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"EARTHQUAKE WILL PASS, AND THE LIFE WILL GO ON": A CRITICAL READING OF PUBLIC SPOTS OF DASK¹

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ABSTRACT

Neoliberal governmentality encourages individuals to value their life as a proper(ity). The neoliberal valuation of life embraces 'self-responsible' and 'competitive' individuals. Drawing on the contingency of life, neoliberal governmentality intervenes in affects to govern individuals. For instance, individuals are made anxious by the insecurity, vulnerability and ambiguity about the unintended consequences of what may happen to them. In this study, we address how Turkish Catastrophe Insurance Pool/'Natural Disaster Insurance Institution' (Doğal Afet Sigortaları Kurumu—hereafter, DASK) intervenes in affects for neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ity). With an interpretive, a post-structuralist and a critical management approach, we examine and analyze the content of the public spots of DASK through the lens of neoliberal governmentality. Accordingly, these public spots portray the victims of Van earthquake as 'compulsory guests' and problematise being a compulsory guest. We remark that the compulsory guests do not feel at home at their relatives' homes. Within the neoliberal precarization process to foster responsible subjects, DASK portrays the uneasiness—or properness—of compulsory guests through hopes, anxieties and fears so that individuals are encouraged to get their compulsory earthquake insurance to avoid being a compulsory guest.

Keywords: Neoliberal Governmentality, Foucault, Precarization, Precarious Life, Public Spot, Proper(Ty), Feeling At Home, Affect, DASK

JEL Codes: J17, L20, L21, M10, M14

"DEPREM GEÇECEK, HAYAT DEVAM EDECEK": DASK'IN KAMU SPOTLARI ÜZERİNE ELEŞTİREL BİR İNCELEME

ÖZ

Neoliberal yönetimsellik, bireyleri yaşamlarını uygun bir şekilde değerlendirmeye teşvik eder. Yaşamın neoliberal değerlemesi "kendinden sorumlu" ve "rekabetçi" bireyleri benimser. Yaşamın durumsallığı üzerinden neoliberal yönetimsellik, bireyleri yönetmeye yönelik duygulara/duygulanımlara müdahil olur. Örneğin, bireyler kendilerine neler olabileceğinin beklenmedik sonuçları hakkında güvensizlik/güvencesizlik, savunmasızlık/kırılganlık ve belirsizlik nedeniyle endişe duymaktadırlar. Bu çalışmada Türkiye'de Doğal Afet Sigortaları Kurumu'nun (Doğal Afet Sigortaları Kurumu - DASK) yaşamın mülkiyet olarak neoliberal değerlemesinde duygulanımlara nasıl müdahale ettiğine işaret etmekteyiz. DASK'ın kısa filmlerinin içeriğini yorumlayıcı, post-yapısalcı ve eleştirel yönetim yaklaşımıyla neoliberal yönetimsellik bakış açısından incelemekte ve çözümlemekteyiz. Bu doğrultuda söz konusu kamu spotları, Van depreminin kurbanlarını "zorunlu misafir" olarak betimlemekte ve zorunlu misafirliği sorunsallaştırmaktadır. Zorunlu misafirlerin akrabalarının evlerinde kendilerini evlerinde gibi hissetmedikleri gösterilmektedir. Neoliberal prekaryalaştırma sürecinde DASK, bireysel sorumluluğu güçlendirmek için umut, endişe ve korkular yoluyla zorunlu misafirlerin yaşamak zorunda kaldığı huzursuzluğa ya da rahatsızlığa vurgu yaparak bireylerin zorunlu misafir olmaktan kaçınmak için zorunlu deprem sigortalarını yaptırmalarını teşvik etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Neoliberal Yönetimsellik, Foucault, Prekaryaya, Güvencesizlik, Güvencesiz/Kırılgan Yaşam, Kamu Spotu, Mülkiyet, Evde Hissetmek, Duygulanım, DASK

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1. INTRODUCTION

Imagine that a powerful earthquake hits you and your family. You lose your home and have to stay at your relative's or friend's house. You cannot have privacy or intimacy. You cannot sleep in your own bed. You must use an unfamiliar bathroom. Your child cannot watch television freely. This scenario was presented by the Turkish 'Natural Disaster Insurance Institution' (*Doğal Afet Sigortalar Kurumu*—DASK) in four public spots broadcasted in 2014 on major television channels. The theme of the public spots was 'compulsory guests'. As DASK explains, the public spots were inspired by the stories of the victims of the 2011 Van Earthquake, which had a magnitude of 7.1.

The 2011 Van earthquake left thousands of people homeless; thus, several homeless people had to stay at the homes of their relatives. DASK calls them 'compulsory guests'; the public spots present compulsory guests as 'not feeling at home' at the homes of their relatives. Every public spot ends with the phrase 'get your compulsory earthquake insurance and avoid being a compulsory guest'. Moreover, the motto of DASK is 'earthquake will pass, and life will go on'. In the public spots, this motto implies that an earthquake may disrupt lives, but will not bring another life. After an earthquake, individuals still need to make individual efforts to survive. In other words, they still need to have "good" circulations amid threats that are imminent to life' (Anderson, 2012, p. 34).

Scholars acknowledge that good circulations should be sustained within all domains of life, as neoliberal governmentality undermines the dualisms of work and non-work, production and consumption, production and reproduction, and private and public (Anderson, 2012; Munro, 2012). Within the aforementioned blurred domains, value is not only created within factories, but within all life (Böhm & Land, 2012; Fleming, 2014). In this sense, neoliberal governmentality tries to transfer the life to the market by producing self-responsible, competitive and entrepreneurial subjects whose relationships are informed by the cost-benefit analyses they make (Foucault, 2008; Weiskopf & Munro, 2012).

Neoliberal governmentality does not target individuals directly; it shapes the 'milieu' through affects. Affects are not subjective; they are of being-in-the-world; thus, being-with. They refer to how individuals resonate with the world (Ratcliffe, 2008). Depending on the contingency of life, and capacities and vulnerabilities of individuals, neoliberal governmentality enacts hopes, anxieties and fears (Anderson, 2012; 2014; Lorey, 2015) mostly

through imagined futures that embrace certain possibilities of what may come and what an individual may lose or gain, etc. (Anderson, 2010).

Drawing on neoliberal governmentality, we examine how DASK values ‘feeling at home’. The public spots portray the uneasiness of compulsory guests at their hosts’ homes. In this sense, compulsory guests are unfamiliar with the spaces that they are guests within; they cannot sleep well, watch television or use the bathroom freely. Even though the hosts are kind to compulsory guests, compulsory guests do not feel at home. They are embarrassed; they see themselves as burdens to their hosts, as one compulsory guest remarks that his extended stay is at odds with being a guest. Their unease is their proper(ty); their proper(ty) is neoliberal governmental self-governance.

Neoliberal governmentality appropriates life by valuing feeling at home within the duality of security and insecurity (Lorey, 2015). The neoliberal subjects try to feel secure within their home. The home, or shell, of the neoliberal subject is not restricted to a determinate space; it is a way of being. Feeling at home depends on self-responsibility, self-sufficiency, self-enclosure and self-interest. Their home is based on an individual cost–benefit analysis. They are responsible for what they can and cannot achieve. Moreover, feeling at home ensures good circulations by limiting being exposed. Not being exposed ignores the demands and vulnerabilities of others. While feeling at home, the world is ‘my world (home)’, where individuals try to adapt to the existing world (Joseph, 2013). Put differently, this is like ontological violence that precludes alternative values and identities (Joronen, 2013).

However, in contrast to the neoliberal governmental valuation of feeling at home, we point out that feeling at home cannot be attained by arriving and staying at safe individual harbours or by limiting being exposed. Feeling at home can embrace the unhomely when the groundlessness (Kraftl, 2007; Reedy & Learmonth, 2011)—and precariousness (Butler, 2009; Lorey, 2015)—of life is acknowledged. With this acknowledgement, we can feel at home within ‘co-exposition’ (Nancy, 2008).

In this study, drawing on the public spots of DASK, we address the following research questions:

R.Q 1: ‘How valuing life as proper(ty) is encouraged by feeling at home’?

R.Q 2: ‘How feeling at home can unsettle the valuation of life beyond proper(ty)’?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Foucault (1997) underlines that governmentality encompasses ‘to conduct individuals throughout their lives by placing them under the authority of a guide responsible for what they do and for what happens to them’ (p. 67). Governmentality refers to the ‘governmental rationality’ (Gordon, 1991, p. 1) of both subjectification and self-governing (Bröckling et al., 2011). Governmentality aims to ‘shape, guide or affect’ the conduct of actors (Gordon, 1991, p. 2). To achieve this, governmentality does not address individuals directly, but within their ‘milieu’ (Munro, 2012, pp. 348-351). The milieu encompasses individuals’ relations with themselves, others, things and events (Foucault, 1991, p. 93; Rose et al., 2006, p. 87).

Foucault (2007) underlines that the milieu is of ‘the problem of circulation and causality’ (p. 21); the problem of circulation, or separating good circulations from bad ones (Foucault, 2007, p. 18), concerns a certain valuation of life (Anderson, 2012; Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero, 2009). As a problem of causality, the milieu refers to the field of possibilities (Foucault, 2007, p. 20). By intervening in the milieu, governmentality aims to shape how diverse elements, encompassing human and non-human arrangements, affect each other for the valued life: ‘The milieu is a certain number of combined, overall effects bearing on all who live in it’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 21).

The concept of affect can adequately conceptualise the interventions in the milieu (Anderson, 2014). In recent years, some studies have conceptualised affect as autonomous and separated it strictly from feelings and emotions. However, within this conceptualisation, affect is addressed ‘as lines of force without a subject’ (Wetherell, 2012, p. 122), and the relation between affect and subjectivation cannot be analysed (Dawney, 2013; Wetherell, 2012).

In this study, we acknowledge the primacy of practices and material arrangements to address subjectivity; thus, we do not privilege bounded individuals and internal mental mechanisms (see Dawney, 2013; Ratcliffe, 2008; Wetherell, 2012). Affect is of being-in-the world and thus being-with. In this sense, it implies the impossibility of detached and self-sufficient individuals. Affect is inextricable from sense-making, and it refers to the process of affecting and being affected within the field of possibilities (Ratcliffe, 2008; 2013a). Additionally, the field of possibilities encompasses possible activities (what a person can do) and possible happenings (what might happen) (Ratcliffe, 2013b, p. 77). This conceptualisation of affect can address ‘the [neoliberal governmental] practices that subjectify’ (Wetherell, 2012, p. 122).

Neoliberal governmentality intervenes in the field of possibilities by making ‘competition’, rather than ‘exchange’, the essence of the market. For neoliberal governmentality, competition is ‘not a natural given that must be respected’, but must be produced (Foucault, 2008, p. 120).

Within neoliberal governmentality, competition is the ‘regulatory principle of society’ (Foucault, 2008, p. 146):

‘what is sought is not a society subject to the commodity-effect, but a society subject to the dynamic of competition. Not a super-market society, but an enterprise society’ (Foucault, 2008, p. 147).

Within this competitive milieu, governmentality operates within the field of possibilities through affect (Anderson, 2014). To compete, the subject should appropriate. His/her life should be valued as proper(ty) (see Butler and Athanasiou, 2013; Skeggs 2014). Since competition pervades all spheres of life, every activity may support life as proper(ty), as Foucault (2008) notes:

‘the individual’s life itself—with his relationships to his private property, for example, with his family, household, insurance, and retirement—must make him into a sort of permanent and multiple enterprise’ (p. 241).

The neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ty) encompasses individual practices of appropriation and what is proper:

‘In the early modern period the property/selfhood interconnection must have appeared almost tautological; one word for property was propriety deriving from the Latin *proprius*, that is, own or peculiar to oneself. What is proper to oneself is that which—existentially and etymologically!—one owns’ (Gunn, 1995, p. 48 cited in Skeggs, 2014, pp. 3-4).

The valued life, or life as proper(ty), depends on entrepreneurship, autonomy, coherence, purity, self-sufficiency and self-responsibility (Davies, 1998; Lorey, 2015, p. 30). This life is not inert; it demands a constant struggle to protect the proper(tied) life. Lorey (2015) points out that neoliberal governmentality depends on precarization. She defines the precarious in its broadest sense as ‘insecurity and vulnerability’ (Lorey, 2015, p. 10). She distinguishes between three dimensions of the precarious: ‘*precariousness*, *precarity* and governmental *precarization*’ (p. 11). For Lorey (2015), precariousness refers to the impossibility of being self-sufficient; to survive, we need the care of others, and our precariousness ‘exposes us to others’ (p. 20). In this sense, it is ‘socio-ontological’ and ‘existentially shared’. It is of being-with (Lorey, 2015, pp. 11-12; see also Butler, 2009; Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). Precarity is

the unequal distribution of the shared precariousness (Lorey, 2015, pp. 21-22). Additionally, this unequal distribution depends on precarization. As with many scholars, Lorey states that neoliberal governmentality addresses the contingency of life and ‘destabilize[s]’ it (p. 13).

The neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ity) within precarization demands self-responsibilisation. This produces individualisation with the fantasy of managing ‘one’s “own” precariousness’ (Lorey, 2015, p. 26) and the ‘normalization of precarization through subjugation and conformity’ (p. 63). Lorey (2015) remarks that the valuation of life as property traces back to liberal thought (p. 31). Within liberal governmentality, the individual learns that he can augment his capacity for his own and his family’s security and for a better life (Lorey, 2015, pp. 25-31). Liberal governmental enact precarization by producing others. These others are devalued according to their body and culture. Women in the reproductive domain and those excluded from the nation state are not as proper/pure as white man (Lorey, 2015, pp. 36-38). In sum, liberal governmentality try to fight against precarity for its (male) citizens. However, neoliberal governmentality governs through precarization (Lorey, 2015).

Lorey (2015) underlines that the duality of ‘freedom and security’ of liberalism are replaced by the ‘freedom and insecurity’ of neoliberal governmentality (p. 64). In other words, while liberal governmentality provide the freedom for some to secure their lives, neoliberal governmentality places this security under constant threat. This change is related to affect and thus possibilities. While liberal governmentality depends on possible activities, neoliberal governmentality threatens possible activities by enacting possible happenings to encourage life to be valued as proper(ity) (see Anderson, 2012; Lazzarato, 2009). Thus, precarity depends on the ‘qualitative differences of bodies, actions, activities and affects that must be produced in competition through active (self) design’ (Lorey, 2015, p. 70) rather than on the ‘naturalized differences’ of bodies and cultures (Lorey, 2015, p. 69).

The neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ity) demands the governing of one’s own precariousness; moreover, it erodes any concept of common action against the precarity by producing individualised winners and losers (Lorey, 2015, p. 90; see also Lazzarato, 2009). One of the main domains that feeds the neoliberal valuing of life as proper(ity) is home. Blunt and Dowling (2006) underline that home is not just a house; home is ‘a place/site, a set of feelings/cultural meanings, and the relations between the two’ (pp. 2-3). Thus, improving the feeling at home is powerful for governmental precarization. Since feeling at home emerges within the practices of how we govern ourselves and engage with others, it can separate the proper (good, valued) circulations from the improper (negative, devalued) ones. Moreover, Isin

(2004) notes that ‘home as a domain of serenity and stability’ produces more anxieties for the neoliberal subject (p. 231). In what follows, drawing on the public spots of DASK, we address ‘how valuing life as proper(ty) is encouraged by feeling at home’, and ‘how feeling at home can unsettle the valuation of life beyond proper(ty)’.

3. CONTEXT AND METHOD

In the recent past, powerful earthquakes have hit Turkey: the İzmit earthquake with a moment magnitude of 7.4 on August 17, 1999; the Düzce earthquake with a moment magnitude of 7.2 on November 12, 1999; and the Van earthquake with a moment magnitude of 7.1 on October, 23, 2011. DASK (Turkish Catastrophe Insurance Pool) which holds the main responsibility of provision, implementation and management of Compulsory Earthquake Insurance in Turkey, was founded in 2000 as a legal entity. DASK tries to increase public awareness of earthquakes and produces an insurance pool that can help people after earthquakes. For DASK, compulsory earthquake insurance is the ‘primary social responsibility’, as it can help earthquake victims and build social cohesion. Although, earthquake insurance is described as ‘compulsory’, it partly depends on the choices of citizens. However, DASK tries to increase the percentage of earthquake insurance within certain control points. For instance, dwellings within the municipality’s borders are controlled if they have compulsory earthquake insurance within the water and electricity subscription and title deed transactions. As of June 9, 2017, the percentage of earthquake insurance holders is 44.7 (DASK).

DASK also tried to build public awareness of the possible traumas of earthquakes in 2014 through public spots that were broadcast on television. In this study, we examine the following public spots with a post-structuralist and an interpretive approach: ‘the bathroom’, ‘watching television’, ‘the toilet queue’, ‘the shakedown’. The public spots which were produced after the Van earthquake were accessed by the authors through the official web site of DASK. The public spots were directed by Çağan Irmak, a famous Turkish director. Each film lasts approximately 35 seconds. Although they are short; Turkish citizens watched them constantly throughout 2014.

The public spots were watched several times by both authors and their content was coded by each author separately at first. Then, the authors came together to discuss the initial codes to arrive at consensus on the final themes. Since “[a]ffect is a powerful form of communicative action that is visible both within and outside language” (Richard & Rudnyckij,

2009, p. 61), the authors did not just pay attention to what is spoken, but also the bodily activities and material arrangements in the public spots. By adopting Gioia's methodology to inductive research which is one of the most cited methodological approach in qualitative research tradition, the data were analyzed qualitatively via the interpretative, narrative and deconstructive approach (Gehman et al., 2018; Gioia et al., 2013; Marshall and Rossman 2016). The same procedure was performed for each public spot and then across the entire data to figure out the commonalities, emerging and salient patterns. Finally, the final themes of this study were identified and discussed in greater details in the following section.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Being a (proper) Compulsory Guest

The public spots aim to get Turkish citizens to imagine themselves as compulsory guests who have to stay at the homes of their relatives. Within neoliberal governmentality, imaginaries produce certain possibilities by envisioning what may happen. They demand certain actions and identities to prevent events that may disrupt a normalised circulation/life (see Anderson, 2010; Aradau and Van Munster, 2011; De Goode and Randalls, 2009). As Lennon states,

‘...the imagined relation is an affective relation to the world. To view the world affectively is not simply to see it as containing certain potentialities for actions but to see such actions as appropriate or desirable, invested with possibilities of pleasure and pain.’ (2004, pp. 120-121)

Within the public spots, DASK asks Turkish citizens to imagine themselves as compulsory guests. The names of the public spots are ‘the bathroom’, ‘watching television’, ‘the toilet queue’ and ‘the shakedown’. Every public spot starts by stating that ‘this film was inspired by the real stories of earthquake victims’.

In the public spot on the bathroom, a female compulsory guest waits timidly in front of the bathroom. The host exits her bathroom; she sees the compulsory guest waiting. The host asks if she will use the bathroom. The compulsory guest confirms that she will. The host asks if she needs a towel. The compulsory guest thanks her and says that she has one. The host tells her to use the bathroom as if it is her own. However, the guest cannot use it as if it is her own. The camera, by slowly showing the floor and walls, presents the unfamiliarity of the bathroom for the compulsory guest (please see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Scenes Taken From The Public Spot Named As “The Bathroom”

In the public spot on the toilet queue, the compulsory guest comes across his female and male hosts in the hall and in front of the toilet. The female host goes without saying anything. The male host asks if the compulsory guest will use the toilet, giving his turn to the compulsory guest. The compulsory guest hesitates. The host reminds the compulsory guest that he is their guest. The compulsory guest is embarrassed; he confesses that his extended stay is at odds with being a guest. However, the host kindly gives his turn to him (please see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Scenes Taken From The Public Spot Named As “The Toilet Queue”

The public spot on watching television starts in the living room. The hosts and compulsory guests drink tea and watch television. The householder changes the channel. On one channel, he hears news on the Van earthquake. The news says that since the Van earthquake help has been mobilised throughout Turkey. Everyone in the living room pays attention to the news. The camera also presents their sadness and attention. The compulsory guest child intervenes by crying, ‘Aren’t there any cartoons to watch in this home? Always news, always news’. His mum hushes him and covers his mouth with her hand. Then, the camera shows the pity in the air. The compulsory guest child says, ‘Mom, let’s go home’. The compulsory guest mother and father look at each other sadly (please see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Scenes Taken From The Public Spot Named As “Watching Television”

The public spot on the shakedown presents the discomfort of compulsory guests at not being able to sleep in their beds and home. It is night time. A dog is barking outside. The compulsory guest husband is seen lying on the shakedown on the floor. He opens his eyes when an interior door (probably the door to the bathroom or toilet) creaks. The camera moves away from the face of the husband; then, we see the wife. She cannot sleep, either. The husband rises; his wife looks at him. The husband turns to his right and looks at his two children, who are not sleeping very comfortably in the same bed. He turns his head to his left and sees their suitcase. Then, he hears a voice from the interior door and sees someone behind the frosted glass (please see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Scenes Taken From The Public Spot Named As “The Shakedown”

4.2. Feeling not at Home

All the public spots end by stating that ‘many people whose houses were damaged in the earthquake had to be the guests of their relatives for a long time: Get your compulsory earthquake insurance and avoid being a compulsory guest’. The public spots aim to prompt Turkish citizens to obtain compulsory earthquake insurance by showing them how compulsory guests cannot feel at home within the houses of their relatives.

As a domain of familiarity, security, stability and belonging, the home should be one’s own, and it must be appropriated; in other words, it should provide shelter from the hurly-burly of life; it should be a shell that allows us to be ourselves without being exposed to others (see Jacobson, 2009; Kaika, 2004). Home should also provide a sense of closure and pureness.

Jacobsen (2009) notes that '[A]t home, we can relax into our own ways of doing things, and do so without a plan, without determining in advance where we should be and for what purpose' (p. 359). However, for compulsory guests, everyday practices at home are troublesome. They are exposed to their hosts. For instance, they cannot use the toilet and bathroom with ease; they cannot sleep well and they cannot watch whatever they want on television.

The source of anxiety in these public spots is being a compulsory guest; it is not being helpless. To foster responsible subjects, DASK portrays the uneasiness—or properness—of compulsory guests. Being a guest can be appropriate if the guest can leave in good time. However, when guests stay for a long time, hosting can cause problems for both hosts and guests. In the public spots, the hosts are kind people; although they do not give their proper(ty) to the guests (see Derrida, 2000), they share their homes with the compulsory guests. If the public spots portrayed the guests as rude, they might have been offensive or inefficient.

The public spots problematise being a compulsory guest. Since proper guests do not stay for a long time, compulsory guests are not 'proper guests'. Indeed, one compulsory guest confesses that he is not a (proper) guest anymore. Within neoliberal precarization individuals affect each other within their individualisation (Lorey, 2015, p. 3) and thus within their own precariousness. Being dependent on others is not appropriate. Everyone is responsible for themselves. Thus, compulsory guests also take for granted the neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ty). In this sense, they are 'proper compulsory guests', because they do not feel at home; they feel embarrassed and sad about their situation. They are not demanding; only the child can cry about his discomfort.

5. CONCLUSION: FEELING AT HOME ON GROUNDLESS GROUND

The mantra of DASK that 'earthquake will pass, and the life will go on' implies that an earthquake will disrupt life as proper(ty). Furthermore, the disrupted life should be repaired, since the disruption will not bring an alternative life. As Aradau and van Munster (2011) underline, catastrophe insurance values the 'proprieted life' (p. 57) and 'sustain[s] the normal and the present in its existing configuration' (p. 64). The disruption creates winners and losers within the neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ty). The winners can sustain their proprieted life and circulation through insurance (Aradau & Van Muster, 2011; Lobo-Guerrero, 2007). The insurance supports their self-sufficiency.

However, the compulsory guests are losers, since they cannot sustain neoliberal governmental circulation or adapt to life as it is. Within the neoliberal valuation of life as

proper(ty), circulation depends on individual entrepreneurship and responsibility. Adaptation requires the ability to feel at home. When feeling at home is reduced to the neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ty), it prevents exposure to others; it settles, purifies, appropriates and closes the individual within his/her boundaries, success and failure. Thus, this also leads to precarity (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013; Lorey, 2015). Moreover, within precarity, individuals try to feel at home within their self-responsibilisation; they do not feel at home when being cared for by others or during common struggles against precarization:

‘In the permanent race for the hoped-for securing one’s own life and that of one’s immediate social milieu against competing others, the fact that a lastingly better life cannot be an individual matter is obscured.’ (Lorey, 2015, p. 90)

However, feeling at home cannot be reduced to the mere neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ty). It can serve to be exposed to the other, to the common, and to the improper. Since being is being-with, individuals cannot primordially feel at home within their self-enclosure (Butler, 2009; Nancy, 2008). Feeling at home beyond the neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ty) requires acknowledging our precariousness. Our precariousness, which is an aspect of our groundless ground, regards our limit as self-sufficient individuals (Butler, 2009; Butler & Athanasiou, 2013; Lorey, 2015). Our groundless ground cannot be tameable, capitalisable and measurable; it is the ‘excess of life’ (Lobo-Guerrero, 2014; Lorey, 2015); it marks the common and improper (Davies, 1998; Devisch, 2013) against the neoliberal valuation of life as proper(ty).

Within the excess of life, preceding categories and identities erode. It is the ‘with’ of being-with that is essential (Nancy, 2008). When ‘with’ is not the essence, preceding values and norms determine how separated and valued individuals should engage with each other (e.g., as ‘proper guests’ and ‘proper compulsory guests’). However, when the ‘with’ is the essence, it embraces our groundless ground and precariousness, disposing of the self-enclosed, propertied subject. With this, the ‘with’ entangles the proper and the improper. Moreover, feeling at home within this entanglement can disrupt neoliberal circulation and disclose alternative worlds and subjectivities.

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