

## THE GIFT OF MEDICINE. HEALTH CARE ACTIVISTS AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN POST-WELFARE GREECE

One of the most visible effects of austerity in Greece has been the dismissal of state-funded health care for the uninsured. As a result, in 2015, one third of the Greek population didn't have access to free health care. In the wake of such harsh welfare cutbacks, a network of 40 grassroots solidarity clinics has emerged in the country as an alternative welfare state led by the civil society.

My focus is on middle class activists and the reasons and consequences of their engagement. I will show that health care activism in the Greek crisis is essentially an exclusionary strategy of accumulation of symbolic capital and, ultimately, a subtle form of social reproduction by a certain sector of the impoverished middle classes. The incorporation of biomedicine and its power structure exacerbates a class polarisation between patients and activists, since one must be endowed with a certain amount of cultural and social capital to deal with the complexities of health care provisioning. Filtered by such a selection, becoming an activist ushers in the possibility of hoarding opportunities, social capital, exercising patronage and defending a class position endangered by the economic crisis.

Drawing from a nine months fieldwork in Athens, my aim is to show how civic engagement is actually part of a more complex daily economy of survival for those whose relative well-being has been shaken by the ongoing recession and austerity policies: a search for a livelihood parallel to that carried, although in quite different forms, by the popular classes. My final claim is that health care activism in Greece is inevitably muddled with the reproduction of certain power relations, forms of exclusion and, above all, a neoliberal rearticulation of the very notion of citizenship.