

Austerity and Solidarity – volunteering as double movement in Greece

Mr Russell Henshaw – DPhil Candidate

University of Oxford – Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology

Theme II – Double Movements and Populism

If Polanyi suggested governments engender markets this can be seen in austerity policy which became widespread across Europe following the Great Recession. This was not deregulation but reregulation – but to what end and with what consequence? My ethnographic research among volunteers in Greece's solidarity movement addresses this question. Specifically regarding welfare policy, it asks how volunteers respond to this withdrawal of rights as state provision shrinks. Yet also drawing upon the idea of governmentality it attempts to show the ambiguity of this resistance – in the curious moment that Syriza, the ruling anti-austerity party, became responsible for implementing the very policies it opposed. Could it be that austerity, as it provokes a counter-movement, produces exactly the citizens it requires – those that will work for free with no enshrined rights? As volunteers try to re-embed those rights do they inadvertently participate in their retrenchment? Here, the tensions and contradictions between the Market and its supposed opposites can be viewed through the prism of the volunteers' efforts as they attempt to forge the community around them.