intermediates between two worlds that have not yet figured out a way of coexisting in the migrants' community.

The conditions were not so favorable for another migrant from the same region. Following the most common route to Greece through Turkey, he found

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[46] For the use of traditional medicine by Pakistanis in Britain, see A. Pieroni *et al.*, "Traditional medicines used by Pakistani migrants from Mirpur living in Bradford, Northern England," *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* 16 no. 2 (2008): 81-86.

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himself hosted by other Pakistanis with origins from the same village at N. Ionia. He had studied medicine in Pakistan and dreamed of practicing it professionally before being forced to leave the country for reasons related to his safety. Without knowledge of English or Greek, he found an occupation at the area's unofficial mosque and was therefore known as the imam to the members of the community. Nevertheless, the dream of medicine did not fade and possibilities for its realization were discussed several times during the friendly meetings of the migrants: *"I have studied medicine. I want to be a doctor – but it's too difficult here. Can't mix up with the state... too much trouble for my diploma."* He hoped that someday he would find a way to open a pharmacy using a Greek citizen's license and practice medicine in the back room. At the same time, he was writing the memoirs of his migration.

Are migrants escaping reality then? Hardly. The adversities they face are related not only to the elimination of their personal aspirations for acquiring social status through their professional lives. The discourse that marginalizes them does not only target their value as citizens or professionals, nor even only their personal morality. What is devaluated is their cultural background, which is represented as backward and uncivilized, irrational and pre-modern.[47] Rather than deriving from the hardships they experience as migrants, their trauma derives from their realizing that the image of the "western paradise" that led to their decision to migrate never existed. Far from experiencing a paradise of democracy and tolerance, their reality repeatedly confirms their suspicion that the necessary sacrifices for the existence of liberal societies they dreamed of are their very own subjectivities. They are collectively disdained through the development of Orientalized and racialized discourses about their Asian countries of origin. Therefore, what is really at stake when they constantly re-narrate their memories and their stories of migration is the task to re-negotiate the way they organize their memories of their past, their homeland and their decision to migrate and their experiences as migrants in a narrative that makes their trauma meaningful.

Bridging an imagined past with an expected future

Meaning cannot be created by fragments of experience – it needs to be organized within a context. And it is only through their contextualization in a meaningful narrative that hardships and adversities become bearable. The context shapes the plan of the subject's final release from its pains and therefore reconstructs suffering as a necessary part of the plan, which is temporary and will lead to the subject's final justification.[48] For Pakistanis that migrated, migration was a

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[47] L. Fekete and A. Sivanandan, *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamophobia in Europe* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 1-12; Chris Allen, *Islamophobia* (London: Ashgate, 2010).
[48] Liakos, *Αποκάλυψη, Ουτοπία και Ιστορία*: 97-99.

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trauma that was contextualized in such a narrative. War, foreign interference, social turbulence and exploitation of the country's wealth that did not benefit its inhabitants shaped a climax of suffering that ended at the decision to migrate: to leave families and friends, give up plans, suffer the journey towards their new homelands through illegal routes and dangers and finally reach a land where "things would be better." It was the prospect of correcting the injustice made to their lives in their homelands that made migration worth going through.[49] Despite their expectations though, their present is defined by structural limitations that cancel the validity of their initial narrative. Injustice is not corrected; suffering migration was not the last step towards redemption. The way their past is incorporated into their present, the way memory guides their way to the future needs to be adapted.[50] In that sense, what is ultimately altered is the way they understand the interconnection of temporalities.

Their past is not there anymore – spatial and temporal distance allows its re-collection with nostalgia.[51] But it is not the kind of nostalgia that urges return to the past that is lamented. Nostalgia takes place exactly because the past is securely over and therefore functions as a stable point of mnemonic reference, offering support for the hardships of the present.[52] What Pakistanis of Nea Ionia reconstruct with their narrations is potentiality: they imagine their present and their future according to what the past might have been. They inscribe temporality in the space of their lives, resulting not in nostalgic reconstitutions of their past, but in cherishing fragments of their memory.[53] Their narratives balance between a utopia of memory for the life "they could have lived" and magical realism – both tropes of an alternative way to embody a reality that seems to marginalize them or at least structurally constricts them into a social condition that cancels the expectations that have formed their decision to migrate in the first place.

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[49] On the emotional impact of migration and feelings of loss and cancellation involved, see S. Akhtar, *Immigration and Identity: Turmoil, Treatment, and Transformation* (Lanham MD: Jason Aronson, 1999); Salman Akhtar, "A third individuation: Immigration, identity, and the psychoanalytic process," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 43 (1995): 1051-1084; Avner Falk, "Border symbolism revisited," *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 10 (1983): 215-220; Grinberg and Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*. Also, on the clash between perceptions of *desh* and *bidesh* and sentiments of failure or success, see Gardner, "Desh-Bidesh" and Mapril, "The patron and the madman."

[50] Jörn Rüsen, "Historical consciousness: Narrative structure, moral function and ontogenetic development," in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, ed. Peter Seixas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

[51] On nostalgia in the context of migration, see Salman Akhtar, "The Immigrant, the Exile, and the Experience of Nostalgia," *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 1 no. 2 (1999): 123-130.

[52] David Lowenthal, "Nostalgia tells it like it wasn't," in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, ed. Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).

[53] On reflective nostalgia, see Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (NY: Basic Books, 2001).

Balancing between what is acceptable through experience and the surreal, they transcend the certainties of the linear perception of time and seek to bridge the gap between modern and pre-modern perceptions of time – to use the past in order to remember the future. Such practices of experiencing the world are often adapted by communities that do not enjoy a secure position in the wider system in which they are contextualized.

When migrants develop alternative professional identities that balance their memories and the expectations from their past before migration, what they are actually doing is establishing bridges between their past and the way they envisage their future. The identities they embody as alternatives to their working ones are not, for the most of them, lived experiences. The young age (late adolescence or early adulthood for the most of them) at which they migrated did not leave enough space or time to complete life courses that would result in the professional identities they envisaged. Even most of those that had completed their university studies had not yet established a professional life. In other words, the identities they embody, rather than speaking about the loss of an experienced status, speak about the loss of their privilege to dream – in their past and present. They project their nostalgic recollection of their past onto a utopian vision of their future.

Conclusion

Migrants' exclusion at the social outskirts (along with the poor and other social categories recently re-invented as the new dangerous classes threatening "society's security") may be a pre-condition for the discursive organization of the post-civil neoliberal society. Constructing, inventing and excluding not only the external enemy, but the anti-citizen within, is in this frame a part for diffusing governmentality and imposing biopolitical control both of those excluded and of those included in the citizenry as well. However, such an approach diminishes the agency of those marginalized, obscuring them as a whole in an undifferentiated category through the lenses of the hegemonic discourse.

In contrast to the neoliberal narrative of subjects accountable for their irresponsible and high-risk life choices who deprived themselves of access to a secure and respectable life, the informants in this study did not succumb without resistance to their economic, ethical and social marginalization. They developed practices of resistance within and through which they developed subjectivities challenging the tropes by which the dominant discourse represents them. The resistive narratives they articulate, however, do not have the form of a face-to-face confrontation with the established social order. What they challenge is not necessarily the roots of social organization, but their exclusion to the margins and their consequent deprivation of the right to develop subjectivities in accordance

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with their expertise and expectations. What they question is the fact that their coercion to migrate and the multiple losses in terms of cultural, emotional, network and economic uprooting, instead of opening the path for their redemption from suffering turned out to be the step toward a new round of hardships. What these narratives challenge is not only the justification and legitimacy of their exclusion in the context of an extended life plan, but justification on the grounds of skills and symbolic capital remaining unexploited. It is not the symbolic capital of knowledge and skills that is lacking from migrant communities. What is missing for their inclusion in the group of society upon which biopolitics take the form of imposing governmental discourse rather than excluding and controlling, is the context within which their symbolic capital will transform through its practice and recognition – conditions that the very fact of their structural exclusion as migrants deny.

The Pakistanis of Nea Ionia have not developed alternative professional identities individually; it is rather a collective act, that takes place within "communities of memory" within the collective environment of persons that actually meet regularly and establish through their meetings a relationship of intimacy.[54] Within such communities, through processes such as acting out everyday experiences, working through the trauma of migration, and renegotiating the narratives of their life-stories, the participants create for themselves the space to develop subjectivities that challenge the discourse that devaluates them collectively by defining them as culturally inferior. When they embody professional identities and develop their subjectivities according to them they challenge their construction as "undeserving migrants." The microcosm of the community of intimacy that they develop and the roles they undertake within such a community function rather as a metonymy for the way they are envisaging to participate in the local community in which they have settled after their migration.[55] By constantly undertaking the efforts to make space for themselves either in the area's open spaces or in a narrative in which they are not devalued, they elaborate alternative ways of subjectifying included (instead of excluded) selves.

Therefore, in such communities that embody alternative ways of belonging, silences about hardships of migration give their way to narratives of expectation and fulfillment. These narratives find their space to flourish in the cracks of the constructed reality and move between nostalgic and future utopias. They usually take the form of a designed desired reality, where fulfillment and self-completion will be the result of holding occupations in accordance with skills

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[54] L.M. Danforth and R. Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 219 ff.
[55] For the space produced for the migrants at diaspora and the notion of home, see Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*.

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and expertise. In this sense, the way immigrants use their leisure time does not differ structurally from the way the indigenous population does: they become engaged in performative activities that reconstruct their experienced reality according to the way they have envisaged it, obtaining at the same time symbols necessary for securing and potentially improving their social status.

Thus, for migrants, developing a collective subjectivity based on alternative professions becomes a strategy of resistance against marginalization and devaluation of personal subjectification imposed by neoliberal discourses. What remains unaddressed, though, is whether such a condition concerns the migrants exclusively, as a result of their migratory situation, or tends to expand and include broader strata of population that gradually become excluded from the labor market. The separation of the "money earning occupation" from the "occupational identity," as the economic crisis deepens, seems to concern large parts of the working force who, not being able to find a job that meets their expectations and expertise, undertake unstable, fluid and temporary jobs and continue to pursue their dreams during leisure time. In this sense, the case of Pakistani migrants of N. Ionia can be used as a window to reveal the structural inadequacies of neoliberal economies, the strategies of exclusion and marginalization, and the practices of resistance that develop within them.