COMMUNICATION AS THE INTERSECTION OF THE OLD AND THE NEW

THE INTELLECTUAL WORK OF THE 2018 EUROPEAN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION DOCTORAL SUMMER SCHOOL

Edited by Maria Francesca Murru, Fausto Colombo, Laura Peja, Simone Tosoni, Richard Kilborn, Risto Kunelius, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Leif Kramp, Nico Carpentier

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The construction of the homeless in the Greek street paper *shedia*

Vaia Doudaki, Nico Carpentier

Abstract
The chapter deploys discourse theory to study the construction of the homeless subject position in a Greek street paper called *shedia*. After a brief outline of the relevant parts of Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discourse theory, the article first reports on the theoretical work that outlines the elements that construct the homeless subject position, keeping in mind the existance of a hegemonic version of this homeless subject position, which is driven by stigma and othering. While mainstream media often replicate this problematic representation, street papers offer counter-hegemonic (and more respectful) articulations of the homeless subject position. In the case study that follows, 11 print issues (totalling 726 pages) of the Greek street paper were analysed through textual analysis. On the basis of this analysis of *shedia*'s coverage, we can see three nodal points of the hegemonic discourse on the homeless at work: the absence of the home as stigma, the lack of agency and the political identity of the denizen. The counter-hegemonic discourse, that can also be found in *shedia*, has three nodal points that are the inverse of those of the hegemonic discourse: the alternative home, the attribution of agency and the political identity of the citizen. Arguably, this case study is relevant because it shows the mirror-image-logics of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic representations, and the significance of using high theory and political philosophy to further our understanding of social practices.

"Who among us, in his idle hours, has not taken a delicious pleasure in con-
structing for himself a model apartment, a dream house, a house of dreams?"
                                    Charles Baudelaire (quoted in Benjamin, 1939/1999: 227)

1. Introduction[1]

Homeless people are very much part of modern (urban) life, and many middle-class people regularly—albeit very briefly—meet homeless people, for instance, on the streets or when traveling with public transport. Snow and Anderson (1987: 1336) start their article, "Identity Work among the Homeless", with a series of concepts that have been used to refer to those at the lowest part of the social hierarchy, which includes concepts such as *ribauz*, *lumpenproletariat*, untouchables and underclass. The middle-class gaze of us—better-off city dwellers—in the street or in the tube, only seems to confirm this.

Among the vast academic literature on homelessness, the above-mentioned Snow and Anderson's article is one of the early publications that focused on the identities of homeless people, showing the complexities and diversities that characterize this social group, but also doing what still happens only too rarely—listening to homeless people—which also gently counters the significant stigma that this group is confronted with on an almost permanent basis.

This article takes a similar approach, by deploying discourse theory: a theoretical framework that is rooted in political philosophy, to better understand the discursive construction of the homeless subject position in the Greek street paper *shedia*. In particular, Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discourse theory has the capacity of theorizing the discursive-political struggles that can be found in *shedia*, as this magazine shows the articulation of the disempowering hegemonic discourse on homeless people, attempting to dislocate it and offering an alternative, counter-hegemonic discourse, centred around three nodal points: the home, agency and citizenship.

2. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) provide an outline of their discourse theory, which is embedded in a post-structuralist and post-Marxist agenda. In contrast to many other approaches in discourse studies, Laclau and

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1 Parts of this chapter have already been published, see Carpentier & Doudaki, 2019 and Doudaki & Carpentier, 2019

Mouffe's discourse theory uses a macro-textual and macro-contextual (see Carpentier, 2017: 16-17) definition of discourses as frameworks of intelligibility. Discourses thus become seen as necessary instruments to give meaning to the social world, without denying the latter's material dimensions. This also implies that discourses provide subjects with points of identification, which Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 115) call *"subject positions"*. Similar to Althusser's notion of interpellation, these subject positions offer subjects the building blocks of their subjectivity, as discursive structures for the construction of the self.

Moreover, Laclau and Mouffe emphasize the structural openness of discourses, which are always vulnerable to re-articulation, avoiding an ultimate and total closure of meaning. Discourses are often coherent entities, gaining their stability from privileged signifiers—or nodal points—but this stability is never to be taken for granted, as discourses can change, become insignificant or disintegrate. This contingency also impacts subject positions, that can never totally saturate the subject, as there are always a multiplicity of subject positions at work, and subjects always construct unique identificatory relationships with these subject positions. But at the same time, subject positions exercise considerable power, by providing structures of meaning that structure people's subjectivities, how they see, feel, experience and think about others and themselves, and which subjects and groups they like or dislike, consider friends or enemies, or consider even human or not. Of course, subjects do not identify with all discourses and subject positions. In some cases, they will, but in other cases they might distance themselves, remain insensitive or become hostile towards other discourses, which implies, as Van Brussel (2018) has argued, discursive recognition without identification.

Finally, Laclau and Mouffe also strongly thematize the political dimensions of the discursive, as discourses engage in struggles with each other, over the establishment of hegemony. Not all discursive struggles result in hegemony, as some struggles simply continue without any discourse achieving victory, but in some cases a discourse manages to gain a dominant position and to transform itself into a social imaginary that can benefit from the luxury of taken-for-grantedness, normalization and eventually sedimentation. But in this scenario, as the below example of homelessness will illustrate, even counter-hegemonic discourses are able to contest the hegemonic discourse and offer points of resistance, creating the threat that the once victorious discourse could be removed from its (discursive) throne.

3.   Constructions of the homeless and the home

One area where we can see this struggle at work is in relation to the subject position of the homeless person. The homeless is a subject position, contested, fluid, contradictory, as well as an object of identification and dis-identification, acceptance and rejection, but still very real in its existence. As a subject position, it is particular, because it is articulated through a series of disempowering signifiers that together form a stigma. The vortex of this stigma generates strong absorptive forces that tend to reduce the individual to this one subject position, ignoring the multiplicity of subject positions that make up a person's subjectivity. This reduction can even be found in (some of) the academic literature on homelessness, which in turn has provoked a series of critical reconsiderations of what is often called *homeless iden-tity*, addressing the issues in the *"extensive literature focusing on homelessness and identity"* where *"often homelessness is presented as constituting a discrete and one-dimensional identity that people avoid or embrace"* (Parsell, 2011: 443).

The homeless stigma is simultaneously discursive and material, affective and cognitive, temporal and spatial, dealing with absences and presences, working with selves and others. It is an assemblage of material routines, sleeping places, *"tattered and soiled clothes"* (Snow & Anderson, 1987: 1339-1340), interactions with companions, social workers, police officers, kind or aggressive passers-by, policies aimed at objectivation, disciplining, invisibility, removal and criminalization, all structured through the absence of one crucial material component: the home. Snow and Anderson (1987: 1340) describe how central antagonism is to this assemblage:

> Actual or threatened proximity to them not only engenders fear and enmity in other citizens but also frequently invites the most visceral kinds of responses, ranging from shouts of invective to organized neighborhood opposition to proposed shelter locations to 'troll-busting' campaigns aimed at terrorization.

Even if the subject position of the homeless is 'only' part of the assemblage of homelessness, it still merits our attention, because of its centrality to the operations of the stigma, and because of the hegemonic forces that attempt to construct this subject position through the stigma, objectifying and dehumanizing homeless people, denying them access to the signifiers of agency and citizenship, reducing them to passive denizens[2]. But also the resistance against the hegemonic articulation of

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2   Denizenship originally (see Hammar, 1989) referred to the (reduced) rights of permanent residents in a foreign country. Here, we use it in the expanded meaning, as the reduced political, civil and social citizenship rights (see Marshall, 1992) within a populace. Turner (2016) calls the latter denizenship type 2.

the homeless, attempting to subjectivize and humanize them(selves), makes this a highly relevant component of the assemblage of homelessness.

In the construction of the subject position of the homeless, the absence of the home—or what McCarthy (2013: 54 – referring to Swain, 2011) calls *"roofless-ness"*—plays a crucial role, both in articulating the subject position and in organizing the logics of stigmatization. Here, we should keep the centrality of the home in Western imaginaries in mind, as exemplified by the centrality of the home in Felski's[3] (1999/2000: 18 – our emphasis) seminal definition of the everyday, as:

> [...] grounded in three key facets: time, space and modality. The temporality of the everyday
> [...] is that of repetition, 'the spatial ordering of the everyday is anchored in a sense of home'
> and the characteristic mode of experiencing the everyday is that of habit.

In this imaginary, the home is the house, a material shelter that generates a private sphere for the (bourgeois) nuclear family, a process that Hollows (2008: 10) called the *"familialization of domestic culture"*. The home is also an archive and storage space, containing a multitude of objects, tempting Maleuvre (1999: 115) to the following description: *"it is as an owner of a great many objects that the bourgeois individual inhabits the home. To dwell is to possess. Home and property strike a perfect constellation in the concept of the private collection."*

The (possession of the) home itself functions as a normative ideal, which is actively imposed as one of the requirements of modern life. Heidegger's (1993: 363) choice for using the notion of homelessness, as a metaphor to capture alienation, is just one of the many possible illustrations of the centrality of the home in the Western imaginations. While, for Heidegger, home/being homed is *"a condition in which humankind is at one with itself, balanced between the earth and the sky, between physicality and spirituality"*, and homelessness refers to *"the alienation of that balance, an estrangement of body and spirit"* (Smyth & Croft, 2006: 15). Societal groups that are outside this hegemonic discourse (and its materialization into a home) are, in different degrees, subjected to interventions that aim to align their behaviour with this hegemonic discourse. Powell (2008: 88), for instance, describes how the nomadic life of Roma and Travellers exposes them to societal pressures to *"conform to a sedentary way of life"*. The sedentarist hegemony—with sedentarism defined as *"the system of ideas and practices which serve to normalise and reproduce sedentary modes of existence and pathologise and repress nomadic modes of existence"* (McVeigh, 1997: 9)—not only affects Roma and Travellers, though. Also, the subject position of

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3   This is not to argue that Felski does not pay attention to hybridity and fluidity.

the homeless is articulated through this anti-nomadist discourse, where the lack of a home is a sign of *"failure and degradation"* (Hughes-Edwards, 2006: 122), and *"representations of homelessness can often work to reaffirm idealized notions of domestic life in which the home is equated with 'safety and security' and the streets with 'fear and danger '"* (Hollows, 2008: 121, with reference to Wardhaugh, 1999: 96).

The central position of the home in Western imaginaries is not without contestations. Two key contestations are important here, as they also have the potential to impact on the stigma articulated with the subject position of the homeless. Morley's (2000: 47) emphasis on the mobile home as symbolic space (and not so much a place) represents one type of contestation, exemplified by this citation: *"home may not be so much a singular physical entity fixed in a particular place, but rather a mobile, symbolic habitat, a performative way of life and of doing things in which one makes one's home while in movement."* Even if there are many—pleasant and unpleasant—ways of organizing and experiencing mobile domesticity—consider, for instance, Richter's (2005) book *Home on the Rails*, about female bourgeois railroad travel—the more positive evaluation of mobile domesticity also offers the potential for more benevolent articulations of the homeless subject positions. The second contestation focuses more on the problematization of the home as the site of disciplining interventions, unequal power relations and violence. Here, Haraway's (1991: 171-72) description of the home can be used as an illustration of this contestation:

> Home: Women-headed households, serial monogamy, flight of men, old women alone, technology of domestic work, paid homework, re-emergence of home sweat-shops, home-based businesses and telecommuting, electronic cottage, urban homelessness, migration, module architecture, reinforced (simulated) nuclear family, intense domestic violence.

4.   Media constructions of the homeless

There are many locations where the discourses on the homeless subject position circulate, but if we look at mainstream media, homelessness is not an issue that they frequently cover; when it is addressed, the hegemonic discourse of homelessness is largely reproduced, conveying *"mainstream society's messages of power, influence, and authority"*, since *"[b]y exercising our power to name, we construct a social phenomenon, homelessness, the criteria used to define it, and a stereotype of the people to whom it refers"* (Daly, 1996: 9). But in many cases, homeless people are not visible, and thus become—to use Tuchman's (1978) concept—*"symbolically annihilated"*. When homelessness is covered by mainstream media, episodic coverage dominates, focusing on the tragic death of an anonymous individual or on

charity work being done to support homeless people (especially around the Christmas holidays periods) (Howley, 2003: 280). Only rarely, the structural or systemic reasons of homelessness are addressed.

The mainstream media coverage of homeless people is aligned with the hegemonic discourse of stigmatization, as outlined above. Homeless people are portrayed as a *"threat"* to the well-being of society, largely through *"them versus us"* articulations (Whang & Min, 1999a). The processes and signifying practices of othering are evident even in more sympathetic approaches of the homeless, since they are then reduced to being victims and helpless, dependent for their salvation on society's benevolence, while the rest of society is assumed to be healthy and powerful (Whang & Min, 1999a.). When they are not presented as victims, homeless people are represented as responsible for their situation. In these cases, responsibility is attributed to the individuals, disconnected from any structural causes and dimensions, employing again binary oppositional schemata (Whang & Min, 1999b). Furthermore, in mainstream media, 'experts' dominate as sources on homelessness. When news about homelessness appears, the homeless remain largely absent, which renders them voiceless, whereas various authority holders speak on their behalf or (more often) against them. In the cases where homeless people are given the opportunity to speak, their role is usually *"limited to the devalued voice of experience"* (Schneider 2011: 71), which contributes to the construction of the dominant discourse of the homeless and the perpetuation of their marginalization and stigmatization.

5.   Counter voices: Street papers

The mainstream media coverage, and its alignment with the hegemonic discourse of stigmatization and sedentarism, is not the only media environment that allows for the circulation of the homeless subject position. Some media publications explicitly resist the hegemonic discourse of homelessness, and engage in a discursive struggle over the construction of this subject position. The most poignant example is the so-called street press, which made its appearance in the late 19th century, but has been proliferating from the late 1980s and 1990s onward. *Street News*, established in 1989 in New York, is considered to be the first contemporary street newspaper and has served as a prototype for street papers around the world. Also, *The Big Issue*, launched in 1991 in London, paved the way for the flourishing of street papers across Europe.

Street papers, circulating most often in the format of magazines or newspapers, demonstrate considerable diversity as to their format, design, content and op-

erational models, but also consistency in regards to their approach and philosophy. They do share a common main purpose, which is supported by their distribution model, and which is to support homeless and other socially excluded people to find their way back into society, through employment (Harter, Edwards, McClanahan, Hopson, & Carson-Stern, 2004; Boukhari, 1999; Howley, 2005). Homeless and poor people are the sole vendors of these editions, having the opportunity to gain some income and potentially reconnect with society.

At the same time, street papers have a strong focus on the coverage of home-lessness issues, poverty and social exclusion, broadening the scope of the latter by bringing more inclusive perspectives of their constituents and dimensions, and rais-ing awareness on social inequality and injustice (Harter et al., 2004). They publish *"highly personalized accounts of life on the streets, coupled with fearless critiques of contemporary economic conditions and regressive (often repressive) social policy"* (Howley, 2003: 280-281). By bringing in the voices and perspectives of the homeless and poor people, but also of activists, artists and civil society, street papers broaden the perspective of what homelessness and social exclusion is, and highlight the struc-tural dimensions of causes and effects of the increasing social and economic inequali-ties. As Howley argues, *"street papers challenge the basic assumption that capitalism is a viable, let alone an equitable system of human relations"* (Howley, 2003: 288).

However, there is a need to be careful with univocally celebrating street pa-pers, especially when considering the actual range of opportunities that is offered to vendors to express themselves. Torck (2001) argues that the space given to the vendors' voices in street papers is generally limited, and restricted to specific writ-ing genres, like the personal narratives, a restriction that in fact perpetuates their stereotypical representations. In many cases, street papers' vendors are not part of the management and editorial teams, which raises questions about how participa-tory and grassroots-based these publications are. Moreover, the search for sustain-able (business) models has driven some street papers towards (more mainstream) content of general interest, moving away from content that is advocating for homeless people. For example, *The Big Issue,* whose model has been considered successful in achieving high sales, has been criticized for focusing too much on news about entertainment and the arts, not exhibiting sufficient interest in issues of homelessness or poverty and in hosting the vendors' original voices (Torck, 2001).

These tensions and debates reflect the different, and to a certain degree, com-peting visions of the street papers' mission, and relate to their efforts to balance: providing employment opportunities to the homeless (arguing for a business-ori-ented model) and covering issues related to social and economic injustice, by host-

ing the voice of the communities affected (arguing for an alternative media organization model, promoting participation in management and content production, and non-hierarchical organization). Still, even when considering this diversity, street papers have the capacity to move away from the hegemonic discourse on homeless people, and offer different, more respectful articulations of this subject position.

6.   Countering stigmatization: A case study of *shedia*

In order to exemplify how these counter-hegemonic articulations work, how an alternative articulation of homeless people is constructed, but also how we can still see (traces of) the hegemonic discourse on the homeless, we will focus in this case study on *shedia* (*σχεδία,* meaning raft), the only active street paper currently operative in Greece. It circulates in the form of a monthly magazine and its first issue was published in February 2013. It is operated through the NGO Diogenes, which was established in 2010, in Athens, with the aim to support, through a wide range of activities, the efforts of homeless and socially excluded people to (re) integrate into the social tissue. *Shedia* is a member of the International Network of Street Papers (INSP).

Following the model of street papers around the world, *shedia* is sold by its network of vendors in public places, in the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. Its network of vendors includes: homeless, long-term unemployed, people living in poverty, refugees, asylum-seekers, and people trying to battle drug addiction. *Shedia*'s vision is a fair world, "*without poverty, in which each individual has access to a safe home and enjoys the right to live with dignity, as an equal member of our society*"[4] (shedia, 2017). The street paper's main priority is "*to support our fellow citizens experiencing poverty and social exclusion in their most extreme forms to support themselves. Activating the people we are addressing and trying to support them, is a fundamental component of our interventionist approach*" (shedia, 2017).

Shedia had 186 active vendors in 2017, whereas it has employed 486 vendors since 2013. Its vendors sell the magazine for 4 euros, with 2.7 euros per issue going directly and indirectly (social insurance) to the vendor. In 2017, *shedia* had eight full-time and two part-time employed members of staff, 32 voluntary content contributors, and 31 volunteers supporting *shedia*'s activities; there were also a number of other occasional volunteers and contributors. *shedia*'s revenue comes mainly from sales and subscriptions, and, to a lesser degree, from donations, ad-

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4   All quotes from *Shedia*'s articles and website that are included in this text, have been translated from Greek to English.

vertising and fundraising activities. In 2017, its monthly average sales were 23,000 copies (shedia, 2017).

In this case study, the *shedia* publications covered a period of one year (July 2017 – June 2018); 11 print issues and 726 pages in total were analysed through textual analysis (Saldaña, 2009). An inductive approach was used to identify the elements and nodal points of the articulation of the subject position of the homeless identity.

7. Homelessness in *shedia*

Shedia's signifying practices show the duality of the positions that subjects (individuals, or, in this case, organizations) can take towards discourses, identifying with some, and recognizing the existence of others—in the latter case, without identifying with them. In *shedia*, we can find the recognition of the hegemonic discourse on the homeless subject position, but *shedia*'s articles dislocate this discourse in favour of a counter-hegemonic discourse, that moves away from the objectivation of homeless people, focusing on their subjectivation. In *shedia*'s coverage we can see three nodal points of the hegemonic discourse on the homeless at work: the absence of the home as stigma, the lack of agency and the political identity of the denizen. The counter-hegemonic discourse also has three nodal points that are the inverse of those of the hegemonic discourse: the alternative home, the attribution of agency and the political identity of the citizen.

7.1. *From the bourgeois home to multiplicity and dignity*

The material absence of a home—or the lack of a permanent residence as it is translated—is crucial in the construction of the homeless subject position, and forms one of its nodal points. The *shedia* articles recognize (and critique) the existence of a hegemonic discourse that articulates the home in such a way that homeless people become discredited, and *shedia* renders this discourse visible. One discursive element of this hegemonic discourse is the permanent residence, preferably home ownership, as the benchmark of a successful and socially acceptable life. It is the precondition of someone's public identity and the key to accessing the services and facilities of organized society. Another element of the hegemonic discourse is that the home is constructed primarily, or exclusively, as property and through its economic value, with significant emphasis on the material elements (building, furniture, etc.). This construction of home as property, organized around the capitalist logic and the dominant models of the banking

system and the housing market, uses the home-as-a-house definition, articulating it as a source of profit. Thirdly, the hegemonic discourse is grounded in a dichotomy—either one has a permanent residence or not—and thus leaves no space for the possibility of a 'homed' person with a 'normal' life to be found without home at some point of his/her life.

Even if *shedia* does recognize this hegemonic discourse (and the specific way that the home, as its nodal point, is articulated), it does not identify with it. In contrast, the *shedia* articles support an alternative (and counter-hegemonic) discourse on the homeless subject position, by referring to alternative, broader and more fluid approaches of the home, instructed by the homeless people's living experiences and more symbolic and affective understandings of the value of home. Moreover, the *shedia* articles attempt to dislocate the hegemonic sedentary discourse, by using two strategies. The first strategy points to the perverse and anti-social consequences of bourgeois housing policies, which reject affordable housing (as it is not profitable), and facilities and shelters for the homeless (as they undermine the economic value of the surrounding houses). As a consequence, we see increasing inequalities, also at intersectional levels, between the privileged and the dis-privileged (from which the capitalist system feeds), and thus increasing the levels of homelessness. Moreover, the encroachment on public space, and its privatization, are problematized, where, for instance, urban public spaces become inaccessible for homeless people, while they remain underused by the population at large. A second strategy questions the safety and tranquillity of the (bourgeois) home. Its immobility and fixity is sometimes related in the *shedia* articles to its being also a place of isolation and inactivity, and a dangerous and violent place, which forces its inhabitants into homelessness, either due to domestic violence and toxic family relations, or to social/external factors of conflict and war.

The *shedia* articles propose an alternative discourse, which still positions the home as a nodal point of this discourse, but that simultaneously produces a more empowered subject position of the homeless. In this alternative discourse, the home is defined as a symbolic space, which opens up opportunities for articulating it as mobile and multiple. Not restricting the home to the house renders the home flexible and hybrid, adjustable to the people's needs and living conditions. Here, the home can include temporary and/or transit places, the neighbourhood and the surrounding natural environments. Sometimes the home is simply what one carries with him/her, consisting of his/her valuable belongings. It might not be the home of choice, or the ideal home, but the home one manages to create, or inhabit, after abandoning an abusive parental home, or it might be the temporary shelter that still offers safety. This articulation entails the awareness of fragility, precarity, contin-

gency and multiplicity in relation to the home, which functions as both a burden and a liberating force, as a disabling and enabling condition for the homeless.

The articulation of the home as symbolic space, which we can find in the articles, moves the definition of the home away from its economic value, and sees it as the benchmark of a dignified life, focusing on the quality of life. A home provides its inhabitants with dignified living conditions that are lacking in some of the temporary shelters, and even more so, in warehouses, tents, in places with no water and electricity, etc. In this sense, dignity gains priority over the house that stops being a home, as in some cases the life on the streets is chosen over a violent and toxic home environment. Another element in this shift away from the home's economic value is the articulation of the home as a memory with high affective value. In this re-articulation, the home—often either lost or forcefully abandoned, and usually romanticized—becomes the synonym of childhood, a safe haven, and a family space that offered (and could again offer) love and happiness.

7.2. From removing to attributing agency

The subject position of the homeless is also articulated around his/her agency or lack thereof, which is the second nodal point. In the hegemonic discourse on the homeless subject position that we can find in the *shedia* articles, the homeless become objectified, and represented as inactive, useless and weak. The *shedia* articles argue that in the hegemonic discourse, homeless people are represented as powerless and lacking agency, if they are represented at all. Here, the subject position of the homeless is articulated through their inactivity, uselessness, lack of purpose in life, non-embeddedness in, or disconnection from, the social tissue, and (lack of) capacity to function as 'productive' members of society.

The *shedia* articles attempt to dislocate this hegemonic construction. Obviously, through *shedia*'s publishing and distribution practices, the invisibility of homelessness is countered, but the need—and the social responsibility—to support homeless people in regaining voice and visibility, is also explicitly addressed, both as a critique and as action taken, by civil society, activists and artists, trying to raise awareness, to destigmatize, and to practically support homeless people. Moreover, the *shedia* articles take aim at the attribution of individual responsibility to homeless people. It is emphasized that the responsibility for the homeless persons' disempowerment lies with the political-economic system, and not with the individuals themselves. For instance, in the *shedia* articles we can find the critique on the combination of low wages and unaffordable housing, especially in the prosperous mega-cities of the West, like in New York, Paris, Toronto, etc., which makes it still

impossible for employees to have a "decent" residence.

The *shedia* articles also invoke an alternative discourse, that focuses on the homeless' agency, resilience and (social) activity—including their possible employment—while still acknowledging the limits to this agency. One element of this construction is related to the homeless person taking on particular roles, such as employee or expert. The articles refer to homeless people who work, and whose income is not sufficient to allow them to maintain a residence, and to those who function as tour guides, taking visitors to the backstreets of central Athens in *shedia*'s "Invisible tours" project. The homeless are also articulated as having agency by stressing that they engage in particular activities, constructing both physical/bodily and intellectual agency, ranging from sports to capacity building seminars and the arts. Still, these are mainly activities organized by *shedia*—or by collaborating or similar organizations, in Greece and abroad—in an effort to help homeless people socialize, empower themselves and (re)connect with society. *Shedia* attributes, for instance, a lot of importance to the Greek homeless football team, created through its founding NGO, Diogenes, and the team's participation in the Homeless World Cup, which is seen as a substantial means to activate and socialize individuals living on the streets. A third way in which homeless people are represented as having agency is through the possession of particular characteristics. They are, for instance, represented as having a developed sense of solidarity; they are seen as members of society who help one another and other members of society, being especially supportive to people in need or in a weak position (e.g., when their fellow citizens are exposed to the dangers of life on the streets). Homeless people are also represented as resourceful, and being aware of how they are seen by others. They may even perform the hegemonic homeless subject position, in order to help others. For example, a man in a wheelchair wrote to the magazine about how a homeless person offered to help him, when he could not pass with his wheelchair, as the pavement ramp was blocked by a fancy car. The homeless person then forced the car owner "*to come out of his hole*", by leaning on the car and activating its alarm; the owner, infuriated by the fact that a "*street person*" would touch his car, rushed to take his car and leave (issue 58, p. 12). Another agency-enhancing characteristic is the homeless' resilience against material, but also psychological and social hardships, which is seen as sometimes to exceed that of people in much better financial and living conditions. There are, for instance, a number of stories in *shedia* about homeless vendors consoling people that would confide in them their physical or mental health problems.

At the same time, even if the *shedia* articles systematically highlight the structural causes of homelessness, and focus on the homeless' humanity, or on their efforts to tackle their problems, the articles still articulate homeless people as

in need of help, even if it is a different kind of help than the one that is found in the hegemonic discourse. The main aim of *shedia*—to "*help people help themselves*", which aligns with the broader vision of street papers around the world—lies in the acknowledgment that homeless individuals have the agency to take control of their own lives and get empowered, but they still need society's assistance to do so.

7.3. From denizen to citizen

The hegemonic discourse on homeless people also affects the public/civic component of this subject position, as they become disconnected from the polis and its (full) citizenship. As is the case with the other nodal points of the hegemonic discourse on the homeless, *shedia* recognizes the existence of this hegemonic discourse, but simultaneously attempts to dislocate it. In one of *shedia*'s issues, one of the venders uses the word "*dismemberment*" (issue 56, p. 47) to describe her experience, which captures this reduction of citizenship to denizenship. This reduction, linked to the rather oppressive state policies, affects the more traditional political and civic citizenship rights, but also what Marshall (1992) called "*social citizenship rights*", depriving homeless people of social insurance, healthcare, education and employment. Homeless people are constructed as a threat to other people's safety (as thieves and/or being violent[5]) and health (as carriers of diseases). They are a threat and miasma, also due to their very existence and visibility in the city, as their material presence (and the presence of facilities for the homeless) threatens the economic value of the house-as-property, and frustrates citybranding initiatives. These problematizations make homeless individuals lose the right to inhabit not only private spaces, but also public spaces. They "*are transformed from political bodies, that is citizens, to simple bodies, to materials, to numbers*" (issue 59, p. 30-31). Moreover, the homeless are not only objectified and stigmatized, but become, more and more, criminalized (e.g. the practice of not allowing homeless persons to sleep in parks and on squares in residential areas, is becoming widespread).

Shedia's articles also contain an alternative discourse, which starts from the (re)humanization of the homeless, and which invites for a reconfiguration of citizenship, towards a more inclusive and diverse version. These articles construct citizenship as affective[6], through the stories they contain, describing the homeless'

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5   *Shedia*'s articles do contain a few references to incidents with homeless people as perpetrators, but they are exceptional.

6   See the academic literature on affective citizenship, for instance, Mookherjee (2005) and Di Gregorio & Merolli (2016).

feelings, needs, (lack of) well-being, and their everyday lives and living conditions, often told by the homeless themselves. By positioning the homeless people in the center of these stories, their human face—largely lost through the processes of stigmatization and objectivation—is reconstructed, also by referring to particular characteristics, such as civility, kindness, helpfulness and solidarity (as outlined above).

In these signifying practices, the homeless are not critiqued for their weaknesses and addictions; rather, these stories provide the space to explain the motivations and reasons behind addiction, to sketch its multi-layered reality, and to generate understanding that legitimizes the use of more inclusionary models of citizenship (accepting that citizens can have problems and still remain citizens). For example, the consumption of alcohol appears often in the homeless' stories; the problems it creates are not concealed and alcoholism is not glorified; at the same time, the nuances of the ways that alcohol becomes a refuge, or solace, in dealing with the physical harshness of being a homeless person (cold, rain, no regular access to food and (warm) water, for instance), but also the emotional and psychological hardships of loneliness, fear, and despair, are explained.

The alternative discourse, secondly, builds on pluralist forms of citizenship, not only by articulating homeless people as one of the many different groups of citizens, but also by showing the internal diversity of the homeless, rejecting their homogenization, and instead emphasizing the cross-cutting connections with many other identities. Homeless people appear as members of diverse social groups, countering the stereotype of the anonymous individuals that exist—disconnected from the social—as a separate (social) category. In this context, the subject position of the homeless intersects with the subject positions of the immigrant (especially the ones who have no 'legal papers') and the refugee (especially when living in unsuitable accommodation, in camps and temporary settlements). Moreover, the articles show that homeless people can be well-educated people, or, as already mentioned, they can be people with employment who cannot afford accommodation. Homeless people can also be couples with children and pets, and families that are forced to live on the streets due to economic reasons, or forced displacement (e.g. due to conflict and war). This subjectified articulation of the homeless then also includes representations of the homeless as responsible and caring people, taking care of their children, other family members or their pets, supporting and helping others in need, being socially aware and displaying solidarity.

8. Conclusion

Shedia is a location where the disempowering and stigmatizing—and sometimes fear-inducing, sometimes criminalizing, sometimes patronizing—hegemonic discourse on the homeless subject position is structurally contested. The magazine offers a significant counter-voice for a deeply problematic form of othering, firstly by rendering the hegemonic discourse visible and then, secondly, by dislocating a multitude of its discursive elements. And, thirdly, *shedia* also invokes a counter-hegemonic discourse, by re-articulating the three nodal points of the hegemonic discourse. The (signifier of the) bourgeois home as economic asset is opened up, to demonstrate a variety of homes, where the home becomes articulated as a symbolic-affective space. The agency that the homeless subject position lacks, becomes reinstated. And the denizen, having his/her political, civic and social rights denied, is transformed into a citizen again.

From a broader perspective, this case study also demonstrates the relevance of using high theory and political philosophy to further our understanding of social practices, and support empirical research. This cross-fertilization allows not only a better understanding of the structural processes in social practice, but also contributes to the further development of theoretical frameworks. This case study also shows the importance of studying resistant practices and political struggles, as they show the contingency of the social, and bring hope for generating more empowering and humanizing frameworks of intelligibility into thinking (and feeling) the identities of stigmatized groups.

Moreover, this case study is also relevant because it analyses how resistance can produce a mirror image of the discourse it is resisting, with the three nodal points still very present (even if they are inversed). This comes with a cost, for a number of reasons. Through this photonegative logic, the hegemonic discourse still obtains a presence, offering itself for identification[7]. A second issue is that the magazine's articles still, to some degree, confirm the modernist hegemony of the home and sedentary life, pushing more nomadic lifestyles out of the picture. Finally, some of the very dark sides of the homeless subject position get filtered out of the alternative discourse, even if there is attention for the milder dark sides (e.g. alcohol abuse) that can still be integrated into the alternative discourse. Despite these issues, it is hard not to see *shedia* as a materialization of the hope for a more respectful way of thinking about homelessness and (thus) for a better life for homeless people.

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7   At the same time, *shedia*'s approach brings out the distinction between discursive recognition and identification very clearly. As this distinction is still underused in discourse theory, it has high theoretical relevance.

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