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The Anti-Capitalist Movement and the Migrant

Comparing Agendas and Debating Facilities

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Abstract

This paper aims to critically analyse the ways in which one network of the radical left presents migration. By comparing two perspectives, that of the writers and the 'subjects', this paper aims to contest the radical left's idea of migration, allow some migrants a voice that has perhaps been usurped by the radical left, highlight the dangers of representation in general and consider the practical implications of this specific misrepresentation. It aims to draw attention to the misrepresentations that can occur when a well-intentioned, but nevertheless dominant group represents another less privileged one.

Introduction

In this age of globalization, immigration has become a controversial topic, often dominating political and media discourse, and consequently, public attention. In recent years the European Union's 'managed migration'¹ approach, has generated much discussion on the role and purpose of migrants in receiving societies. Nevertheless, representations of migrants, including their activities and predicaments, continue to remain in the hands of others who do not share their situation, but hold the authority and ability to engage in the discourse (Rojo & Van Dijk 1997). Whether it is a Guardian article on the exploitation of migrant workers by gang masters, or a political speech vilifying 'bogus' asylum seekers, the portrayal of migrants is usually related by one who has their own agenda and objectives, be it positive or negative in mind.

While mainstream political and media discourses are mainly concerned with presenting migrants as villains, victims or economic imports, there are less readily available voices which lay claim to their own image of migration. In contrast to more mainstream discourses, the radical left portrays migration in an optimistic light. The literature produced takes a celebratory stance- 'the migrant's' existence and his or her 'struggles' around work and mobility are viewed with hope and interest. To the radical left, migrants are heroes or heroines, who undermine authority and rise above exploitation. This positive view of migration could be recognized for its part in counter-acting the negative impact of most elite discourse. Moreover, its distribution through a broad network has increased practical support for migrants and has served as a means to discourage and challenge the concept of 'illegal' migration. However, despite the apparent good intentions of this work, the way in which migrants are portrayed should not be left unexplored. One cannot ignore the fact that a privileged group with a political agenda is representing another less privileged one.

Intrigued by the use of the terms, 'We are all migrants', and 'No one is Illegal', this paper will

critically examine the theory that has materialized on migration in a specific network of the radical left. This is necessary for the following reasons. Firstly, it is an unusual and therefore interesting portrayal of migration. Far more significantly however, this specific portrayal of migration could have practical consequences; some of the people who write, read and discuss around the material are engaged in 'noborder'², and other types of activism with migrants, who may be living in vulnerable situations. The ways in which the former view, and therefore treat the latter is highly relevant. For partly this reason the perspectives of migrants are key to this paper. In the latter part of the paper, the perspectives of the 'subjects' will be used to contrast with and perhaps challenge the perspective of the people representing them. This paper offers an opportunity to reflect on the influence that one's perspective, agenda and authority can have on one's writing. Moreover, its reflections can serve to draw attention to the dangers inherent in representing others, however well intentioned one is. The implications of this specific representation will not be left unexplored.

This paper is divided into three sections. In section one there is theoretical discussion on the issues that are to be reflected on in this paper. This is followed by a description of the ways in which the research was carried out. Sections two and three are a comparison of perspectives. Section two focuses on the ways in which the radical left presents migration. There is an attempt to define the radical left, as well as the ways in which it relates to migration. In section three there is a shift to an alternative perspective - the opinions of some migrants on issues that relate to the ideas of the radical left are reviewed. As well as this there is a critical examination of the general ways in which the radical left portrays migrations. Lastly, the possible practical implications of the radical left's representations is discussed.

¹ A rhetoric of management has replaced a 'zero tolerance' attitude towards international migration. The emphasis is on regulating migration in order to maximise its positive affects on the European Union (Salt 2002: 39-40).

² The noborder network: a European grass roots and activist network which was founded in 1999 with a view to do no border projects and free movement and anti-deportation campaigns. Tactics include demonstrations, activist camps and direct action (noborder network 2004a).

Theorizing the Dangers of Representation

The anthropological critique of Edward Said (1987) draws our attention to the dangers of representing others. In 'Orientalism' Said argues that the colonialist powers of Europe invented a discourse of otherness thus rewriting the history of the colonialist cultures in order to justify their actions. Established hierarchies remain in place because of the way that the 'oriental' is spoken for and represented by the European. In other words, a discourse of otherness allows the one who has control over the represented to retain his or her power and authority (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 6).

Foucault's (1984) understanding of modern power reminds us that power is changeable, relational and connected to control over discourses and knowledge. Language is not a neutral force; it has the ability to change peoples' perceptions of events and 'others' and thus to shape reality (Van Dijk 1993, 1996, 1997). For Said and others, 'the other' has been manufactured, in the form of a series of discourses, through which a dominant group or individual can define or legitimise themselves through dismissing the represented. As the representation affords the dominant group an 'expert' status it also simultaneously silences 'the other' (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 9). Politicians are one such example of a dominant group which has been known to use discourse in order to represent 'others' in a such a way that legitimises their authority and absolves them of any wrong doing (Rojo & Van Dijk 1997).

This misuse of authority and power does not have to be deliberate. Misrepresentations can occur even when a dominant group without an obvious agenda, intends to present an accurate and fair portrayal of another. In recent years anthropologists and sociologists have begun to critically examine the risks of representation in their own work. Attention has been drawn to the inevitable authority of the researcher (Groves & Chang 1999; Mullings 1999; Gabriel 2000) and the ways in which this can impact on the relationship between the researched and the researcher, as well as research findings. The research relationship has been acknowledged as a 'power relationship' (Groves & Chang 1999: 238) Whilst reflecting on the 'powers and privileges of whiteness', Gabriel (2000: 168) points out that in interviews, words are 'framed, prompted and interpreted' by the researcher. He stresses that researchers can unintentionally misrepresent, silence or 'pathologize some ethnicities whilst normalizing others'.

Although it has been argued that the author's dominance cannot be displaced and therefore all representations of others should be avoided (hooks 1990: 151-152), scholars have developed an approach to research that attempts to deconstruct the power differences discussed above. Attitudes of self-reflection have sought to explore how knowledge is perceived, interpreted and finally represented. It has been argued that the researcher's perspective can never be impartial as it has been shaped by such underlying factors as gender, class, race, nationality, sexuality amongst others (Hathaway 1991). In recognition of this, the role of reflexivity in ethnographic research is to deconstruct the power and reduce the interpretative authority of the researcher, thus producing a more authentic account of the field (Davies 1998).

Celebrating or Romanticizing the Other

As 'others', by definition, are repressed and silenced by dominant discourses, attempts in alternative discourses have been made to readdress injustices through a series of representational tactics. These 'corrective' procedures have a tendency of celebrating and describing aspects of 'the other's life and culture that has previously been portrayed as inferior by the dominant culture (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 13). In particular, the survival strategies of the 'oppressed', as well as any strategies of resistance in response to the oppressor are emphasized. Although seemingly positive, these representations can hold significant complications. Attempts to portray the represented in a positive way can be damaging due to presenting the latter in a 'heroic' and 'exotic' light (Olson & Shopes 1991: 198). By 'romanticizing Others' (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 13) the author is reclaiming and misrepresenting their lives for the sake of personal or political ideology. Moreover, it can lead to an over exaggeration of the survival or resistance strategies used by the oppressed. Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1996: 14) relate such instances where feminists interpret and represent the stories of 'others' in a way that directly reflects their own (the writer's) agenda. It could be argued that although well meaning in their attempts to empower the oppressed, these representations achieve the opposite of the intended affect. The voice and agenda of the represented is overpowered and silenced by that of the (re)presenter.

Abu-Lughod (1990: 41) reflects on this tendency to 'romanticize resistance' by criticizing a recent scholarly fixation with a specific type of

resistance. She points out that the recent rise in social movements has fueled an academic interest in human agency and in the ways in which individuals carry out everyday forms of resistance. As a result, scholars have become so focused on finding and describing resisters that other aspects of investigating resistance such as power analysis have remained neglected. According to Abu-Lughod (1990: 41-42) they 'read all forms of resistance as signs of ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated', therefore failing to explore the complex power structures in which 'acts of resistance are embedded' As well as failing to adequately recognize the inseparable relationship between power and resistance, this lack of analysis ultimately fails to give a valid portrayal of the individual or group concerned.

The above reflections are of particular relevance as they point to the possible misrepresentations that can occur when a researcher or writer is focused on one intended portrayal in his or her work. Moreover, they serve as an example of the influence that one's ideologies, background and agenda can have on one's perspective. It could be argued that in such cases the (re)presenter has failed to adequately reflect or deconstruct his or her agenda during their work. However, it could also be argued that, to a certain extent, the (re)presenter's agenda is given a preference over accurate portrayals of other peoples' lives. Regardless of whether it is conscious or not, in the above examples the (re)presenter is projecting his or her own agenda onto the represented. It could be argued that these misrepresentations carry similar dangers to the 'orientalist' reflections of Edward Said. By promoting his or her agenda through the representation of others, the writer is reinforcing the dominant order that he or she is attempting to critique.

The material that is to be critically examined in this paper is not produced by scholars. However, the writers have authority in their own circles, and therefore have the power to grant legitimacy to their own work. This is further enforced by the fact that as some are engaged in practical work with migrants, this could be seen to increase their 'expertise'. As mostly white Europeans, it can be argued that the radical left are indeed a dominant group in general, but specifically in regard to some of their 'subjects'. The social and legal position of the radical left stands in direct contrast to those of the migrants they are working with and mostly writing about. Not only do the former hold the 'privileges of whiteness' referred to by

Gabriel (2000), they also have the privileges of a European passport.

There should be no confusion surrounding the ideological perspective of the (re)presenter in this paper. The radical left, by definition, has a political perspective and agenda. It would therefore be fair to suggest that the ways in which the radical left views and presents migration is influenced, if not directly related to its political ideology and agenda. In view of the fact that the radical left, a dominant group with an ideological perspective and agenda, is representing 'others' who are in a significantly vulnerable position by contrast, this paper will attempt to examine, offer alternatives to, and perhaps challenge the fore-mentioned representations.

Methodology

This paper is concerned with comparing two perspectives, that of the radical left and of their 'subjects'- economic migrants. A particular radical left network was chosen due to its interest and extensive writing on migration. As well as reading the material produced, I attended a series of 10 weekly seminars (one of which was on migration) run by participants of this network in London.

Given the composition of existing fieldwork I decided to undertake and include my own research with migrants. Due to time limitations only five people were interviewed. One interviewee was located in Brighton while the others all worked in the same hotel in London. Snowballing as a technique was successfully used with the people in London. Tape recordings were used for two interviews. After it was sensed that it could cause discomfort for the interviewee, this method was changed to detailed note taking by a friend. The interviews were semi- structured and taken in as much depth as possible. A set of questions was used as a guideline. If the interviewee spoke of a subject of interest that was not on the question list, this was expanded on. The topic of irregular migration was approached in a more neutral way than the other issues discussed. Interviewees' current living and working status were not inquired about, thus any information regarding this issue was offered by interviewees in informal conversation or included in an answer to another question. There was a question asked regarding interviewees' past experiences of irregularity. In order to minimise discomfort interviewees were told that they did not have to answer this question if they found it too personal. As originally planned, secondary

data in the form of published scholarly work was also used in order to compliment the findings of my fieldwork.

Ethical Issues

Confidentiality was promised to all interviewees and their personal details, such as their names and personal details were disguised. Informed consent was gained after the reasons behind the interview were briefly explained. Perhaps more significantly there was consideration given to the possibility that information given by interviewees would fall into the wrong hands, in this case that would be the immigration authorities. For example, although all interviewees had the official papers to be in the country legally, some were working irregularly. In order to protect the interests of people in similar situations, the details of the interviewees' strategies will not be revealed in the paper.

When interpreting and selecting the data collected, my own agenda was kept in mind recalling that in writing this paper I aimed to convey and place the ideas of the radical left on migration into dispute. This approach carries with it some of the risks of misrepresentation that were pointed out previously. I was aware that when relaying and editing both sets of perspectives I was at risk of interpreting the data in such a way that suited my own agenda. I therefore attempted to exercise self-reflection regarding the ways in which I interpreted, framed and presented the information collected. With the words of Abu-Lughod (1990) and Kiitzinger and Wilkinson (1996) in mind, I was aware to not over read a tendency to romanticise migration in the radical left, or a tendency to have capitalist aspirations in migrants. My own agenda and the misleading affect that it could have on the material collected is as significant to this paper as the agenda of the radical left, and its subsequent implications.

Migration: the Radical Left's Perspective

The main part of this section will concentrate on the ways in which one radical left network perceives and presents migration. Before this, an attempt will be made to define and describe the radical left in general, as well as the specific network whose material is being discussed. The latter part of the chapter reflects on the ways in which the radical left relates to and identifies with migration, and possible reasons for this.

Defining the Radical Left: Questions and Complications

Defining the radical left is not an easy task. The diverse spectrum of groups in the radical left often provide contradictory self-definitions, each reflecting their own agenda and ideological perspective. Some in the radical left refer to themselves as 'the global movement' indicating their identification with the anti-globalization³ mobilizations. Others, however, dispute the existence of a single 'movement' due to the conflicting and sometimes contradictory political agendas that exist in the radical left (Aufheben 2002). It has been suggested that a strict definition of the radical left should be discouraged as it cannot adequately portray its true essence (Neumann 1988). Ideally, one would not have to find an over-all term to define the interactions and ideologies of a broad range of groups. I will embark on such a description with caution.

Who are the Radical Left?

For the purposes of this paper the radical left will be defined on the basis of factors that unite as opposed to factors that divide; shared strategies and ideologies will be described. A defining feature of the radical left is the refusal to engage in parliamentary politics. Extra-parliamentary tactics, such as 'direct action'⁴ are used to achieve social and political change. (Neumann 1988: 31). The radical left have been described as revolutionary in intent, but not in practice (Neumann 1988:16). For this reason the radical left seek to distinguish themselves from the 'reformist' institutional left whom are perceived as such for attempting to change the system from within (Neumann 1988: 14.) Despite some fastidious ideological differences, the radical left share an agreement that Capitalism is a system of exploitation that cannot be adequately improved; therefore it should be fought against, abolished and replaced by an alternative way of living.

³ An umbrella term encompassing a diverse range of protest movements with a common interest in demonstrating an opposition to economic globalization (Cohen & Rai 2000).

⁴ 'Social and political activism that challenges government, businesses and international organizations through protest, civil disobedience and other non-parliamentary routes. Theoretically rooted in Anarchism and has been a tool of the anti-globalization protesters', (McLean & McMillan 2003: 95).

Although the form that this alternative takes would differ depending on the ideological perspective of the individual or group, there is a general perception that this other system will be kinder or better suited to humanitarian and environmental needs.

Historically, the ideologies of socialism, communism and anarchism would all be included in a definition of the radical left. The sixties brought a new meaning to the term radical left with the emergence of 'new' social movements such as feminism, ecological, anti-war and black struggles (Cohen and Rai 2000: 4). These have been distinguished from conventional workers' movements due to an adoption of a wider focus in their struggles as well as a change in tactics. They attempted to change social structures through retaining a lifestyle and identity and through the use of civil disobedience strategies such as direct action (Munck 1988). The present day radical left incorporates a range of networks, which include animal rights, environmentalist, race, class, labour, and social justice concerns (McClean & McMillan 2003: 18).

The material used in this paper is produced by one network of the radical left that is formed of European groups. The structures of this network are such that there is no process or desire for a collective name. Individually however, these groups are self-defined as, and therefore identify with post-autonomist, libertarian communist and anarchist ideologies. The network formed in the last two years allows these groups to loosely work together in the form of discussion circles, open meetings, critical analysis, publication of ideas and direct action with the aim of exchanging thoughts and developing theory on particular issues centred around globalization and wage labor. (This co-operation has culminated into a space at the London E.S.F.⁵ in September and in EuroMayDay).⁶ Certain aspects of migration have featured prominently in the discussion forums of

⁵ The E.S.F. or European Social Forum took place in London between 15th-17th October 2004. It is 'a giant gathering for everyone opposed to war, racism and corporate power, everyone who wants to see global justice, workers' rights and a sustainable society... The first two gatherings of the ESF in Florence (2002) and Paris (2003) attracted over 50,000 participants from across Europe and beyond. It is a chance for people from around the world to come together to engage in debate, organize action and build networks to strengthen our movement.' (European Social Forum)

⁶ EuroMayDay: mobilizations of precarious workers in Milan and Barcelona (Arozena et al 2004).

this network. Some of the groups in this network are more involved with issues concerning migrants than others. The Frassanito network, in particular, is engaged in 'noborder' activism with irregular and regular migrants. In addition to considering political material produced by this network, the writings of Hardt and Negri (2004) on migration will also be discussed. This is due to their specific views on migration as well as the influence they hold on the above-mentioned groups (which can be observed through an adoption of their 'language' and concepts in the literature).

As this network has neglected to name itself, it will be referred to as the radical left for the rest of this paper. As it will be argued that their general political perspective has had a significant influence on the way that migration is perceived and represented it is necessary to briefly assess their general focus and agenda. Their focus can be divided into two main aims; an analysis and active resistance to economic globalization and a theoretical and practical search for 'radical' alternative lifestyles (Mertes & Walden Bello 2004). The impassioned words of Jess Whyte (2002) below are typical of the feelings held by this section of the radical left towards the present economic world system:

'Neoliberalism's onslaught on humanity, is an onslaught that aims to commodify us: to create the ideal worker-the "pair of hands" Henry Ford longed for, detached from desire, from resistance, from imagination. Capital is a system that seeks to subordinate the entirety of human activity to market relations, to the creation of surplus value. This war, to redefine human beings as labour power, is a war that is raging throughout the global factory, not just in the sweatshops of the East but in the office blocs and the homes of the West.'

(Whyte 2002).

The passage below is extracted from an article entitled 'The Borders of Everyday Life'. It is significant as it articulates the radical left's vision of alternative lifestyles and social relations:

'We must strive for ways of living, where we are not ruled by money or access to the rights of citizenship, where our relationships with one another are not mediated by capital's alienations and separations. Instead we must create ways of living built out of grassroots co-operation, solidarity, with spaces for all of our differences, needs and desires. Worlds where we can

organize autonomously from, and against the control of money, the state or different types of bosses. A world with space for many worlds. By drawing connections between all the struggles we can go further; to create greater opposition to capitalism, the state and the racist borders of citizenship and create a world for truly global multicultural post-capitalist societies.'

(Greenpepper 2002).

It is useful to keep the general ideas of the radical left in mind throughout this chapter and the rest of this paper.

Migration

The term migration encompasses a range of situations, for instance, it can be permanent, temporary, forced or voluntary- although these distinctions cannot be strictly applied to the circumstances of peoples' lives. The word migrant could be used to describe a diverse range of people who might have little in common apart from having moved away from their homes for 'a period of time that is longer than a visit' (King, Mai & Dalipaj 2003: 6). For instance, a professional businessman and a seasonal farm worker might be worlds apart in terms of their living and working conditions, aspirations and background. In some of the literature that is to be reviewed, but certainly not all, the type of migration and the ways in which it is believed to impact on society is not always clarified. This is due to a lack of specification or the use of extensive political terminology which is customary to the discourse of the radical left. In some instances, in order to offer an adequate explanation an interpretation has been required on my part. Although it is not always made clear, it could be suggested that the migrants written about by the radical left are economic migrants, probably engaged in low skilled sector work. It is fair to say that the institutionalized left would perceive them as being negatively affected by the global economic system. The following section will describe the ways in which the radical left portrays migration.

Migrants as Autonomous Subjects

Amongst calls for a shift in perspective centred on a 'new image of migration' (Tavolo dei migranti 2004), migrants are portrayed as 'autonomous subjects', that is, individuals who follow their own will power, aspirations and are actively participating in their own destinies. (Barchiesi 2004; Frassanito network 2004a; Hardt & Negri

2004; Tavolo dei migranti 2004). This emphasis on human agency is a conscious effort to create a culture of 'visibility' around migrants (Mitropoulos 2004). Although there is widespread recognition that the movement and work conditions of migrants are influenced by the structures of neoliberal capitalism, the emphasis remains on the choice, or, in the words of one commentator, 'the subjective decision' of the migrant 'to adapt to the needs of capital', (Arozena et al 2004: 3).

The emphasis on autonomy is an attempt to contrast with the general left-wing approach towards migrants which is criticized for being 'paternalistic'. It is argued that purely representing migrants as victims of economic globalization is detrimental and insulting. The institutionalized left in particular are denounced for portraying migrants as subjects deprived of rights or as 'weak subjects incapable of taking autonomous action' (Tavolo dei migranti 2004). Trade Unions, left-wing academics and others who call for citizenship, equal work rights and integration of migrants are condemned for imposing a European identity on the latter as well as reinforcing the European Union's attitude towards them. The latter is believed to treat migrant workers as labour imports which can be manipulated to meet the labour market's needs.

Migration and 'Precarity'

Significant to the migration debate for the radical left is the term 'precarity'. This literally means 'unsure, uncertain, difficult, delicate' (Frassanito network 2005a). In a political sense it is used to refer to living and working conditions without security or guarantees. There is a consensus amongst those of the radical left that the changing structures of global capital are inducing the end of secure full time employment. Precarity therefore, is perceived to be the standard experience of work in today's global system of capital (Mitropoulos 2005). The relation of precarity to labour is described below by a writer in Mute magazine.

'When one has no other means to live than the ability to labour or - even more precariously, since it privatizes a relation of dependency - to reproduce and 'humanize' the labour publicly tendered by another, life becomes contingent on capital and therefore precarious.'

(Mitropoulos 2005).

Due to their labour conditions, as well as their life situations, migrants are believed to be at the forefront of this precarious existence. The

precarious label can be easily applied to migrant workers without documents as they are refused state protection and therefore basic rights. Moreover, even though they may be working in the informal labour market they have no employment rights. An 'economic' existence in the 'national space' without basic citizenship and labour rights has been described as the ultimate position of precariousness (Mitropoulos 2005). It is believed to be a position of constant insecurity where one is vulnerable to exploitation. In the discourse, precariousness and irregularity are linked and perceived as common characteristics of migration today. Precarious work is described as flexible, irregular, seasonal and temporary. These are common features of domestic work, retail, 'hospitality', agriculture, sex work and the building industry, jobs that are increasingly carried out by migrants, both documented and undocumented. The following passage stresses the understanding of migrant labour in relation to that of non-migrants.

'...to talk about migrant labour means to talk about a general tendency of labour to mobility, to diversity, to deep changes, which is already affecting, although to varying degrees of intensity, all workers.'

(Frassanito 2005b).

Migrant labour is believed to be a 'political category' (Tavolo dei migranti 2004) or hold 'political centrality (Frassanito network 2005a) as it draws attention to, offers a greater understanding of, and anticipates the general conditions of contemporary labour. This is further illustrated by the passage below:

'the migrant worker is forced to endure a condition of social and job insecurity that is neither occasional nor temporary....In this sense it can be said that all of contemporary labour is becoming migrant.'

(Frassanito network 2004a).

In other words, by observing the current working and living conditions of migrants, one can gain a better insight into future labour conditions, and also perhaps into more effective ways for workers to organize and thus resist exploitation.

The application of the word 'social' to the word 'insecurity' in the above passage highlights that migrants are believed to experience insecurity in aspects of their lives other than work. This association is also referred to by Hardt and Negri (2004), who believe that insecurity is such a

common characteristic of migrants' lives that it leads to a 'condition' or existence of insecurity.

Economic Globalisation

The global demands of the economic market are deemed to be directly responsible for the existence of 'the precariat' (Foti 2004: 21). A connection between globalization and increased mobility on a global scale is reiterated throughout the 'precarity' discourse. This connection or relationship and its impact on labour and migration is described by Hardt and Negri (2004: 133) in the following passage:

'In the contemporary economy however, and with the labour relations of post-Fordism, mobility increasingly defines the labour market as a whole, and all categories of labour are tending toward the condition of mobility and cultural mixture common to the migrant.'

From the point of view of those who hold an interest in 'precarity', migration has become a way of understanding the effects of globalization on people in general. On the one hand globalization has created the conditions where people can move around the globe with relative ease. On the other hand this mobility is regulated and controlled for the flexible and competitive demands of global capitalism. This exploitative aspect of globalization is referred to by Whyte (2002) as he comments on the ways in which one should, and should not, view migrants:

'...these people [migrants] can never be political trophies, as their flight is a testimony to the Western complicity in the devastation that has propelled them away from their homes.'

Unlike Whyte (2002), Hardt and Negri (2004) believe that globalization has impacted on migrants' lives in a fundamentally positive way; the details of which will be given below.

'The Migrant' as a Revolutionary Subject

'Certainly most migrations are driven by the need to escape conditions of violence, starvation, or deprivation, but together with that negative condition there is also the positive desire for wealth, peace, and freedom. This combined act of refusal and expression of desire is enormously powerful.'

(Hardt and Negri 2004: 133)

In Hardt and Negri's (2004) sequel to 'Empire' (Hardt & Negri 2000), migrants are seen to be part of the 'Multitude'. This is an all-encompassing concept that includes the industrial working class as well as agricultural workers, the poor and unwaged amongst others (Hardt and Negri 2004: 129-138). The definition of multitude emphasizes social difference whilst stressing a 'commonality', that is, an increasing common condition resulting from having to exist within the new forms of global sovereignty explored in 'Empire'(Hardt and Negri 2004: 134). As a 'living alternative' to the latter, the multitude is partly characterized by a natural tendency towards resistance that aims to displace authority and create a democratic society. 'Multitude' therefore is ultimately concerned with issues of power, resistance and democracy. It is significant to this paper that the multitude are seen to react against the conditions of Neoliberalism instinctively.

As a 'special category' (Hardt & Negri 2004: 133) of the poor, migrants are portrayed as being in a position of exceptional strength. Not only do they 'embody the ontological condition' of 'resistance', but they are also endowed with unique capabilities shaped from past and current experiences. It is argued that escaping from a life of 'forced mobility' and 'constant insecurity' is advantageous as it equips migrants with the necessary tools to resist 'the typical forms of exploitation of immaterial labour' (Hardt & Negri 2004: 133). Their power is also attributed to their 'condition', that is, a 'mixture of mobility and cultural diversity' which results from their experiences of migration. As illustrated in the passage below, migrants are presented as subverting forces in receiving societies:

'...the great global centers of wealth that call on migrants to fill a lack in their economies get more than they bargained for, since the immigrants invest the entire society with their subversive desires. The experience of flight is something like training for the desire for freedom.'

(Hardt & Negri 2004: 133-134).

From the perspective of the radical left this passage catapults the migrant to stardom; her position becomes enviable, or at the very least inspirational. When Jess Whyte (2002) states 'we should all become economic migrants', he is not being metaphorical. It could therefore be suggested that the perceived state of existence or 'condition' of migrants is believed to hold revolutionary potential. If one is a migrant, they are not only in a better position to undertake resistance than non-migrants; indeed, they also

inspire the rest of society to follow in their footsteps.

Although this understanding of migration is clearly observed in the work of Hardt and Negri, it is also visible in a subtler form throughout the discourse of the radical left. The following passage on migrant labour and mobility also hints at the revolutionary potential of migrants' 'conditions'.

'Because of the possible extension of these conditions we speak of a political centrality of migrants' work. The position of migrants represents the social anticipation of a political option to struggle against the general development of labour as it will be extended to the whole society and the whole life of all people.'

(Frassanito network 2005b)

This connection between potential revolutionary activities and migration can also be observed in the definition of the 'precariat'. Migrants are a much referred to part of the 'precariat', that is 'a new immanently flexible, yet potentially radical social subject' and a direct product of contemporary capitalism (Foti 2004: 21).

Mobility as Subversion

Mobility emerges as a central theme in Hardt and Negri's (2004) reflections on migration. As is conveyed in the above passage, Hardt and Negri (2004: 133-134) associate mobility with breaking away from the norm and with influencing activities of resistance. Mobility is also deemed responsible for the acquisition of new talents and opportunities:

'Migrants may often travel empty handed in conditions of extreme poverty but even then they are full of knowledge's, languages, skills, and creative capacities: each migrant brings with him an entire world.'

(Hardt & Negri 2004: 134)

Perhaps more significantly, mobility is associated with gaining the creative capacity to exist outside the realm of state controlled boundaries. This is hinted at in the passage below, which holds suggestions that mobility, or indeed migration, allows people access to a space, mental or physical that is not so readily defined or wholly controlled by the nation state. In other words, mobility opens up a new realm of possibilities. Moreover, migrants are mentally and physically

freer, or indeed less controllable, than non-migrants:

'Migrants understand and illuminate...the situations of more or less free forms of life. They roll up hills as much as possible, seeking wealth and freedom, power and joy. Migrations recognize the geographical hierarchies of the system and yet treat the globe as one common space....'

(Hardt and Negri 2004: 134)

Hardt and Negri's (2004: 134) reflections on migration also suggest that mobility is believed to dispute the authority of the nation state. This is illustrated by the line, 'Migrants demonstrate the general commonality of the multitude by crossing and thus *partially undermining every geographical boundary*', [emphasis my own].

The Crossing of Borders without Papers

'... the alleged number of at least half a million illegal border crossings into the EU each year proves the autonomy of a migration movement which is overcoming fences and barbed-wire, ignoring infrared cameras, defying plastic handcuffs, and dragnet controls. It spans oceans, continents and skies'.

(Schneider 2004).

Mobility, in the specific form of irregular border crossings is celebrated and admired in the literature of the radical left. This 'clandestine' activity is seen as a deliberate act of defiance, which, not only empowers the migrant but also undermines the authority of the nation state and the rules of the global market; thereby constituting, in the words of one writer, 'a refusal of capital's enclosures and domination' (Whyte 2002). According to some writers, the 'free' movement of irregular migrants is raising questions about the ability of the nation state to control its borders and those within them (Barchiesi 2004). Such movement is therefore a direct challenge not only to the authority, but also potentially to the foundation and existence of the nation state. The perceived challenges posed by migrant mobility can be observed in the following passage, which is taken from a newspaper produced by the Frassanito network.

"Migrants are not just the collateral damage of global capitalism: they are the active agents of free movement who represent a subverting power in respect to the sovereignty of the

nation-state as well as the new regimes of hyper-exploitation on a global level",

(Arozena et al 2004:1).

This view is echoed and expanded upon by another 'noborder' activist who states:

'As globalization from below, migration movements constitute a global resistance against old and new economies and their modes of exclusion, repression, division, separation, detention and selection',

(noborder network 2004b).

The fact that irregular border crossings are seen to pose a challenge to institutionalized dominant orders is significant. As illustrated in the passage above, 'old economies' or the nation state and 'new economies' or Neoliberalism, is seen to embody exploitative and oppressive structures. This holds particularly relevancy for those in the radical left with anarchist principles who hold the view that any form of institutionalized authority is coercive and thus should be abolished. It appears therefore that the way in which the radical left perceive irregular border crossings is directly related to their own aspirations and ideologies. This will be further expanded on below.

Migration as a Social Movement

It is stressed that irregular border crossings are not carried out by individuals but by a 'movement', which is actively organizing itself in an autonomous fashion. Before embarking on further discussion on the ways in which migration is understood to be a social movement by the radical left, it is important to clarify what is meant by this specific term. In the opinion of Piven and Cloward (1979), social movements are a collectivity, holding a group identity and a set of constitutive ideas with an aim to bring about or resist crucial changes in the social order. It is of particular significance to the content of this paper that latter definitions of social movements emphasize a consciousness and rational in the actions and desires of the individuals and groups involved (West & Blumberg 1990; Zirakzadeh 1997).

A social movement could be composed of loosely networked groups, holding a similar objective but rooted in different parts of the world (Cohen and Rai 2000). It is noteworthy that some of the radical left consider themselves to be part of such a movement. There is a common perception by some on the radical left that there exists a

'globally interconnected social movement' (Notes from Nowhere 2003) made up of different grass roots movements and united by its opposition to global capitalism. It has been referred to by some, as 'globalization from below' (Mertes & Walden Bello 2004), and by others as the 'globalization of resistance' (Notes from Nowhere 2003).

The justifications given for the unusual application of this term to migration have partly been relayed in the above section on 'the crossing of borders without papers'. These deserve further explanation and will be expanded on below. This 'powerful social movement' is portrayed as such, due to its challenge on a daily basis to 'border regimes' (Tavolo dei migranti 2004) Irregular migrants are perceived as being engaged in an organized 'struggle for freedom of movement'. The strength of this social movement is attributed to the belief that individual nation states and the European Union have been unable to control and restrict the movement and survival of irregular migrants. 'Freedom of movement' therefore has already been 'claimed' or reclaimed by irregular migrants from the authorities:

'...a social movement which cannot be controlled by various states policies of the sealing off of borders and which cannot be reduced to economical cost-benefit-calculation.'

(Arozena et al 2004: 1)

It is believed that the organized border crossings of irregular migrants have impacted on the European Union to such an extent that a change in immigration policy has been required. The 'zero tolerance'⁷ attitude of the past decades has been replaced by that of 'managed' migration (Barchiesi 2004). This is seen to be an admission of the European Union's failure to control its own borders.

Migration is also seen as a social movement due to its perceived impact on the nature of citizenship in Europe. Some writers claim that the act of crossing a border 'illegally' creates a contradiction within the citizenship policies of the European Union, thus challenging the existing concept of citizenship and demanding a new

⁷ 'Zero tolerance' refers to the European migration policy of the last thirty years. Emphasis was on controlling migration as opposed to 'managing' migration in order to maximize economic and other benefits.

practice of social rights (Barchiesi 2004; Arozena et al 2004: 5).

'By transcending national borders migration challenges conventional notions of citizenship as well as legal frameworks and opens up a new space for the practice of rights which reach far beyond the historically known constitutional settings.'

(Arozena et al 2004: 5).

This 'challenge' is deemed important as it redresses the existing social inequalities between European Union citizens and non European Union citizens. As full social rights are granted with citizenship, it is suggested that irregular migrants are drawing attention to the general lack of basic rights, in terms of 'housing, education, health services' (Arozena et al 2004: 5) suffered by migrants, irregular as well as regular. Germany is given as an example of a country where migrants can lose their unrestricted residence permits if they need to claim welfare from the state.

This new understanding of rights not only draws attention to and challenges this 'contradiction between inclusion and exclusion' (Castles 2000: 124), but according to Barchiesi in particular they are directly associated to a whole transformation of society in which people can start reclaiming their lives back from commodification⁸.

'Migration is a social movement that demands a new understanding of social rights that is clearly linked to de-commodification, the claim for new commons through which societies in receiving countries themselves can start to seize back, within struggles that transcend the narrow boundaries of nation-state institutionality, what had been taken away from them in the decades of neoliberal restructuring... In the expansion of a sphere of rights that is no longer dependent on the labour market and on the commodity form embodied in the contract of employment, the specific struggles of the migrants carry the embryo of a new universality that challenges the increasingly discredited universalism of a

⁸ Commodification is a term deriving from the work of Marx; the transformation of social relationships into commercial relationships of buying and selling. The social relations between peoples assume the alienated form of relation between material products. (McLean & McMillan 2003: 95).

liberal discourse on rights whose translation into practice is synonymous with new exclusions and selectivity'.

(Barchiesi 2004)

Barchiesi's comments may stem from a common perception held by the radical left and others. Borders are seen to act as a 'filter' for the labour market, a process referred to as 'selective inclusion' (Frassanito network 2005b). The European Union is seen to regard and treat migrants as purely economic necessities whose flexibility can be manipulated in accordance to the labour market's competitive needs. In the above passage Barchiesi seems to be suggesting that by undermining these border regimes irregular migrants are reclaiming the control that the labour market and the institutionalised authorities have over working people's lives.

The Merging of 'Movements'?

Migration as 'a social movement' is an attractive prospect to the radical left for obvious reasons. The perceived existence of a movement suggests a purpose and strength, as well as an actual threat to the current political and economic structures that are deplored by the radical left. Moreover, if the impact of this 'movement' is intended, it points to a marked resemblance with the agenda of the radical left.

By merely referring to migration as a social movement the radical left is leaning towards an identification of sorts. This 'identification' is further exemplified by the specific injustices that this 'social movement' is described as challenging. As already mentioned 'migration as a social movement' is portrayed as attacking the exact same structures that the radical left wishes to challenge. It is not surprising therefore, to find places in the discourse where the radical left appears to relate their struggle to the 'struggles' of irregular migrants. It is significant that the Frassanito network is not purely choosing to present migration as an autonomous social movement in its own right. They are linking 'migration as a social movement' to global 'movements' of resistance against Neoliberalism and thus also linking it to themselves.

'We consider migration as a social movement and see the role of migrants' struggles as crucial for the further development of the entire global movement'

(The Frassanito network 2004b)

'Migration as a social movement' is believed to be organized in an 'autonomous' fashion with underlying features of 'co-operation' and 'self-organization' (Greenpepper 2002). This portrayal is a factor suggesting that the radical left are indeed identifying with 'migration as a social movement'. The above characteristics reflect the principles admired and sought after by groups in the radical left which are heavily critical of the impact that Capitalism has had on social relations. They are significant as they are believed to contrast with the oppressive way society is believed to have been organized. The passage below illustrates that irregular border crossings are seen to constitute a positive alternative to institutionalized power:

"When migrants force and conquer European borders through their everyday struggles they also exercise an alternative constituent power which contrasts to the material constitution of Europe built upon the hierarchization of social and political spaces. Autonomy of migration is a subversive movement,"

(Frassanito network 2004b).

The following passage is from a 'noborder' seminar at the E.S.F which is aptly entitled a 'Meeting of Movements'. Its title and contents appear to suggest that the radical left are inviting irregular migrants to join them or work with them on some level.

'We are here as we were in Genoa, in July 2001, where for the first time the global movement met migrants' struggles, during that beautiful demonstration on the evening of the 19th.... We are here as we were in Bari Palese, in Southern Italy, where in the summer of 2003 a direct action against a detention center created the conditions for the escape of dozens of migrants. We are here bringing with us the experiences of the struggles of migration all over the world, from the mobilization of the sans papiers in Europe to the Freedom Ride of Migrant Workers in the US last year, from the "Justice for Janitors" campaign to the upsurge of Woomera, in Australia. In the last years, these struggles have forged new political languages and practices',

(Arozena et al 2004: 1).

The words of the Frassanito network, as well as those of Barchiesi and others (Greenpepper 2002) are highly suggestive. It appears that these writers and activists are not merely admiring the 'struggles' of irregular migrants but identifying

with them and possibly, inviting them to join them in the 'global movement' against Neoliberalism. It should be pointed out here that although the literature on migration as 'a social movement' does draw similarities between these two 'movements', it does not directly describe irregular migrants as consciously attempting to organize and impact on the authorities in the ways described above. It could be assumed that the perceived impact of irregular border crossings is seen as unintended consequence of actions that hold an altogether different motive. However, the references to migration as a social movement, as well as the suggestions that this 'social movement' and the radical left have similar characteristics does seem to imply that at least some of the writers believe that there is some level of intent and awareness in migrants' actions. This is further emphasized by the stress on migrant resistance in the general literature.

To summarize, migration is represented by the radical left in the following ways. There is a conscious attempt to contradict the presentation of migrants as victims of Neoliberalism by portraying them in a different light; from the perspective of the radical left, migrants are capable and autonomous protagonists. The work and living conditions of migrants are of interest due to a growing interest in 'precarity'. The social and financial insecurity experienced by some economic migrants is used as a way of drawing attention to the increasingly flexible work conditions of the general population. This 'precarisation' coupled with the perceived benefits of forced mobility are believed to propel migrants into a position to carry out and inspire acts of resistance.

Due to their current subversive activities and potential revolutionary prospects, migrants are admired, respected and perhaps viewed as future fellow revolutionaries. Although migrants' mobility in general is perceived as subversive, defiant and challenging, the impact of irregular border crossings is of specific interest. These are seen as undermining the authority of the nation state, the European Union and the current conditions of Neoliberalism. Moreover, irregular border crossings are believed to draw attention to the contradictions inherent in the European Union's notion of citizenship and the workings of the labour market.

Irregular movement across borders is presented as an autonomous social movement due to its perceived characteristics and impact. Moreover the latter is observed to have similarities with the radical left in terms of organization and perhaps aims. From this identification one can presume

that the radical left are not only standing in solidarity with migrants' 'struggles', but also attempting to work together with them on some level. It can be suggested that the emphasis placed on migration as a social movement in particular, adequately demonstrates that the radical left are projecting their own political ideology and aspirations onto migrants' activities. This will be discussed further in the next chapter

Challenging the Radical Left's Portrayal of Migration

The main purpose of this chapter is to challenge the radical left's portrayal of migration. Firstly, there will be a critical analysis of the general way in which migration is presented in the literature; some specific tendencies will be pointed out. Following from this, the perspectives of some migrants on issues that relate to the ideas of the radical left will be reviewed. This material will be drawn from primary and secondary data. The inclusion of migrants' voices is a key aspect of this paper. Through the presentation of these highly relevant opinions, my intention two fold- to challenge the position held by the radical left on migration, and through doing this to draw attention to the risks involved in this specific representation of migration. Thus, in the latter section of the chapter, the possible implications of the radical left's portrayal of migration will be briefly explored. It will be argued that a possible misrepresentation has practical as well as theoretical dangers, as many writers of the radical left are also involved in activism with undocumented migrants. Additional aims are to allow some migrants a voice that has perhaps, been usurped or misrepresented by the radical left. The material used is not intended to be a representation of the views of all migrants; as well as the above-mentioned aims, its purpose is to allow for a possible diversity in opinions in order to combat the generalizations made by the radical left.

General Problems with the Radical Left's portrayal of Migration

As already mentioned, a key problem with the radical left's portrayal of migration, is a lack of clarity. At times there is a failure to distinguish between different forms of migration, whilst other details, such as the type of resistance taking place, are often left unexplored. These tendencies can be observed specifically in the texts on 'precarity' and the deliberations of Hardt and Negri (2004).

Despite presenting migrants in a powerful light-according to Hardt and Negri (2004:133-134), they are 'free forms of life', who endow 'the entire society with their subversive desires'- there is no attempt to supply any detail or expand on these descriptions. Apart from a brief description of the conditions that migrants might be escaping from and currently enduring, and a definition of migrants as a 'special category of the poor' (Hardt & Negri 2004: 133), there is no attempt to describe specific possible reasons for resistance, such as, for example, exploitative work conditions⁹. Moreover, there is no distinction made between documented or undocumented migration, which can have a significant impact on migrants' living and working conditions. By not attempting to validate or justify their representations, Hardt and Negri succeed in creating an ambiguous and abstract notion of migration. This is exemplified by the romantic language used to describe migrants.

Although the 'precarity' discourse does point to conditions that may cause resistance or unrest, they are not adequately described. Although it is insinuated that the migrants referred to are working in low skilled sectors, the discourse neglects to describe specific work conditions or to distinguish between different types of work. This serves to insinuate that all migrant workers are suffering from the same insecure job conditions; a vast generalization which is exemplified by the use of the term 'the migrant worker' (Frassanito network 2004a). It could be argued that the use of the phrase 'the migrant' serves to objectify the latter, thereby achieving the opposite of the radical left's aim to empower their 'subjects'.

Hardt and Negri (2004: 133) can also be held accountable for reducing migrants to a general state of being, through the use of the phrase 'condition of mobility and cultural mix common to the migrant'. The inclusion of the word 'condition' in this phrase implies that migrants are in a situation so similar that it has induced a common state of being. The fact that this phrase is followed by declarations that migrants are influencing receiving societies to resist is significant as it suggests that this 'condition' or state of being automatically reduces migrants to resisters.

It could be argued that the other texts reviewed also romanticize migration and reduce their subjects to resisters. However, in some of the

other texts the portrayal of migration is far more tangible. When defining 'migration as a social movement' (Arozena et al 2004; Barchiesi 2004; Frassanito network 2004b), the writers are precise on how and why migration is believed to fit into the latter description. The movement of irregular migrants across borders as well as their perceived impact is described in articulate manner. The details given to justify the portrayal of migration as a social movement make this specific representation less of an ambiguous notion, and therefore easier to challenge.

However, as already mentioned in the previous chapter this particular depiction of migration holds a specific uncertainty which is also observable in the rest of the literature. Despite consistently portraying their 'subjects' as resisting and undermining their 'oppressors' the radical left fails to address whether there is a level of social and political consciousness and intent in migrants' actions. It could be presumed that as the literature on 'migration as a social movement' neglects to directly state that irregular migrants are deliberately intending to challenge the authorities by crossing borders, they are indeed not being portrayed as conscious resisters. This argument is supported by Hardt and Negri's (2004) depictions of migration. As the multitude's resistance is impulsive, it could be presumed that migrants- as part of the multitude, are not aware of their resistance. On the other hand, the description of migration as a social movement holds certain suggestions. By definition, social movements consciously attempt to bring about drastic social changes. A level of social and political awareness is therefore insinuated by this particular choice of description. Moreover attempts in the literature to draw comparisons between the characteristics of 'migration as a social movement' and the radical left, as well as the general emphasis placed on migrants as resisters in the literature, would seem to carry insinuations of consciousness on some level at least.

It has been argued that it does not matter how migrants' perceive their actions, that is, the impact of their actions is far more important than the intentions behind them (Barchiesi 2004). For the other reasons outlined in this paper, as well as the depiction of migration as a social movement, it will be argued that the ways in which migrants perceive themselves and their actions are highly significant to the arguments of the radical left.

In the following section the perspectives of some migrants will be reviewed; their relevancy lies in the fact that they allow us to gain an

⁹ It is however assumed that as part of 'the multitude' they are exploited by global capitalism.

understanding of what role migrants wish to play in society. Moreover, they allow us to see if migrants perceive themselves in the same light as the radical left. It should be stressed that as the primary and secondary data presented in this paper is a small sample it cannot be seen as statistically representative of all migrants in similar situations. As suggested by Jordan and Duvell (2002), cultural understandings should be seen as influencing the opinions and aspirations of the migrants interviewed to a certain extent. The material collected will be used as a way to place doubt and contest the ideas of the radical left.

Migrants' Perspectives

In the following section, both primary and secondary data will be used. The primary data will be composed of interviews, which were conducted separately with five individuals. All interviewees were male, from Arabic speaking countries, between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five and were working in low skill sector jobs, either as maintenance or night porters in a hotel or in the take away industry. There was an attempt by myself to put their answers in a cultural context. In other words, there was consideration given to the affect that their cultural background might have on their answers (Jordan and Duvell 2002). Due to the small size of the sample, other scholarly sources will also be relied on.

In the fieldwork undertaken by myself, interviewees were mainly asked their opinions on their future aspirations, their present job conditions, on citizenship and on being 'illegal'. Their reasons for migrating, as well as their thoughts on Capitalism and work in general were also discussed. Although views on some topics were varied, there was a general agreement on specific issues. Interviewees had strikingly similar opinions on 'illegality' and citizenship. With regards to money and future aspirations there were also some shared goals. All interviewees claimed to have lived without papers at some point in the past, although at present they were all living here 'legally'. Therefore, they spoke about the practical and emotional consequences of being irregular with relative ease.

In my fieldwork the first questions asked were in reference to the interviewees' past and current job conditions. The aim of this was two fold- to see if the interviewee could be described as living a 'precarious' life by radical left standards, and to gain a response to these possible conditions. All interviewees could be described as having

'precarious' job conditions. They all had one day off a week, on which they were often called in for 'emergencies' by their boss. However, none of the interviewees expressed direct dissatisfaction with their job, despite having little control over working conditions and working flexible hours.

With regards to existing without papers there was a unanimous agreement that it was an undesirable state of existence. All answered yes when asked if they had ever lived or worked without papers. In response to the question 'what don't you like about your life?' Siamak answered, 'I don't like George Bush and I don't like being illegal, I am ashamed.' He continued by describing his experience of living and working without papers in Greece:

'...I like to walk on the streets and not being stopped. In Greece I was getting stopped all the time, and the television were saying bad things about people like us all the time.'

Beshir, Erik and Osama also referred to their difficulties with police when asked to describe life without papers. There was a general perception that living without documents meant that you had less control over your life and that you were more open to exploitation. Erik said that when he had no papers, he had 'no protection- I was afraid the police will stop and ask me many questions. If you have papers you can go anywhere.' Peter, on the other hand spoke of being underpaid by his boss:

'I prefer to be legal, as I felt like a second-class citizen because people only paid me part money when I worked. I felt not like a normal person.'

It could be suggested that when Peter felt like a 'second class citizen' it was not only in regard to wages but also to his position in society. Feeling degraded and embarrassed because of the way you are portrayed or treated by some aspect of the receiving society can also be observed in the words of Siamak above. In his case it is the media and the police who make him feel 'ashamed'. Siamak's comments on living irregularly in Greece are reflected in research done with irregular Bulgarian migrants in Greece (Markova 2001: 55). One hundred and seven migrants, of which 75% were women, were asked to describe the way they felt with regards to their irregular status in a questionnaire. 'Always on the alert' was the most popular answer, directly followed by 'feel humiliated, without any self confidence.' Feeling 'uncomfortable' was also often referred to. The answers 'I do not care' and

'very frightened rarely go out' were rarely brought up.

A desire to be a 'normal' part of society is significant and can be observed in all five interviews undertaken by myself. This desire is partly expressed through the wish to acquire a European Union or British citizenship. In response to the question do you want a passport from one of the countries in the European Union, all interviewees answered yes. Not surprisingly freedom of movement and status were strongly associated with holding a passport of this specific region. Beshir and Erik wanted European passports so they could acquire freedom of movement. They wanted to be able to go on holiday and to be able to leave and return to Britain without any problems. This would be, in the words of Beshir 'like a normal person'. They both gave a distinct impression that they would be empowered and treated better in general if they a passport from one of the countries of the European Union. Referring to this, Erik stated:

'When you've got the passport that gives you power. When you have no passport you are nothing.'

A wish to be 'normal' was expressed by three participants through the specific use of the word. This desire was not only associated with having documents and ultimately citizenship, but also through securing a 'normal' future by working and saving money. The two quotes below from Siamak and Beshir, illustrate that being 'normal' or 'like everyone else' is also equated with owning one's own business and property.

'...England is very good for money, that's why everyone comes here. My boss he has a lot of money, and he has four houses and all the time he think about money. Some people change when they make money, and they want more and more, people are different, I'm not like my boss, I like to live normal like many people. I am happy with just one house, and maybe one shop.'(Siamak).

'To be honest I am really happy with my life, I have wife and kids, but I would prefer to move on, buy a nice house, that's the dream for everyone isn't it? A nice house, holidays, a better and better life, and then you reach your target like everyone else. Not just working, working, every day I work. I want to be a manager, own my business, earn good money, then I will be free. So, no one can ask me 'why you come in late Beshir? One day I would like to control my own things. Make shop with my brother in law, hopefully soon.'(Beshir).

Erik, Peter and Osama also commented on business and property plans when asked about their long term plans. Osama and Peter stated that they were working in order to buy a house. The following account is from Erik:

'I want to buy a big house in my country, a car, and to open a small shop. That's it, I don't ask for money.'

Similar property and business aspirations can be observed in research done with Eastern European temporary workers in the agricultural and horticultural industry in Britain¹⁰. When asked about their hopes for the future, several workers planned to save money and return 'home'. Aspirations included starting businesses, buying a house and starting a family.

Although all the interviewees in my fieldwork stressed the significance of money in their short and long term plans, it was emphasized that although important, money was not the most valued aspect of their lives. Beshir in particular, spoke of the importance of health and his children. Family and culture were commented on and appeared important for all interviewees. Although money was given as the main reason for living and working in the UK, some secondary reasons such as learning English were also given. The above passage where Siamak comments on the attitude of his boss towards money demonstrates that he has a critique of someone who dedicates his life to purely making money. When asked about capitalism, Beshir criticized western values by comparing them to Libyan ones:

'to be honest the way that we live before we came to this country, every single house in my country which is my neighbour's or my friend's house is open, if I am hungry, if I go to my home and I see rice and I don't want rice- I call my friend, what's the lunch?... Here if you don't work, if you don't wake up early to catch the train, you will be, homeless or somewhere, you don't have nothing'.

¹⁰ Interviews were carried out by Ben Rogaly and Paula Tenaglia for the research project 'Temporary Working in UK Agriculture and Horticulture'. The project report, published in August 2005, is available at: <<http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/gangmasters/pdf/research-study1.pdf>>

The influence that cultural justifications and understandings can have on the perspectives of migrants should be considered. All five interviewees in my fieldwork shared a similar cultural background and that could be an influential factor in their answers. The significance that cultural backgrounds as well as the economic and political situations in countries of origin can have on migrants' aspirations is illustrated in the research of Jordan and Duvell (2002). Three groups from separate countries and 'very different societies' (Jordan and Duvell 2002: 10) were interviewed. Although the migrants who had left their country of origin for primarily economic reasons had similar future aspirations to the migrants interviewed by myself, there was a marked difference in the attitudes and long term plans of the three groups that reflected their economic, political and cultural backgrounds. For example, the Polish migrants interviewed were focused on saving money and returning to Poland, while the Brazilians emphasized personal growth and had plans to return to Brazil in the long term.

Crossing Borders without Documents: A Different Perspective

The crossing of borders without papers is used to justify the portrayal of migration as a social movement by the radical left. This description of migration is presented as holding similar characteristics and perhaps a similar agenda to the radical left. One writer argues that the way in which migrants without papers organize themselves is a prime example of 'autonomy, co-operation and self-organization', (Greenpepper 2002), features which are held in high esteem by the radical left. The experiences of Albanian migrants (King, Mai & Dalipaj 2003) presented below will be used as a way of contesting this perception of migration. Firstly, the opinion of Siamak from my own fieldwork will be related:

'Everybody has different experiences, whether somebody comes in by plane with illegal passports or by boat, that is a big difference, if I manage to come to Europe through Turkey, its because its very important, its about money, people come because its important to them, its not easy, its very dangerous, a lot of people die- I have seen people die- like from Turkey to Athens, but people come for many reasons, maybe not always money.'

The realism that is portrayed in Siamak's account serves as a contrast to the abstract portrayal of border crossing found in the discourse of the radical left. A stark difference can also be

observed in the experience of Agim (King et al 2003: 43-45) recounted below:

'I tried to go to Italy by speedboat from Vlore four times. I was scared to go again in the boat after the first time I went in the water. I experienced what being in the sea was like. I was close to dying many times. The trip was 90 per cent unsafe. It was a journey between life and death.....I went by myself....In general no one has safe contacts in the destination, even if you have someone they usually let you down, they do not help you out. No one accompanied me. I was at the mercy of my own fate.'

Agim continues his story by relating his experiences with Albanian gangs at the border crossings:

'Every time I crossed a border I was not really scared of the police. The problem was the Albanian gangs who covered every sector. Different groups had different deals. Different groups with different prices approached me at every border crossing. I did not accept because the price was very high....I was almost killed by Albanian gangs there (at Calais) because I did not want to pay. They said 'You have to pay because we are the gods of Calais'. They asked for 1,000 German marks. I did not have enough money. When they saw that there was no other way then to kill me, they left me alone.'

Although Agim's story could appear to be particularly brutal, some aspects are echoed in the stories of other Albanian migrants. The ability of people to make their journey appears to depend on the amount of money they have, and even so, the experiences recounted are hazardous and much dependant on luck. Although there are instances relayed of migrants helping each other, money appears to be the basis of survival and the main source of transaction between people. This could be due to the control that international criminal networks have over irregular border crossings. Some hold the view that trafficking is a highly organized business where traffickers control and determine the movement of migrants in order to gain maximum economic profit (Salt & Stein 1997). Whether facilitating people across borders at a high price or exploiting people more directly through trafficking¹¹, it appears that

¹¹ Scholars make a distinction between smuggling and trafficking. Trafficking is defined as the exploitation of people directly over an extended period of time (Baldwin-Edwards 2001).

gangs or organized networks are becoming increasingly common. As approximately 500,000 people (King et al 2003: 15) are trafficked or smuggled into Western Europe every year, Agim's experience at the hands of gangs could be a typical one. The overriding picture is not of an environment that is organized by the characteristics described by the radical left. The authority of the gangs acts as a substitute to the authority of the nation state in supposedly autonomous areas; individual migrants appear to be largely vulnerable and unsupported.

To summarize, the following impressions could be drawn from the material presented above. With regards to my own field work it can be seen that interviewees disliked living irregularly due to its given status and practical implications; social discomfort, fear of police and exploitation at work were some of the reasons given for this preference. The distress or discomfort associated with living irregularly is further emphasized by the results of Markova's research in Greece. It could be suggested here that the ways in which migrants experience irregularity is influenced by the way they are treated in a given country. In my field work, experiences of living irregularly in Greece, appear to be far harsher than in Holland or England. This view is echoed by the experiences of irregular migrants in Spain, which are remarkably positive when compared to Greece (Baldwin-Edwards 2001). This is significant as it suggests that migrants' experiences and subsequent feelings of irregularity are not always negative.

An underlying factor that emerged in my research was a desire to be 'normal' or live like the majority of the mainstream population. This was expressed in different ways by interviewees. However, having the right papers and acquiring a certain lifestyle, that is, owning ones own property and business appeared to be a common association with 'normality'. Being treated well by the mainstream population and the police was also related to living 'normally' by some. Although property and business aspirations were typical ambitions of the migrants in some of the sources reviewed, these were not the only aspirations mentioned.

Although most interviewees did not share any personal experiences of irregular border crossings, there was a strong preference shown for having papers and therefore being 'legal'. Indeed, freedom of movement was only associated with owning a British or European passport. Siamak was the only interviewee to refer to his experience of crossing borders irregularly directly. However, the other sources

(King et al 2003) used present a picture that echoes the message given by Siamak. Irregular movement across borders is thought of with trepidation and associated with a lack of control; migrants feared for their lives at the hands of gangs or unknown dangers.

Relating the Perspectives of Migrants to the Ideas of the Radical Left

The radical left believe migrants to be resisters who challenge and undermine the system that exploits them. It is suggested that as fellow revolutionaries their struggle is significant in the fight against global capitalism. It is clear that the migrants interviewed did not see themselves in this way; their plans did not embody any desire to consciously subvert from the norm or challenge 'their oppressors'. Moreover, they did not appear to be part of any social movement or show any interest in any type of alternative system of living. The aspirations of the migrants interviewed suggest an alternative vision to that which is presented by the political material of the radical left. Instead of celebrating their exclusion from society, the migrants that were interviewed are seeking inclusion- the European Union's notion of citizenship and its privileges are embraced and desired. Moreover, interviewees appeared to be seeking a particular lifestyle that would distance them from unorthodoxy. This is illustrated by the emphasis placed on being 'normal' as well as the conventional nature of their long term plans. It should be pointed out that the migrants interviewed did not appear to be empowered on in celebration of living or working without papers. As the migrants interviewed are seeking inclusion into the system that the radical left attempts to challenge, it can be concluded that the two parties do not hold similar agendas.

The radical left's portrayal of migration is an alteration of migrants' true wishes and, with specific regard to irregular border crossings, migrants' realities. In particular, the notion of migration as a social movement is a gross misrepresentation; migrants are perceived to be acting in a way that is desired by the radical left. This would suggest that the radical left is projecting its own political ideology and agenda onto migrants. Whatever the reason, the portrayal of migration in the literature suggests that migrants' desires and needs are either misunderstood or ignored. This is particularly disconcerting because writers from the radical left are engaged in practical work with irregular migrants who are in probable positions of vulnerability.

Conclusion

Through comparing two perspectives, this paper has offered an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which one's ideological position and agenda can affect one's perception and representation of another. Moreover, it has, I hope, demonstrated the complications that can arise when a dominant group attempts to represent a less privileged one in a seemingly positive way. The conflicting perspectives that have transpired only serve to highlight the possible dangers of this form of representation.

This radical left has indeed emerged as a dominant group that is 'guilty' of misrepresenting its 'subjects'. Although attempting to empower migrants by portraying them as out-witting and challenging their oppressors, the radical left has possibly achieved the opposite. By misrepresenting them, it could be argued that the radical left is silencing their 'subjects' and thus disempowering them. These misrepresentations are damaging in a practical as well as a theoretical sense; they are produced and read by 'noborder' activists working with irregular and regular migrants in probable positions of vulnerability. If the radical left is indeed inflicting its own ideology and agenda onto migrants then it could be argued that it is using migrants' standing in the global system to reinforce its own political position. This in itself would point to an abuse of power. It is alarming that the radical left does not view itself as an exploiter; from its perspective it is fighting with, and on behalf, of the oppressed in their struggles against the oppressors.

The stark difference between the two perspectives explored in this paper draws our attention to the complex inequalities that exist between these two groups. These are fundamental social and legal differences which govern the way each is treated on European Union ground and undoubtedly influences the way each perceive their life situation and that of others. Whilst the radical left holds the privileges of European Union citizenship, migrants, in particular migrants without papers lack the 'rights' afforded by the latter. Therefore it could be argued that the radical left's commitment to participating in, and writing about activities of resistance is a reflection of the relative social security that a European Union passport, and other privileges such as class and skin colour offers them. Likewise, the aspirations and opinions of the migrants interviewed could reflect their current position of relative social insecurity (when compared to the radical left) as well as the

influence of past experiences of irregularity. This paper has argued that living in a situation where one is socially and financially insecure possibly leads one to search for security through an inclusion into the very system that has contributed to this situation in the first place. It suggests that the radical left can afford to be engaged in direct action precisely because of the particular position that they hold in society.

It is a cause for concern that the radical left do not view migrants in a similar way to that which they (the migrants) view themselves. This is particularly so, as some of the radical left are engaged in practical work with migrants. If the radical left can project their political perspectives onto migrants' needs on paper, they can do it in reality. It is possible that the radical left's abstract and idealistic vision of migrants will manifest itself into encouraging irregular migrants to react towards their situation in a subversive way. If pressurised into activities of resistance irregular migrants would face very different consequences to the radical left.

It is highly notable that the migrants whose opinions were reflected on in this paper do not view themselves as resisting, undermining or challenging the dominant order, nor do they have any desire to. Significantly, they seek inclusion into this supposed system of exploitation; they pursue the security, status and lifestyle of most European Union citizens. It is paramount that the writers and activists of the radical left become more aware and accepting of migrants' aspirations and wishes, whatever they may be. Moreover, that they aim to relate to migrants individually as well as from a structural perspective. It should also be suggested that more research could be done with a more statistically representative sample that is culturally diverse and of mixed gender.

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