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Appraising the ‘Greek Truth Committee’ in the Age of Debt: Counter-expertise, ‘battle truths’, and the struggle against post-crash neoliberalism.

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Abstract: This article appraises the value of the Greek Truth Committee on Public Debt (TCPD) as a form of resistance to post-crash neoliberalism. It analyses the TCPD as a knowledge-making practice that directly confronts neoliberalism's use of sovereign debt as a ‘technology’ designed not only to secure itself against democratic demands but to constrain subjectivity within the model of an entrepreneur-of-the-self. Through an analysis of its Preliminary Report, I explore the TCPD’s work as a form of what Lazzarato calls ‘counter-expertise’, which not only destabilised dominant mythologies regarding the public debt but constructed new ‘truths’ about it that could cultivate new modes of political resistance.

Introduction

From the Occupy and Indignados movements to more recent parliamentary experiments such as Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, a vast array of political practices have emerged over the last decade in order to challenge the fiercely anti-democratic, if not entirely post-political, debt regime(s) of post-crash neoliberalism in Europe. In turn, a range of thinkers have sought to grasp the social, cultural and political dimensions of these experiments and to explore the political potentialities opened up by them.’ Against the temptation to read these practices pessimistically through their failures, this literature is united by its critical affirmation of their ongoing value. There is, in other words, an enthusiasm for what we might learn not
only from these popular resistances, but also how we might ‘build on the energy, imagination and novel institutions created.’

These endeavours continue to be critically important, even if, understandably, the rising threat of right-wing authoritarianism and the far right across Europe and the Americas has drawn attention elsewhere. Leaving to one side the growing sense that right-wing populisms have become unevenly entwined with neoliberalism rather than signalled its end, it is clear that, elsewhere, the concept of an ‘economic recovery’ has not led to an exit from post-crash neoliberalism. Greece, for example, has recently completed its formal lending agreement with the troika but remains bound to ‘a series of audits will ensure that the continuing reforms will go ahead to ensure a “healthy” economy.’ All the while, the EU continues to produce cross-border regulation through programmes such as its new industrial strategy, which lock in neoliberal policies even as it mobilises a Keynesian rhetoric.

Moreover, as the novel coronavirus pandemic sweeps through the globe, upending the normally ‘frictionless’ flows of capital, the state interventions that have so far been mobilised to keep global capitalism afloat promise to radically increase the debts held by states. The warning by the UK chancellor, Rishi Sunak, that the borrowing underpinning his Covid-19 stimulus package ‘will have to be paid back at some point,’ should be taken as an ominous sign that debt might become the premise through which further rounds of neoliberalisation are ‘locked in’ to both national and global governance architectures. The fact that the IMF has not reconsidered its policies towards debtor states, mostly of the Global South, but simply offered them more debt at the height of the pandemic also points in this direction. All this suggests that the logic of post-crash neoliberalism will continue to both shape the present and imperil the future.
In light of this situation, this article focuses on and develops an analysis of a political experiment which has been given less consideration in academic debates: the Truth Committee on Public Debt (TCPD), established by Syriza at the height of the ‘Greek Crisis’ to audit the nation’s public debt and formulate arguments concerning its cancellation. It contends that looking to the practices of the Committee is useful insofar as it draws critical attention to the value of knowledge production in the process of political struggle against post-crash neoliberalism, an issue often side-stepped in existing thinking about political resistance after the financial crisis. This latter work has instead tended to favour exploring notions or imminence and/or radical constituent power particular to resistance after the crash, or on questions of political organization and activist structures. In this respect, turning to the TCPD provides opportunities to open up new discussions not only about how knowledge-making practices have been utilised in strategies of resistance in the present conjuncture, but how they could play an ongoing role in them.

Pursuing this trajectory, the article argues that the TCPD harbours a set of knowledge-making practices that can confront the anti-democratic regime of post-crash neoliberalism. To make its argument, the article draws from the considerable resources offered by Maurizio Lazzarato’s recently translated Experimental Politics, which provides tools with which to explore the central role of knowledge production in political struggles. Through an analysis of the TCPD’s Preliminary Report, the article investigates its work as a form of what Lazzarato calls ‘counter-expertise’. Using this concept, the article explores the Committee’s work as a set of knowledge-making practices designed not only to destabilise dominant mythologies regarding the public debt but to develop new ‘battle truths’ about it that could impose themselves on the situation and nourish the broader field of political struggle(s) in two key respects. On the one hand, I argue that they supported and legitimised the
articulation of new political demands as a real potentiality. And, on the other hand, I demonstrate that they possessed the potential to open up new modes of subjectivation that can move beyond neoliberalism’s entrepreneurial self. Given this potentiality, the article concludes by considering how the TCPD’s practices might be appropriated in future, taking stock of the Committee’s failings and reflecting on how they might be remedied.

Neoliberal Post-Democracy: The Debt State and Indebted Subjectivity

Before turning to the TCPD, it is first necessary to outline the context in which it emerged and to which it responds. Scholars have long critiqued both neoliberalism’s deleterious effect on democracy as well as its capacity to dispel political alternatives through its grim ‘realism’.\(^1\) Since the 2008 global financial crash, however, the anti-democratic tendencies of neoliberalism have become much more apparent: elected leaders in Southern Europe have been intermittently usurped by unelected technocrats whilst supranational organisations continue to prescribe austerity programs that further entrench neoliberalism’s market order. Accordingly, the so-called ‘Eurocrisis’ has motivated renewed academic interest in the relationship between neoliberalism and post-democracy.\(^2\) While perspectives differ across this literature, academic understandings of the neoliberalism’s post-democratic project tend to focus on how it subordinates the state to the needs of the market so that democratic choices are hollowed out by ‘concerns with economic growth, competitive positioning, and credit rating’.\(^3\)

The economic, political and historical dynamics that have created this problem are well captured by Wolfgang Streeck, whose recent intervention emphasises the role that debt has played in constraining democracy.\(^4\) For Streeck, the social democratic state in Europe, one traditionally resourced by tax income, has
been incapacitated by the interdependent projects of neoliberalism and financialisation, which have transformed it into a ‘debt state’. Neoliberal policies such as tax cuts and the ‘capital flight’ enabled by integrated global markets have eviscerated tax receipts, creating ‘holes’ in public spending. As a result, states have increasingly needed to turn towards private credit markets to resource its expenditure. State debts have grown considerably and must be serviced ‘with an ever greater share of its revenue.’

The effect of this pincer-movement has been to split the concerns of the state between two competing and irreconcilable constituencies. No longer simply accountable to its citizens, the *Staatsvolk*, the state is now also bound to the *Marktvolk*, its creditors who are ‘investors rather than citizens.’ Crucially, the competition between these constituencies is based on an asymmetry of power that is central to the dynamics of contemporary post-democracy. While the *Staatsvolk* – and violent decisions regarding who is and isn’t included in this category – are subject to the sovereignty of the state, the power of the creditors not only exist beyond the state but can contain it through the possibility of withdrawing their capital. In limiting national sovereignty, ‘market forces’ constrain ‘the freedom of the *Staatsvolk* to make democratic decisions,’ whilst empowering ‘the *Marktvolk* which becomes increasingly essential for financing government decisions.’

Since the 2008 crash, Europe has seen an intensification of this logic. As Streeck shows, spiralling state debts, largely a result of bailing out banks, have transmuted into a lack of market confidence in state finances. Subsequent calls for fiscal consolidation have heralded a regime of austerity measures which lock in neoliberal order as a way of protecting the creditors’ interests and increasing their ‘confidence’. Moreover, the premise of debt hasn’t simply secured the immediate needs of market confidence but has been used to entirely insulate the markets from
‘politics’ through the intensification of ‘cross-border regulation.’ For example, the 2012 fiscal compact, agreed by various EU members, has essentially secured market order from democratic demands in the long-term.

In the post-crash era, as Lazzarato argues, ‘the representative system of popular “sovereignty”,’ has been rearticulated as a set of ‘economically managed dispositifs of neoliberal governance.’ In this sense, the responses of various European institutions to Southern European countries is one particularly acute aspect of the whole. The overall effect can be felt all over post-crash Europe: a market capitalism insulated from politics emerges such that ‘techno-financial automatisms have [increasingly] taken the place of political decisions.’ From this even more pessimistic standpoint, the problem goes somewhat beyond Streeck’s rather narrow conception of the Staatsvolk. It is not simply that the political procedures of parliaments are hamstrung, or that ‘citizens’, narrowly defined, cannot participate in electoral politics. Rather, the problem is that the very possibility for social movements and other political groups to make demands on – and thus transform – the state is blunted and even nullified by the power of the creditors.

But while this mode of analysis usefully illuminates how the state has been shackled by the market, it doesn’t entirely capture the control mechanisms of the new ‘debt society’ which has taken shape in Europe. Understanding this formation requires developing a clearer understanding of how debt has played a vital role in ‘de-democratising’ society and social relations as much as it has the state. It requires an appreciation of how debt has become a central governmental technique of post-crash neoliberalism in Europe, one which doesn’t simply negate the capacity for meaningful decision-making about the future at the level of the state but also at the level of subjectivity.
Lazzarato has shown how the control logic of debt traverses between the state and the subject by transforming social security from a social right into social debt which must be repaid by the individual. Here, the ‘apparatus’ of social debt links state consolidation to the subject by tying social spending, which individuals make use of, to sovereign debt. Sovereign debts are rendered as budget deficits and citizens are figured as indolent and/or greedy subjects who are ‘guilty’ of overextending the state’s resources. Social debt thus mobilises a morality of guilt necessitating that the subject take responsibility for sovereign debt and repay the state in order to make the social it administers ‘sustainable’. But social debt does not require the individual to ‘reimburse in actual money but rather in conduct, attitudes, ways of behaving, plans, subjective commitments […] time used for conforming oneself to the criteria dictated by the market and business.’ In this respect, the austerity regimes that have spread across Europe are not only a means of restoring the confidence of the creditors. They also attempt to ‘govern’ the individual, nullifying political possibilities at the subjective level by leveraging guilt to enclose the subject within the logic of ‘indebted man[sic]’, an enterprise-subject ‘restricted to managing […] its employability, its debts, the drop in wages and income.’

Post-Democratic Greece

The so-called ‘Greek debt crisis’ which surfaced in 2010 is a particularly acute and tragic instantiation of this broader, European project. As Alexandros Kioupkiolis has argued, this crisis has given Greece over to a ‘post-political’ governance that has meant ‘effective sovereignty’ has been distributed to a constellation of international institutions including the Troika – the triumvirate of the IMF, European Commission (EC) and European Central Bank (ECB) which has effectively governed Europe during the crisis – and the ‘potent financial interests weighing on these
The austerity measures contained within 3 bailout packages agreed between 2010 and 2015, have been imposed on Greece either through technocratic rather than democratic procedure or directly against expressions of democratic will. The former occurred when, at the behest of ‘market forces’, the unelected technocrat, Lucas Papademos, oversaw the imposition of the 2nd bailout in 2011. Implementing these measures required bypassing proper parliamentary procedure and the use of exceptional decrees justified as a way of ‘saving the country’. Conversely, the 3rd bailout agreed to by Syriza in July 2015, only days after Greek citizens had rejected them in a referendum, is a crystalline example of the explicitly anti-democratic procedures deployed to manage the crisis.

At the same time, the Greek state’s ratification of the 2012 fiscal compact has effectively ringfenced market needs at the expense of democratic decision-making by committing to EU-wide rules that place permanent limits on social spending. And, furthermore, while Greece has now been "congratulated" by European officials for ending its reliance on bailout money, it remains heavily indebted and structural reforms to the economy appear to constrain future possibilities indefinitely.

Consequently, Greece provides a kind of paradigm for the construction of a governance for capital that is seemingly shielded from any semblance of formal or procedural democratic accountability.

But this project has not only stymied the democratic potential of the state. The attempt to constrain subjectivity into certain governable forms has also been a clear part of the strategy to manage the crisis. A crippling debt morality has been generated not only by the expert knowledges of the ECB as Radman Selmic points out, but also through Greek elite and media discourses that were utilised to govern the crisis through a responsibilizing common sense. Within Greece, the phrase ‘mazí ta fágame,’ (literally ‘we ate it together,’ but understood to mean ‘we are all
responsible for the debt’), famously coined by then Deputy Prime Minister, Theodore Pangalos, in 2010, became a shorthand for this common sense.\(^\text{30}\) It circulated as a kind of nodal point within a hegemonic discourse that apportioned blame to all Greek residents for the crisis insofar as they were deemed to be guilty of partaking in a culture of corruption, laziness, and lavish consumerism which created the debt. A comment piece in *To Vima*, a centre-left Greek newspaper, which affirmed the ‘truth’ of Pangalos’ claim is instructive in this regard: ‘Pangalos outlines a basic truth. That is, that the citizens of this country lived for the carpe diem (let’s eat, let’s drink, tomorrow we die).’\(^\text{31}\)

But even when Pangalos’ formulation was not directly invoked, the more general sense of collective guilt it has come to signify was a feature of dominant crisis discourses. In his analysis of how *Ekathemerini*, a centre-right Greek daily newspaper, reported the crisis, Yiannis Mylonas argues that the guilt or responsibility of indebted subjectivity has been constructed through discourses that juxtapose a culture of laziness and profligacy cultivated by Greek citizens against the need for them to become more entrepreneurial to resolve the crisis.\(^\text{32}\) Interestingly, Mylonas demonstrates that this culture of laziness is constructed as a problem caused not so much by wasteful elites but by the immoral ‘lifestyle and habits of laypeople.’\(^\text{33}\) As Paschos Mandravelis, writing in *Ekathemerini* in 2009, argued: ‘the problem [is] delinquency […] all these small irregularities accumulate as grains of sand in the gears of the economy paralyzing it […] all these created a culture of anomy, accumulating an increasing anomy.’\(^\text{34}\)

What is particularly worth noting here is that the discourses associated with *mazi ta fajame* were not simply about taking collective responsibility for electing an irresponsible political class but instead seeing the acts of ordinary individuals that, taken in the aggregate, amounted to an immoral culture. One can subsequently agree
with Maria Boletsí that the discourse of collective blame somewhat paradoxically
seems to make ‘Greek citizen almost individually responsible,’ whilst also ‘projecting’
the individual as responsible for solving the crisis by taking on a more
entrepreneurial existence.35 The discourse of responsibility, then, is marked by a
‘transversal’ quality inasmuch as guilt is neither entirely collectivised nor completely
individualised but operates by making connections and thus mediating between
them. That Pangalos set up a website to crowdsourc individual stories of Greek
excesses from concerned citizens as ‘proof’ of his hypothesis attests to this
connective logic and the movement between individual and collective it authorises.36
As a particularly pernicious articulation of Omnis et Singulatim, the process of
amassing the collective whilst simultaneously individualising its members that Wendy
Brown argues is central to neoliberal governance, guilt thus constructs a transversal
modality of social debt that can only be repaid by individuals taking on a more
austere and entrepreneurial existence.37

For the Greek anarchist collective, Ta Paidia Tis Gallerias (Children of the
Gallery (TPTG)), the crisis was thus experienced by many as guilt and self-blame: a
‘multitude of personal failures bound together (“living beyond our means”
summarizes the individual “excesses” and “malfunctions” that led to a “national
failure”).38 For them, this mechanism of guilt helps to explain what they note as the
general passiveness of workers in response to crisis, at least in its first few years, as
well as their lack of spontaneous organisation. On the other hand, and in a
theoretical move that serves to usefully complicate Lazzarato’s work on indebted
subjectivity, they argue that ‘self-blame and guilt can take such epidemic dimensions,
that certain defence-mechanisms are needed.”39 The result is the development of a
defensive ressentiment that projects the guilt onto others. Such arguments find support
from ethnographic and empirical accounts of Greek experiences of the crisis, where
feelings of guilt, shame and embarrassment seem to circulate alongside resentment aimed particularly at other (often imagined) workers – migrants, public sector workers, the young, the old, and so on – who are seen to be the real cause of the crisis.40

As TPTG point out, the critical problem with this individualising mechanism of collective guilt, felt either as responsibility or sublimated to a defensive resentment, is that it maintains the legitimacy of the debt and thus never fully escapes from a logic that supports the apparent the necessity of austerity. In both cases, the subject is thus left no alternative but to become an entrepreneur-of-the-self in a context marked by huge reductions in social services, where unemployment remains at 20%, and with high rates of in-work poverty.41 The word vasanizoma (“I am in torment”) which as Boletsi notes was graffitied on walls in many cities across Greece, perhaps articulates the affective consequences of a collision between guilt, deteriorations of material circumstances, and the diffusion of resentment.42

The Greek Truth Committee on the Public Debt

If Greece has become an important example in critical scholarship after the crisis, it is because it sits at the sharp end of, and thus crystallises, the broader logic of post-crash neoliberalism. But it is also precisely for this reason that Greece also became, as Douzinas puts it, ‘a laboratory of resistance,’ brimming with ‘renewed methods of insubordination,’ experiments that all in some way attempted to disrupt or dismantle post-crash neoliberalism and its logic of control.43

As Athina Arampatzi notes, the development of creative organising strategies and solidarity networks inside and outside Syriza, culminating in the party’s electoral victory in 2015, has signalled a ‘new paradigm for socio-economic organisation.’44 Further, although the Syriza strategy ended in capitulation, its first 6 months were
rooted in a radical and popular confrontation with the Troika – the triumvirate of the IMF, European Commission (EC) and European Central Bank (ECB) which has effectively governed Europe during the crisis – and its imposition of austerity. The famous referendum victory, wherein the 61% voted όχι (no) to the terms of the 3rd bailout, marks the highpoint of this movement. Consequently, even if the resistances mobilised in Greece have failed to overturn post-crash neoliberalism, there is still some cause to believe that something might be salvaged from the ruins of Syriza.

My own analysis turns to the Truth Committee on Public Debt as just such an experiment. Both drawing from and significantly developing debt auditing practices first deployed in Brazil, Ecuador and elsewhere, the TCPD was established by the first Syriza government in April 2015 as an independent body designed to audit Greece’s sovereign debt. The Committee investigated the debt between the years of 1980-2015 to determine ‘the truth about the creation and the intolerable increase in the public debt, and to formulate ‘arguments and [trace] the legal foundations concerning the cancellation of the debt.’ Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that the TCPD should be narrowly conceived as a legal, technocratic process ostensibly designed to support Syriza in its negotiations with the Troika. A primary objective of the Committee was to ‘raise the awareness of the Greek population,’ regarding the debt, and to support them to ‘participate as they must in democratic deliberation.’ It makes sense, therefore, to think about the TCPD’s work in terms of its broader socio-political value even as it relied upon and deployed legal discourses.

The TCPD was a formal institutional body composed of individuals with expertise in auditing, public debt and human rights, as well as those with the ‘precious experience’ of ‘local and international social movements.’ And while this body of experts took a central role in the project, it also encouraged and received the
input of ordinary people, who could ‘contribute as experts, witnesses, sources, or members.’ That is, while the Committee was structured around the centralisation of expert knowledges, a problem I will return to toward the end of this essay, it did also attempt to interface with a broader range of expertise than those which composed it. To deliver on its broad mandate, the TCPD employed a range of investigatory techniques: it examined all documentation pertaining to Greece’s public debt including official documents, contracts, treaties, official statistics. But it also made use of public hearings, drawing testimonies from politicians, IMF technocrats and other witnesses.

The findings of the initial phase of the Committee’s research were published in its Preliminary Report, released in June 2015, only weeks before the referendum on the terms of the 3rd bailout. The Report significantly challenged the dominant narratives of the Greek debt and, most strikingly, deployed legal arguments taken from the Doctrine of Odious Debt in international law to demonstrate that much of the debt should be cancelled because it violated the human rights of those living in Greece. But like the work of the Committee as a whole, the Preliminary Report was also a socio-political device. To that end, it was purposefully published in a concise document intended for widespread, public circulation, and used non-technical language to convey its points to non-specialist audiences. Its findings were also outlined in parliament in a presentation that, like much of the Committee’s hearings, was broadcast on the parliamentary television channel and open to the media.

Though Syriza’s capitulation meant that the TCPD was discontinued before it could build on its initial phase, a small body of academic literature has, nevertheless, already begun to reckon the work of the Committee, particularly that contained in its Preliminary Report. The most sustained engagement with the TCPD has come from legal scholars who have recently shown that the Committee’s arguments are well
supported in international law and significantly challenge the Troika’s narratives. Others have used the findings outlined in the Preliminary Report to support their own claims about the illegitimacy of the debt. Despite the TCPD’s untimely demise, then, this body of scholarship ultimately affirms the value of engaging with the Committee’s work as a legal strategy for sovereign debt cancellation, with implications beyond the immediacy of the Greek context.

In addition to these ‘juridical’ discussions, a small literature has begun to consider the Committee in socio-political terms, though much of this work has tended to group the TCPD into a broader cluster of practices that problematise debt rather than developing a sustained analysis of the Committee on its own terms. And while my own research has previously been concerned with thinking about the TCPD as an institution designed to construct forms of collective memory, the intervention I seek to develop here is driven by the belief that reframing and developing this work can better draw out questions of its socio-political contribution and efficacy.

My analysis here is concerned with conceptualising the TCPD as a set of knowledge-making practices designed to serve struggles against post-crash neoliberalism in Greece. If debt has become a ‘technology’ that aims to secure both state policy and subjectivity within the neoliberal framework, then the TCPD’s value, I argue, resides in its capacity to produce knowledges that could potentially destabilise this control logic, opening out new opportunities for socio-political alternatives. In developing this analysis, I aim to provide a reflection on the Greek Committee that not only draws attention to the value of knowledge production within the process of political struggle in general but considers how knowledge-making practices can play a significant role in contesting the ‘debt societies’ which have emerged in the era of post-crash neoliberalism.
To fully render the significance of these practices I now draw from the substantial contribution to political theory made by Lazzarato in his recently translated *Experimental Politics*. The book is largely a sociological and theoretical investigation of the struggles of the *intermittents*, a stratum of creative and cultural workers in the French entertainment industry who, since 2003, have fought against the French Government’s plans to reform the system of social insurance particular to them. Lazzarato’s work elucidates how the struggle of the ‘*intermittents*’ developed into novel modes of organisation and practices of resistance which were marked by their horizontal and participatory character. For this reason, the *intermittent* struggle is, in of itself, worthy of considerable attention. But what is particularly important about Lazzarato’s treatment of the *intermittent* struggle is that it provides tools to think about political resistance beyond the immediate context in which it is situated. By weaving together Foucauldian and Guattarian concepts with William James’ pragmatic philosophy to conceptualise the *intermittents*, Lazzarato develops a sociologically grounded political theory with applications far beyond its case study.

For my own purposes, Lazzarato’s intervention is valuable for two reasons. First, it provides a theoretical perspective that centralises the role of knowledge-making practices within strategies of political resistance. In this respect, his theoretical work shares certain resonances not only with the concept of hegemony rooted in the Gramscian tradition (unsurprising given Lazzarato’s position within the (post)autonomist Marxist tradition) but also activist practices like ‘militant research’, sharing with both a similar set of concerns *vis-à-vis* knowledge production as a terrain of struggle. Nevertheless, it also departs from them in critical ways. Indeed, Lazzarato develops a novel post-Foucauldian epistemology to describe knowledge-making practices as a ‘counter-expertise’ which both destabilises dominant constellations of power/knowledge and provided the ground for new modes of
political action and, crucially, subjectivity. Lazzarato’s political theory can thus shed light on how the TCPD contributes as a socio-political practice – and not simply a legal one – to struggles against post-crash neoliberalism in Greece and, potentially, beyond.

Second, and relatedly, Lazzarato situates his conceptual development of ‘counter-expertise’ within an analysis that grasps the ‘transversal’ strategy of contemporary, neoliberal capitalism. As the foregoing analysis demonstrated, post-crash neoliberalism does not only pass through exploitative economic relations and sovereign juridico-political institutions, it also governs the ‘social’ through a multitude of apparatuses that mould human conducts and subjectivities.\(^{59}\) Attentive to this point, Lazzarato provides theoretical tools which crystallise how political resistance can and must respond transversally, ‘[assembling] its actions against different apparatuses and intervene in their connections’.\(^{60}\) Lazzarato’s work can thus elucidate how the knowledge-making practices developed by the TCPD operate at multiple levels as resistance not only to the anti-democratic power of the creditors operating at the sovereign-juridical level but also the logic of social debt which sustains it at the social and subjective levels. Making this analysis, however, first requires a more comprehensive understanding of what Lazzarato means by the term ‘counter-expertise’.

**What is a Counter-Expertise?**

Indebted to Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge, Lazzarato’s theoretical work is particularly attentive to the ways in which knowledges ‘condition’ power in contemporary capitalism, shaping and ‘governing’ the relations that produce and organise society and subjectivity. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that Lazzarato also turns to Foucault as a way of articulating the political potentialities of knowledge-
making. Indeed, Foucault’s genealogical method, with its concern for how ‘subjugated knowledges’ can be turned ‘against the centralization and hierarchization of knowledges,’ is central to Lazzarato’s concept of counter-expertise. But Lazzarato develops these insights in a distinctly post-Foucauldian direction that can be better understood by quickly setting them against the genealogical methodology they draw from.

Foucauldian genealogy denotes a specific way of doing history, one with political implications that are never too far from the surface. For Foucault, genealogy resists ‘carefully protected identities,’ by disturbing ‘what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified.’ Rather than describing historical events or searching for ‘origins’, genealogy is designed to combat the power-effects of dominant discourses and forms of knowledge, which appear transcendent or pass for common sense. To reiterate Lazzarato’s own invocation of Foucault, it does so by recovering ‘subjugated knowledges’, those which at certain historical moments ‘have been buried or masked’ or were ‘disqualified as non-conceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges.’ In uncovering these fragments, genealogical investigations seek to mobilise them against totalising truth claims, disrupting them by revealing their contingency. Genealogy thus evokes a kind of ‘guerrilla pluralism’, which takes its perspective from outside or above the historical knowledges that are recovered, holding them together as a multiplicity and deploying them against hegemonic knowledge to create ‘epistemic friction’.

Lazzarato’s project, in contrast, is concerned not so much with the pluralism to be found in the history of struggles, but how subjugated or profane knowledge can be constructed and mobilised from inside a struggle in order to resist hegemonic formations of power/knowledge. To develop this point, Lazzarato’s conception of counter-expertise starts from the insistence that knowledge cannot be constructed
from a singular ‘objective’ vantage point, but is always produced within a particular
social perspective or ‘point of view’ from which ‘the multiplicity [of the social] can be
partially and provisionally grasped.’ In this schema, even hegemonic knowledges are
not an objective copy of reality but a ‘sectioning’ which can only ever partially grasp
‘the real’ even if they have imposed themselves as the dominant perspective or ‘truth’
of a situation.

Conversely, Lazzarato insists that the multiplicity of ‘points of view’ are
‘matrices of heterogenous knowledges.’ Each perspective thus provides a resource
for the development of counter-expertise; they are a ‘non-discursive’ starting point
from which new discourses and knowledges can unfold. For Lazzarato, however, the
different ‘points of view’ that inhabit a situation hold varying degrees of potential for
developing effective political resistance. Certain perspectives can prove particularly
fertile for elaborating a counter-expertise. They ‘express the virtualities and
potentialities proper to a situation,’ and thus harbour a capacity to oppose and
challenge dominant forms of power/knowledge. In other words, developing a
counter-expertise is not a process of holding together the multiplicity of perspectives
segmented across the social; it is an attempt to construct knowledges from the
point(s) of view that have the greatest capacity to confront and destabilise a
hegemonic formation.

But while counter-expertise is driven by a familiar quasi-genealogical logic that
strives to destabilizes dominant constellations of power/knowledge, it also seeks to
move beyond the moment of ‘destabilization’. For a counter-expertise does not
simply deconstruct hegemonic truths but is also interested in making truth claims of
its own. The knowledges produced through counter-expertise operate as what
Lazzarato calls ‘battle truths’, which are designed to impose themselves on a political
situation. Drawing on William James’ pragmatic philosophy, Lazzarato rejects the
conceptualisation of truth as an inherent property of an idea. Instead, he argues that
the truth of an idea is something that happens to knowledge through ‘a strategic
process at the heart of which it is verified.’ Knowledge is not validated by the mere
fact of its appearance but is instead verified through battles in public space, and
through its capacity to impose itself upon, ‘interpellate’ and integrate other truths. As
such, counter-expertise does not seek to disperse and relativize truth amongst
multiple sites of knowledge; it engages in the production of knowledges that struggle
against others and ‘becomes’ true through this process.

For Lazzarato, this capacity of battle truths is vital and feeds into broader
political processes. On the one hand, ‘battle truths’ provide the material and
resources through which it becomes possible ‘to structure and bear a demand and a
collective action.’ In other words, the battle truths constructed by a count-expertise
are important insofar as they sub tend, legitimise and nourish the very demands by
which political contestation can lead to new and more egalitarian figurations of the
social. On the other hand, the production of knowledge is also intertwined with
questions of subjectivity and subject-production. Following Foucault’s understanding
of the subject as uneasily produced through its encounters with particular formations
of power/knowledge, Lazzarato argues that the knowledges articulated by a counter-
expertise are the basis on which political movements might open out onto new
formations of subjectivity. That is, counter-expertise offers a new constellation of
knowledge/power which, as I will demonstrate in more detail later, mobilises
subjective dimensions and can become a resource to explore new relations to the self
and others at molar and molecular levels.

The TCPD as Counter-Expertise
When knowledges are understood to be ‘objective’ the assumption is that in some way they have faithfully captured a social totality. Hence, another way to read the quasi-genealogical modality of ‘counter-expertise’ is as a process whereby that which is thought unified, solid, and objective is unmasked as a partial if hegemonic ‘construction’ of the social taken from a particular perspective. In this context, a counter-expertise adequate to the common sense of post-crash neoliberalism would set about destabilising the agglomeration of technocratic, economic, and moral discourses which sustain and justify it as a partial rendering of reality developed from the point of view of the creditors.71

Certainly, the apparent veracity and objectivity of neoliberal knowledges was pulled apart, sometimes in dramatic fashion, during the life of the Committee. A key moment was during the public hearing featuring Panayiotis Roumeliotis, a former advisor to the Greek government and negotiator in their dealings with the IMF, on June 15th 2015. In these session, Roumelitois appeared to confirm not only that the 1st Greek bailout in 2010 was an attempt to save French and German banks from their exposure to the debt but that the IMF had actively colluded with the creditors.72 As Eric Toussaint, a long-time anti-debt activist and leading member of the TCPD, has noted, the public broadcasting of these revelations on parliamentary television acted as the catalyst for drawing serious media and public attention to the Committee’s work.73

But it was the Preliminary Report which built upon these dramatic if fragmentary revelations with a sustained and forensic account of Greek sovereign debt. In the Report’s first chapter, the Committee developed a historical analysis of the debt between 1980 and 2007, which showed that it was not caused by overextended social security programmes. Rather, interest rates and payments, in other words the technical instruments which creditors use for the purpose of ‘financial
expropriation,” were a key reason for the large accumulation of debt up to 2007, accounting for two thirds of the increase. In addition, tax evasion by Greece’s richest individuals and companies, illicit capital outflows, and huge reductions in corporation tax were also major factors in the growth of Greek public debt. These findings are followed by a second chapter on the sovereign debt accumulated after the crash between 2010-2015. Its conclusions confirmed the revelations made in the public hearings, demonstrating that the bailouts of the Greek state were not a ‘rescue package’ but mechanisms by which European and Greek Banks could reduce their exposure to debt.

By exposing the cynical exploitation of knowledges in this way, the Committee’s counter-history of the debt destabilised the seeming objectivity of the creditors’ claims, revealing that they had, in fact, been constructed from the creditors’ point of view in order to serve their interests. The claim that neoliberal common sense is the ‘objective’ capture of a social totality, was thus undermined by the Report’s account of its partiality, both in the sense of its ‘bias’ and in the sense that it only partially grasped the multiplicity, excluding, above all, the heterogenous perspectives that are woven into the social fabric.

This raises questions not only about which other perspectives have been excluded in the Troika’s constellation of hegemonic knowledges, but, perhaps more significantly, which ‘point of view’ was taken by the Committee in order for it to go beyond the quasi-genealogical work of destabilisation and make an account of that which was not accounted by the creditors. After all, the decision of which ‘point of view’ to take is a question of judgement about which perspectives can most fruitfully ‘define the problem,’ and, in doing so, delimit the political stakes and possibilities within a political confrontation.
The ‘point of view’ adopted by the Committee is not necessarily obvious, however. The Report variously refers to ‘the Greek people,’ and ‘Greek Citizens’ as well as to terms with a less nationalistic baggage such as ‘the residents of Greece’, and ‘society’.

Undoubtedly, a point of view is indexed to each of these names which harbours at least some capacity to oppose the neoliberal consensus. And yet none of them is fully commensurate with the knowledges located within the Preliminary Report. In fact, the TCPD took its bearings from the figure of a subject with human rights, a rights-bearing subject, which enabled it to construct new knowledges about the debt. By taking this point of view, the Committee could recover legal knowledges from the Doctrine of Odious Debt in international law. Because the doctrine is strongly grounded in human rights norms, it became possible to argue that the debt was:

‘illegitimate’ if the terms or conditions of the debt were morally unconscionable; or,
‘odious’ if those conditions conflicted with fundamental human rights including the democratic right to self-determination and democratic principles; or, ‘unsustainable’ if as they compromised the state’s future capacity to protect fundamental human rights.

The TCPD deployed this framework to analyse the impact of the debt on several recognised human rights including those to self-determination, freedom of assembly, work, health, education and so on. For example, the Committee found that the right to social security was violated by the imposition of the Troika’s memoranda in 2011 and 2012, which ‘eviscerated existing social protection measures, placing many at risk of poverty.’ As the Committee argued, the ‘significant degradation of the standard of living and the living conditions,’ constituted a violation of this right. All in all, the Report found that the debt, through the conditions attached to it, resulted in the violation of the full suite of civil, political, social, and economic rights.
The value of this constellation of discourses was in their capacity to operate ‘transversally’ and intervene at different sites of power. In the first instance, they had the ability to interfere with the apparatus of social debt. If the hallmark of post-crash neoliberalism is to turn social security into social debts that individuals are guilty of (over)accumulating, then the TCPD’s construction of legal knowledges dissembles this logic by doing the crucial work of (re)establishing the conception social protections as rights and not debts. In fact, the strategic use of rights discourses enabled the Committee not only to disrupt but in fact reverse the logic of social debt by redefining the creditors as perpetrators who violated the rights of those residing in Greece. As the Preliminary Report concluded, organisations like the IMF and the ECB, ‘as part of the Troika, [are] co-responsible for violation of human rights.’ It also demonstrated that some private banks had acted illegally and were thus also ‘perpetrators.’ In this rendering of the debt, it is not ordinary people but the creditors who are guilty.

Secondly, these arguments fed into the Report’s juridical intervention insofar as they articulate the legal case for debt cancellation. Using its findings regarding the deleterious effect on human rights, the Committee claimed that the public debt could be unilaterally repudiated under international law. Because human rights have ‘primacy’ in the international regime, ‘the violation of human rights through conditionalities affects the validity of the debt contracts,’ and thus serves as a central basis for the cancellation of debt. Importantly, debt cancellation interferes in the juridico-sovereign apparatus of debt and thus responds directly to the anti-democratic project of post-crash neoliberalism. Given that debt is the ‘technology’ by which neoliberalism seizes the state, debt cancellation nullifies this point of leverage, providing new and democratic possibilities. It can be no surprise that this logic finds its expression in the Preliminary Report. It is most explicit in the Committee’s argument.
that the debt impinges on democratic principles, Greece’s right to self-determination, and that, consequently, the debt should not be repaid.85

But more than a technical instrument for legal argumentation, these discourses also had a social and political function. Their crucial role was as the epistemic substance from which it became possible to ‘structure and bear’ debt cancellation as a tangible socio-political demand. That is, the legal knowledges produced by the Committee articulated and nourished the political demand for debt cancellation by structuring it as what Alfred North Whitehead might call a ‘real potentiality’.86 For Whitehead, potentiality can be divided between ‘general’ potentiality, which refers to the abstract possibilities bound up in general categories of objects or subjects, and ‘real potentiality’ which is ‘conditioned by the data provided by the actual world […] and] is relative to some actual entity, taken as a standpoint whereby the actual world is defined.’87 Using this schema, one could say that the Committee transformed debt cancellation from a general demand to a real demand by showing how it might be actualised within the socio-political conjuncture that shaped the ‘Greek crisis’.

There is thus an important sense in which the Committee’s work provided the resources for ‘democratic deliberation’,88 in the words of the Preliminary Report, even while the apparatuses of debt appeared to have suspended this possibility by foreclosing discussion of alternatives. In its structuring of a real demand, the Report subtended the cultivation of such an alternative, enabling it to intercede within a social order whose maxim, lest we forget, is ‘There Is No Alternative.’ In a certain way, then, the knowledges constructed by the Committee should be considered as means to cultivate the reintroduction of ‘the political’ into the distinctly post-political scene of post-crash neoliberalism. Breaking with the latter’s hegemonic consensus, the Report subtended a process akin to what Rancière might call dissensus by
‘rephrasing and re-staging’ the debt, with all its implications, as a site of political contestation.\textsuperscript{89}

This process of re-staging the debt is visible not only in the various ways that clusters of national and/or left-wing media organisations, such as \textit{I Avgi}, \textit{To Vima}, \textit{Efimerida ton Syntaktou}, and \textit{Epobí} as well as \textit{Red Notebooks}, and \textit{Left.gr}, mediatised the report’s findings (from video footage of its presentation in parliament to the faithful reproduction of its executive summary). It can also be traced through the ways that the report’s arguments were utilised in material published by many of these organisations. For example, the online newspaper \textit{Epobí} published ‘10 truths about the memoranda and the public debt,’ delivering a counter-account of the debt explicitly developed out of the TCPD’s findings.\textsuperscript{90} In the co-operatively owned newspaper, \textit{Efimerida ton Syntaktou}, Aris Chatzistefanou utilised arguments from the report to explain why Greece could follow Iceland in rejecting austerity.\textsuperscript{91} The newspaper also ran an article ‘The debt must not be paid,’ written by TCPD member Leonidas Vatikiotis. The article argued that the report demonstrated that ‘stopping payments and denying debt […] is a realistic alternative.’\textsuperscript{92} In this way, the Preliminary Report provided battle truths that subtended the ‘fabrication of public opinion,’\textsuperscript{93} giving epistemological support to the idea that there is, in fact, an alternative to austerity.

Of course, Syriza’s capitulation has hampered much of this potential, making it difficult to fully evaluate the efficacy of the Committee’s strategy. But it is perhaps possible to trace some of the socio-political effects of the Report in its circulation across public space. Indeed, Scholars have already noted not only that ‘the evidence from the [TCPD] was widely accepted as accurate,’ but that it did at least make some contribution to mobilising support against the 3\textsuperscript{rd} bailout proposed by the Troika culminating in the victory of the “\textquoteleft;ótα” vote at the referendum.\textsuperscript{94} Furthermore, in
their afterlife beyond the capitulation and the Troika’s the 3rd memorandum, the findings of the Preliminary Report have been used not only to mobilise support for similar practices elsewhere, but also in an increasing number of academic analyses of the Greek debt crisis. If truth is a battle in which knowledges must ‘spread and undergo other processes of verification and validation, to be put to the test,’ then these developments are at least indicative of the capacity of Committee’s knowledges to interpellate, and intervene in, post-crash neoliberalism.

TCPD as Subjectivation?

Processes of knowledge production are not only bound up with the articulation and mobilisation of political demands. The possibility of mobilisation already implies a relationship between discourses and their subjective effects and poses the question of how knowledges intertwine with processes of subjectivation in political struggle. For Lazzarato, counter-expertise and its construction of battle truths should also be understood as ‘one of the techniques for the production of subjectivity,’ and ‘an instrument in the process of constitution of a collective “self.”’ The importance of this capacity cannot be underestimated. As discussed earlier, post-crash neoliberalism is not reducible to a set of economic relations secured in and through the sovereign and juridical apparatuses of the state. A central aspect of its functioning resides in its capacity to ‘govern’ the social through constellations of power/knowledge, which secure the subject as an entrepreneur-of-the-self. And so, since the production of counter-knowledges can generate and sustain new and alternative forms of subjectivity, it may provide the very means to escape from neoliberal subjection.

The relationship between politics and the subject being developed here should be distinguished from the ‘formalism’ that often defines theories of political subjectivity. For it is not simply a question of the subject’s ‘formal’ appearance in the
political sphere, as in the political philosophies of Rancière or Badiou, where the political subject emerges through a subtractive declaration as that which is not (ac)counted, or has no part, in the dominant configurations of the social order. If, as Lazzarato warns, contemporary capitalism must be understood through its ‘microphysics’, which governs identities and conducts, then it is also a question of how ‘subjectivity act[s] at the molar and molecular level to subtract itself from the designations of the government of conducts and subjugations.’ This requires an alertness not only to the collective self that emerges at the ‘molar’ level of political representation, but also how battle truths can simultaneously ‘mobilize molecular dynamics,’ creating opportunities for new counter-conducts and subjectivations at multiple levels.

From this perspective, while it is certainly possible to argue that the rights-bearing subject from which the Committee took its point of view denotes the ‘collective self’ it aimed to construct, I am less interested in this overarching articulation of the ‘collective subject in struggle.’ This is not to say this rights-bearing subject has no value. In its (re)articulation of health, education, social security and so on, as rights and not debts, such a subject represents that which has been occluded by post-crash neoliberalism and, as such, its antithesis. And for this reason, it should be given consideration as one of the many tools in the arsenal gestured to by the Committee, even if its Syriza’s capitulation has curtailed its articulation, and transformation.

But I would like to explore a slightly different hypothesis regarding another set of subjective dynamics that might also be mobilised through the human rights discourses deployed in the Preliminary Report. I am concerned with how the Report imparts a concept of victimhood which, although it both accompanies and traverses the rights-bearing subject, harbours the potential (at least) to mobilise a logic that is
heterogenous to it. This notion of victimhood is not only implicitly legible in the catalogue of human rights violations recorded in the Preliminary Report but is also explicitly articulated by the Committee in its conclusion that ordinary people residing in Greece were ‘victim[s] of an attack premeditated and organized by the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, and the European Commission.’¹⁰² As I will now suggest, the possible value of this figure is a kind of potentiality that, if cultivated carefully, might ‘subtract’ individuals from the apparatus of social debt and its production of guilty, if entrepreneurial, debtors.

Scholars of human rights have long noted (even if critically) that the figure of the victim is defined in opposition to the perpetrator’s act of evil as an innocent.¹⁰³ Indeed, Robert Meister argues that ‘Human Rights Discourse functions […] to construct the innocence of victims,’ and ‘exhorts us, always, to identify with victims whose suffering it graphically depicts.’¹⁰⁴ The connection between victimhood and innocence made here is crucial. In embodying the concept of innocence, the figure of the victim buttresses the destabilization of the guilty subject of post-crash neoliberalism’s ‘common sense’. For this reason, the Committee’s turn to the figure of the victim might be understood as a strategic recuperation of innocence designed to neutralise the apparatus of social debt. This is certainly the logic underpinning arguments made by Vatikiotis, alongside other voices on the Greek left, that the Preliminary Report ‘annulled the claims of Panagalos that “we all ate it together.”’¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, connecting this discourse of victimhood to the mobilisation of subjective dynamics requires careful theoretical elaboration and must be approached with caution. A critical issue is that the victim has little content other than its innocence, a problem given much critical attention by both philosophers and socio-legal theorists. For them, the victim, while innocent, is also essentially marked by a lack; it is both ‘passive’ and ‘hapless.’¹⁰⁶ Since a subject capable of agency is also a

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subject capable of doing wrong, passivity is important because it fixes the subject within its innocence. But as Makua Mutua points out in his postcolonial critique of human rights, it also often means that agency is deferred to another, the western ‘saviour’ who acts upon and on behalf of the victim to ameliorate their suffering.107 The political potential of the victim is somewhat counteracted by this agential lack, which casts serious doubt on its own long-term capacity for political action.

I want to suggest that these difficulties can be circumvented, however, by avoiding the temptation to regard victimhood as a substantive or affirmative form of political subjectivity. Rather, it is possible to develop a much more ‘strategic’ understanding of the figure of the victim. In this mode, victimhood functions to reverse the already-existing condition of guilt and finds its limits precisely as it announces the innocence it establishes. Not a finality or the fixing of an identity, then, victimhood constitutes a strategy for opening-up new possibilities.

This limited but crucial potentiality can be understood if one considers that by reversing the ethico-subjectivation of guilt produced by debt, the victim-subject also mirrors it. As Lazzarato points out, the subject implied by the moralising logic of debt has no content other than the responsibility to a creditor it implies; social debt does not ‘mobilize physical or intellectual capabilities [...] but the morality of the debtor, his mode of existence (his “ethos”).108 The point is that the ethico-subjectivation of debt does not, in of itself, demand that the subject become an entrepreneur-of-the-self. Rather debt is ‘just’ the control technique that neoliberalism uses to secure this subject. Similarly, the innocence of victimhood, as an ethico-subjectivation of its own, does not engender conducts but nullifies only the moralising effects of guilt. Whilst this frees the subject from its moral responsibility to become ‘entrepreneurial’ it also makes no claims about what forms of substantive subjectivity should take its place. From this perspective, victimhood is a liberating
nullification, that, in freeing the subject from debt’s moralising effects, both necessarily exhausts its contents and leaves the question of subjectivity radically open.

Certainly, the possibilities afforded by the TCPD as a tactical intervention at the level of subjectivity were grasped by members of Diagrafi tou ebrionous tora (Debt Write-Off Now), an anti-debt and anti-austerity movement based in Greece. Their critical support for the Committee was based primarily on its capacity to ‘change people’s consciousness’ by creating information that opposes ‘the urban myth that “we ate it all together,”’ and ‘arm[ing] the people against bourgeois propaganda.’ Through the language of consciousness raising, then, Diagrafi tou ebrionous tora insist upon the Committee’s capacity to provide an account of innocence that offers individuals an escape route from the moralising discourse of guilt. My own argument is that, in underpinning this account of innocence, the human rights discourses mobilised by the Commission might offer support for just such a change in ‘consciousness,’ understood as a shift in perspective that opens individuals up to new possibilities for action.

With this in mind, I want to suggest that if the arguments mobilised by the Preliminary Report are important, it is because they can place the subject in relation to what, following Guattari, Lazzarato calls the existential function. The existential function is distinct from both discourses and action. It both precedes and moves alongside them as a force of ‘existential self-positioning’ that ‘expresses a change in the manner of sensing.’ It thus denotes the non-discursive kernel where a point of view is displaced or shifted within the subject, stimulating a new belief in the efficacy of acting and of being otherwise. Triggering the existential function is thus the precondition ‘for a new praxis, since it refers to […] “confidence,” to the mobilization of the disposition to act.’ Above all, it provides “a subjectivity
option,” which give us back the world and the “production of self” as open processes which we are engaged in.\textsuperscript{114}

By intervening in the logic of social debt, the knowledges mobilised in the Preliminary Report harbour the molecular capacity to partially disentangle the subject from apparatuses of guilt, destabilising not only feelings of shame and self-blame but also dissipating the kinds of defensive resentment that, according to TPTG, they underpin.\textsuperscript{115} In doing so, the discourses assembled in the report provide opportunities to unhem individuals from both the form and conduct of neoliberal subjectivity as a necessity. Such disruptions to dominant power relations might thus radically shift and reposition the subject’s relation both to themselves and the debt without determining, giving rise to a disposition for action without determining any substantive form of identity. These dynamics can thus undergird political struggle, supporting the possibility of mobilisation against the debt as well as the articulation and pursuit of political demands. But they might also create new space to engage creatively with what Lazzarato calls ‘modes of being together,’\textsuperscript{116} through the co-development of new subjectivities and forms of life.

Within the Greek context this potential was sadly obliterated in the wreckage of Syriza’s implosion before it could be fully articulated. But insofar as the Committee’s knowledge-making practices address the broader problem of sovereign debt under post-crash neoliberalism, they are worth giving consideration insofar as they might be productively reappropriated in future. For they bring new meaning to the argument made by Maria-Lucia Fatorelli, a public debt expert and member of the Greek Committee, that ‘before anything else can be done, there must be a debt audit.’\textsuperscript{117} In her original argument, Fatorelli meant practices like those used by the TCPD underpin new possibilities for political action by providing knowledge that can be used in legal processes designed to cancel debts (or at least as leverage in
renegotiating them). But the arguments presented here suggests this function also operates ‘transversally’. Not simply a technocratic procedure taking place in the sphere of juridical action, if the TCPD is important it is because its knowledges may also support the production of new subjectivities and forms of life by suspending the moral relations of debt. In the age of post-crash neoliberalism, such processes could thus lay at least some groundwork for new modes of ‘being-together’ that go beyond the present conjuncture and which might otherwise not appear.

**Beyond Greece: Lessons for the Future?**

Recognising the TCPD’s value also requires a reckoning with its failings. There are, after all, shortcomings that need be addressed should the Committee’s work be appropriated and reimagined in future. Above all, the Committee never fully escaped the problematic organisational logic of Syriza itself, which tried ‘leverage change from above through the state’s orchestration of experts and academics.’ Though it did clearly consider its effect on subjects as crucial to its mission, it never fully embraced a more horizontal model of organisation to realise these ends. This meant that once the dramatically deradicalized 2nd Syriza government decided to axe the TCPD, the process and its intended subjective effects quickly dissipated. This, despite efforts to keep the Committee going afterwards.

One possible consideration, then, is how the strategic use of ‘counter-expertise’ in future might benefit from horizontal modes of working which engage those whom knowledge is being produced about as equal partners in the project of knowledge production. After all, just as Lazzarato argued that the knowledges produced by the intermittents were, in part, shaped by their own ‘informal “expertise” about modes of employment, work, and unemployment,’ so too it is possible to imagine how an informal expertise regarding the lived experiences of austerity could
be incorporated in, and shape the perspective of, knowledges about public debt. A more horizontal model, based on something like a ‘citizen public debt audit’ approach might involve individuals in debt auditing, creating space for them to insert their own perspective into the knowledge-making process.\textsuperscript{121}

Experiments with this kind of organisational approach are already underway. An example is the recent work by Research for Action and their Citizen Debt Audit of Newham council, the municipal government in charge of the borough of Newham in London, one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. Inspired, in part, by the work of the Greek Committee, the Newham debt audit was developed in the context of ongoing cuts to local services by the council and intended to challenge debt and, in their own words, to build a ‘counter-power at the municipal level to resist the financialisation of public institutions and to demand a more accountable and participatory local democracy.’\textsuperscript{122} It began working in 2018 and recently published its report, which finds that a number of loans sold by private creditors, and which hamstring councils with expensive interest payments, are illegitimate and should be cancelled.\textsuperscript{123} Interestingly, the audit drew on participatory methods, using interviews and workshops to understand the impact of Newham council’s financial decisions and to involve ‘the voices of residents in evaluating the legitimacy of Newham’s debt.’\textsuperscript{124} In developing these practices, the Newham audit may offer a model for how the kind of work might be done in future.

Introducing the ‘informal expertise’ of those living with austerity has other advantages. It can draw attention to the fact that public debt is only one problem among others in the era of post-crash neoliberalism. Equally pressing is the issue of private debt, which is similarly instrumentalised to hem individuals into their subjection as an entrepreneur-of-the-self. In their recent article, Montgomerie and Tepe-Belfrage show how issues of private debt have been addressed by auditing
practices that emerged out of ‘debtor assemblies’ formed within the Occupy movement and subsequently replicated elsewhere. These practices are also an example of what Lazzarato would call ‘counter-expertise’. As the authors point out, private debt audits encourage individuals to care about their debt, and to make connections between the numbers circulating on balance sheets and deteriorations in health and wellbeing that they experience. In doing so, Montgomerie and Tepe-Belfrage argue, audits reveal private debt as something which must be dealt with and, as such, call for new political demands, most of all: freedom from debt.

But while these ongoing experiments are important, they also pose the question of how it might be possible to develop knowledge-making practices that address private and public debt together. Doing so may afford new opportunities to render visible ‘the connections between the various spaces and scales that debt operates in.’ Certainly, this is something gestured to by the Newham Citizen Debt Audit when it argued that cuts to locals services contributed to deprivation that forced residents to ‘rely on borrowing to make ends meet.’ But a more sustained analysis is needed, one that can plot the thick connections that link the ‘public’ and the ‘private’, addressing them with an attentiveness to the ‘transversality’ of contemporary capitalism as it operates not only across and through this distinction but also the boundaries between the social, economic, and sovereign-juridical spheres. This more transversal counter-expertise might articulate a broader array of political demands and foster the ‘capacity to assemble […] actions against different apparatuses and intervene in their connections.’ In short, knowledge production that traverse the different but interconnected ‘spaces’ of power is an experiment worth undertaking.
Conclusion

A key theme that might be drawn from Lazzarato’s political theory is the radicalisation of Foucault’s conception of power/knowledge. Simply put, if capitalist power now permeates the social as a ‘strategy’ operating through variegated apparatuses of power/knowledge, then, knowledge, as inextricable from power, becomes a key site of political struggle. Knowledge-making, from this perspective, does not simply seek to describe the operations of capitalism, though this might make up part of its work. Rather, knowledge emerges from within a ‘counter-expertise’ that seeks to destabilise dominant constellations of power/knowledge and to impose itself on the political situation. In doing so, knowledge-making furnishes new political potentialities.

Affirming the value of Lazzarato’s theoretical contribution, this article has shown that ‘counter-expertise’ can play an important role in struggles against the debt regime of post-crash neoliberalism. The knowledge-making practices used by the TCPD do not simply ‘describe’ sovereign debt but destabilise the pernicious common sense that surrounds it. Going further, the Committee’s *Preliminary Report* reversed the logics of the debt regime, simultaneously identifying the guilt of the creditors whilst demonstrating the innocence of ordinary people residing in Greece.

In developing this position, the Report intervened in already existing nodes of power/knowledge across several spheres. Its demonstration of the creditors’ guilt became the basis upon which debt cancellation could be figured a real potentiality and demand. And in this sense, the *Preliminary Report* shouldn’t be considered narrowly as a technical document designed to develop juridical arguments. It was also a social and political tool designed to cultivate the return of the political both as a practice of democratic deliberation and the articulation of demands.
Crucially, this function was both reinforced and underpinned by the Report’s construction of innocence, which had a capacity to intervene in *social* and *subjective* questions regarding public debt, partially unhemming the subject from the mechanisms by which she is constrained as an entrepreneur. In doing so, the Committee’s work points to ways that it is possible to ‘unlock’ both subjectivity and social relations, re-establishing them as creative and ‘open processes’ that can escape from the terms delimited by neoliberalism’s entrepreneurial self.130 For these reasons, this article finds that knowledge-making practices such as those used by the Committee could play an important role in ongoing struggles against debt and thus have ongoing value.

In identifying these possibilities, however, I do not wish to suggest that the Committee’s knowledge-making practices can be unproblematically be exported elsewhere. It will be important to rethink the Committee’s work in at least some of its aspects. This may require thinking about how to forge more horizontal connections between academic expertise and the informal expertise of indebted subjects, as well as how questions of public debt can be brought into relation with those of private debt. Though not an exhaustive list, such reflection may enhance the effectiveness of any ‘counter-expertise’ in ongoing struggles against debt and the constraints it imposes.

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**Endnotes**


15 Ibid., 72-73.
16 Ibid., 81.
17 Ibid., 85
18 Ibid., 96
23 Ibid., 103
24 Ibid., 94.
28 For example, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, tweeted on 19 August 2018 to congratulate Greece for its achievement, thanks to ‘European solidarity’, a phrase delivered with no hint of irony despite it being salt for the wound: https://twitter.com/eucopresident/status/1031431239641845760.
31 Kalfelis Grigoris ‘Ta fagame oloi mazi? alitheies kai psemata [we ate it all together? truth and lies],’ in *To Vima*, 19 August 2012. Available online at: https://www.tovima.gr/2012/08/19/opinions/ta-fagame-oloi-mazi-alitheies-kai-psemata/

33 Mylonas, “Crisis, Austerity and Opposition…” 311.

34 Paschos Mandravelis, 'the Greek Case,' *Ekathemirini*, 25 December 2009, quoted in Ibid.


39 Ibid.


42 Boletsi, “From the Subject of the Crisis…”

43 Ibid.

44 Athina Arampatzi, “Constructing Solidarity…” 50.

45 Eric Toussaint and Benjamin Lemoine, History of the CADTM: Anti-Debt Politics (Liege, Belgium: Coalition for the Abolishment of Illegitimate Debt

46 TCPD, Preliminary Report., 8

47 Ibid., 9

48 Ibid., 8

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., 9.

51 Or, as the Preliminary Report explicitly argues: ‘an objective of this report is to raise the awareness of the Greek population […] In order to fulfill this objective, while remaining rigorous, the Committee decided to spare no efforts to make this document widely accessible to the public. This implied in particular the need to remain concise; a document of several hundred pages would not manage to achieve this objective. But it also meant making efforts to avoid obfuscation. We try to explain our points in clear and non-technical language, particularly as regards the more technical aspects. Only in this way can the Report be read by people without specialist technical knowledge, who however form the bulk of any society […]’. Ibid.

52 The TCPD’s presentation to parliament is available to view here: ‘Parousíasi prokatarktíkon symperasmáton stin Epitropí Alítheias Dimosióu Chréos,’ ['Presentation of preliminary conclusions to the Public Debt Truth Committee'], I Avgi, 17 June 2015. Available online at: https://www.avgi.gr/article/10842/5624938


56 Citation omitted for the purpose of double blind peer review.

57 For more on the Intermittent struggles and Lazzarato’s relation to them see Jeremy Gilbert’s introduction to the English translation of Experimental Politics, which provides a detailed account of this context.


Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2014).

60 Lazzarato, Experimental Politics, 129.

61 Ibid., 119.


65 Lazzarato, Experimental Politics, 121.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 122-123


69 Lazzarato, Experimental Politics, 123.

70 Ibid., 120.

71 Or ‘Marktvolk’ to use Streeck’s stylization deployed earlier.

72 For an account of this hearing see: Toussaint and Lemoine, History of the CADTM, 46–48.

73 Ibid.


75 TCPD, Preliminary Report., 11-14

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., 16-20

78 Lazzarato, Experimental Politics, 121-122

79 TCPD, Preliminary Report.

80 Ibid., 10.

81 Ibid., 39

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid., 51-55

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid., 40, 58-89

Ibid.

TCPD, Preliminary Report, 5


Leonidas Vatikiotis, ‘To chréos den prépei na plirotheí! [the debt must not be paid!], Efimerida ton Syntakton, 26 June 2015. Available online at: https://www.efsyn.gr/stiles/apopseis/31637_hreos-den-prepei-na-plirothei. The idea that the TCPD could reverse the logic of ‘mazi ta fagame’ was also invoked by members of the communist tendency, at the time a left-wing faction inside Syriza, see: Thodoris Marakis, “Diagrafí tou paránomou xreous [Cancellation of Illegal Debt]” Marxismos.com, 23 November 2015. Available online at: https://marxismos.com/diagrafi-toy-paranomoy-xreovs-marakis/

Lazzarato, Experimental Politics, 123


This, even if it is possible to agree with Dimitrios Kivotides that referenda can pose problems with respect to political strategy. See: Dimitrios Kivotidis, “The Pharmakon of Democracy: General Will and the People in the Context of the Greek Referendum,” Social and Legal Studies 27, no. 6 (2018): 755–775.

Lazzarato, Experimental Politics, 120, 123.

100 Ibid. 129.
101 Ibid., 120
107 Mutua.
110 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid., 202.
115 TPTG “Burdened with debt.” It is important to stress that ‘partially’ is used purposefully here. The logic of social debt is not the only node by which the technologies of debt constrain the subject. The technologies of private debt must also be considered. Some suggestions in this regard are taken up in the final section.
120 Lazzarato, *Experimental Politics*, 118.


123 Ibid.

124 Ibid., 52


126 Ibid., 6

127 Ibid.


129 Lazzarato, *Experimental Politics*, 129.

130 Ibid., 202