POLICING THE CRISIS: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Rosa Vasilaki
Policing the Crisis: The Other Side of the Story

• Background of the project: gap of sociological knowledge/police as a non-subject

• Research question: the views and experiences of police officers/reversing the gaze

• Methodology (recorded semi-structured interviews, unrecorded unstructured interviews, focus groups, observation, ethnography)
Policing the Crisis: The Other Side of the Story

- Historical and political context
- Legacies of legitimation and rejection: Civil War, post-Civil War regime, Colonels’ Dictatorship
- The persistence of political violence in Greece
- The dividing lines between the Left and the Right
- The post-1981 ideological hegemony of the Left in Greece
- The role of the police in the symbolic universe of Left dissent
POLICING THE CRISIS: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

• 2008 Athens riots as a turning point
• Protests, civil unrest and the crisis of the political system
• Phases of protesting: 2010-2012, 2012-2014
• ‘Αστυνομοκρατία’ (omnipresence of the police)
POLICING THE CRISIS: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

- Impact of crisis on the police
- Views on protesting/protesters
- Dealing with contradictions
- Violence ‘as a tool’
- Experiencing the paradox of power
Policing the Crisis: The Other Side of the Story

- Nature of hierarchical institutions
- Arbitrariness of orders
- Police as the epitome of the clientelist state
- Lack of recognition/lack of respect
- ‘we are disposables’, ‘punching bag’, ‘scapegoats’, ‘everybody hates us’
Policing the Crisis: The Other Side of the Story

- Social isolation/exclusion
- Stereotyping
- Social rejection across social strata
- Mechanisms of coping
POLICING THE CRISIS: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

- Political views: the Golden Dawn issue
- Media and moral panic
- Voters, sympathisers and ideologues
- The reasons and scale of political identification
- Immigration, xenophobia and racism as social-political context
- The situation today
POLICING THE CRISIS: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Towards a new regime?

- Relief as a result of refraining from the public view
- Lack of clear rules of engagement
- Fear, hope and confusion
- The paradox of power and the use of repressive state apparatuses for left-wing governance
Policing the Crisis: The Other Side of the Story

Main conclusions

• Low morale and feeling of social exclusion

• Democratization of the police: as an institution (NOT of individual police officers/ ‘policing consciousness’?)

• Need for a new public narrative

• Need for dismantling of the clientelist state

• Need for professionalization (dissociation from politics – issue of control? – nature of the political landscape in Greece)