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Subjects supposed to know, believe, and enjoy: The geopolitics of ideological transference in the Swedish begging question

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to contribute to the emerging field of psychoanalytic geopolitics by introducing a conceptualization of a geopolitics of ideological transference of political knowledge and belief. This is done through an extensive theoretical application of the Lacanian- Žižekian concepts of the “subject supposed to know,” “subject supposed to believe,” and “subject supposed to enjoy” on an empirical case study. The case concerns the discourse, ideology, and politics of the Swedish state hegemony regarding its handling of the territorial presence of impoverished and excluded EU citizens with Romanian/Bulgarian passport and Roma heritage – popularly called “the beggars” – with a focus on the crisis-laden year of 2015. The government, state, and the media elevated key actors into the ideological status of subjects supposed to know how to end the “beggars” presence in Sweden in a rational and yet caring way, thus enabling the continuous belief in the Swedish ideology of moral exceptionalism although the practical outcomes effectively hindered the EU citizens from obtaining better life conditions. It is argued that a geopolitics of transference through the application of said concepts enable us to further understand how political actors can simultaneously act cynical and idealist, which both illuminates and complicates notions of what knowledges and beliefs inform politics and political geographies in general.

1. Introduction

Fredric Jameson (2016: 22–23) remarks that political theory “takes as its object problems without solutions” since it cannot constitute its very object. While its subject matter has traditionally been the state, this state-subject’s object is “the collective as such,” which is as ontologically impossible to conceptualize as the individual is. If this is true, all political knowledge must be based on a fundamental supposition that a “population,” “state,” and “individual” exist even though those entities cannot be epistemologically proven. Same logic applies for political geography knowledge, which is why theory is used as such a “cynical” supposition to guarantee its knowledge production’s legitimacy. Another layer of epistemological alienation must be faced by those actors with power who are to govern territories’ supposed populations with what they suppose is knowledge – as the chaotic, uneven distribution of pandemic regimes among different state governments’ interpretations of the knowledges of epidemiology and governance during COVID-19 has shown. Notwithstanding the cynicism of realpolitik tactics and supremacist ideologies’ biopolitics, the corona’s globalization has been accompanied by colossal exposures of the power of faith in the supposed knowledge of institutions and actors and of belief in

futures of hope and despair. The uneasy political relationship among knowledge, belief, and their suppositions has further been revealed by the flood of accusations of the idiocy and hypocrisy of the governed and the governors when they do not act as they are supposed to and appear not to act upon the knowledge of the virus that they are supposed to possess.

Against classical geopolitics’ collusion with state rulers to produce knowledge confirming the latter’s powers, ÓTuathail (1996: 18) proposes that the task of critical geopolitics is to undermine such knowledge’s truth claims by confronting “the general question of how global space is produced and organized by governmentalizing intellectuals of statecraft.” A political-theoretical problem occurs in an era of constant political transparency and general cynicism where the routine exposure of political lies has turned this unveiling into “part of the game” of the status quo (Laketa, 2019: 161). Indeed, if the produced knowledge of the intellectuals of statecraft is already so commonly considered undermined that surrealist conspiracy theories have the same political bargaining power on the market of knowledges as the former, what should critical geopolitics concerned with state knowledge turn its critique against? One option is to turn to the state geopolitics of *transference* by mapping the unconscious topology of power relations underpinning the

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production of ideological knowledge through the abovementioned triangle of knowledge–belief–supposition. The aim would be to create an anchor point among lies, hypocrisy, knowledge, belief, and truth in order to improve the navigation between nihilism and idealism vis-à-vis knowledge and politics in the present exhausted political geographies. The conceptual triangle is inspired by philosopher Slavoj Žižek's (1991; 1997; 2000; 2001; 2009; 2012; 2017) interpretation of Hegelianism, Marxism, and Jacques Lacan's (2004; 2021) psychoanalysis. Žižek's (2009: 30) revitalization of the critique of ideology lies much in his conceptualization of *fetishist disavowal* as an everyday unconscious social practice; in which actors can “know” very well what the most accurate knowledge to act upon is, yet act as if they do not know this. Namely, the power of ideology does not come from what people think, but from their actual practices. In turn, these ideological practices follow a logic of unconsciously supposing the existence of *the big Other*, which is the (nevertheless nonexistent) locus that is believed to give consistency to social and moral orders (Kingsbury, 2017: 2).

Turning to Lacanian-Žižekian theory, I situate this article within the emergence of a psychoanalytic geopolitics (Shaw et al., 2014; Klinke, 2016; Kapoor, 2018; De La Ossa & Müller, 2019; Laketa, 2019; Lee, 2022; see also Genz et al., 2021) that aims to “enrich the study of critical geopolitics through its complex understanding of the psychic and emotional geographies of nationalism” and other dominant political ideas (Shaw et al., 2014: 215). Those geopolitical scholars applying a Lacanian approach have predominantly focused on the concept of enjoyment's (*jouissance*) relationship to collective unconscious and libidinal fantasies underpinning the power of nationalism and racism, and have been inspired by Žižek's appropriation of the term as an analytical tool for critical studies on nationalism (Mertz, 1995; Stavrakakis & Chrysoloras, 2006), racism (Hook, 2021; Zalloua, 2020), and political geographies (Kingsbury, 2008, 2011; 2017). What remains underexplored is how Lacanian-Žižekian geopolitics can clarify the ideological relationship of transference between “belief” and “knowledge” (whether scientific, experience based, or socioconstructed). Reflecting on the popular claims of a contemporary “post-truth” world, Laketa (2019) touches upon this relationship (while speaking of “fantasy” instead of “belief”):

[Unconscious] fantasy [must be taken] seriously as a material condition of geopolitics. There is no escape from the workings of fantasy in the process of making sense of social and geopolitical realities, rather we should acknowledge its productive capacities in ways that confront the impossibilities and contradictions lying at its very heart. (Laketa, 2019: 161)

In critical geopolitics, Žižekian theory on the relationship of transference between knowledge and belief provides the theoretical possibility of both governing and governed subjects believing in sincerity an ideology's claims while being aware that these claims are probably false, affording a middle way of concluding that the intentions and outcomes of political knowledge production and consumption are solely honest, hypocritical, or manipulative (cf. Proudfoot, 2019). Further theoretical-empirical reflection on the Žižekian ontology might support political geographers in mapping the topological relations and scales between the knowledges and beliefs at work in all political geographies.

Here, I try the theory on a case study regarding Sweden. The country's international reputation as an exceptional egalitarian and enlightened nation characterized by equality, equity, antiracism, international solidarity, peace, modernity, and welfare (Andersson, 2007; Jansson, 2018) provides a perfect opportunity for an ideology critique of the distinction and interrelation between knowledge and (political) belief when it comes to the state's treatment of the (so-called) “beggars” during the 2010s. In official Swedish documents, those referred to as “vulnerable European Union [EU] citizens” (Amnesty International, 2018) are impoverished and socially excluded individuals, typically of Romanian or Bulgarian citizenship and Roma heritage. In search of income, these individuals use their right as EU citizens to travel to another

country for three months on a tourist visa. Lacking other income-driven occupational options, some of them beg. Since there are other kinds of vulnerable EU citizens, migrants, and Roma populations (e.g., Swedish Roma, a 10-times larger cohort), in this article, I label the group occupying this social positionality in the Swedish state territory in question as EU *déclassés* inspired by anticolonial revolutionary Amílcar Cabral's (1974) elaboration of Marx's “Lumpenproletariat” (Marx, 1982: 797).¹ Previous research on the EU *déclassés* in Sweden has highlighted the paradoxical character of the Swedish institutional and popular response to their territorial presence, which contradiction has found expression in the conspicuous incongruity between the level of public discourse relating to *déclassés* versus actual political praxis (Barker, 2017; Hansson & Jansson, 2021; Hansson & Mitchell, 2018; Persdotter, 2019; Levy, 2022). Barker (2017) effectively captures this paradox as a “benevolent violence”: on the discursive level, the national self-perception of moral exceptionalism prevails, while on the material level, the *déclassés* are declined social security and legal protection. By applying the Lacanian-Žižekian concepts of three unconscious-ideological “subjects” supposed to “know,” “believe,” and “enjoy” to the political debate surrounding this issue during the crucial year of 2015, I explain how this expression of political hypocrisy was also a realpolitical stirring among ideological interests, knowledges, and beliefs on behalf of a state hegemony in political crisis.

2. Lacanian psychoanalysis and its supposed subjects

To critique knowledge and belief, a theory of the subject acquiring these values is required. Toril Moi (2004: 872–874) once argued that psychoanalysis' ultimate contribution to theorizations on subjectivity is its exposure of all human beings' inescapable trauma in realizing their own finitude vis-à-vis the existence of other subjects, other sexes, and death. Meanwhile, Žižek (2012: 538, original emphasis) claims that the Lacanian subject is also finite vis-à-vis its own existence as a subject: “*the subject itself is a supposition*, for the subject is never directly ‘given,’ as a positive substantial entity [but] is merely a flickering void [that is] ‘supposed.’” Ontologically, the subject is nothing more than a supposition of itself, which miscognizes its (negative) existence as a void finitude. Nevertheless, this subject acts as a social agent due to its own supposition of being a subject, which is why the subject “retroactively” comes to exist in its performances as a subject. The genesis of this supposition of subjectivity has to come from outside the subject since the subject is originally supposed by someone else. Ultimately, this someone else is the big Other, meaning the subject's constitutive outside as “a nonexistent [point] of reference that tacitly anchors, mediates, and gives consistency to symbolic rules, conventions, and mandates” (Kingsbury, 2017: 2). Through the big Other's mediation via paternal caretakers, norms, language, and ideology, the subject can suppose its own existence as a particular set of signified identities. Nonetheless, while the subject unconsciously believes itself to be dependent upon this big Other to exist, the latter is nothing but a supposition of the former.

Since “displacement is original and constitutive” (Žižek, 1997: 41), Lacan (2021: 59) terms the necessary “deceptive supposition” of a self-consciousness “subject supposed to know.” Although this naming has become the standard translation of *sujet supposé savoir*, Schneidermann (1980: vii) suggests that “the supposed subject of knowledge” more accurately highlights the presumption of another subject before an

¹ Cabral (1974: 48) divided this Marxist concept into two moral sub-categories, whereas the “good” one contained populations too heterogeneous to be essentialized as “paupers” and/or “criminals,” as they oscillated between peripheries to centers to find (temporary) work opportunities. Consequently, this term's indeterminateness provides an accurate description of impoverished Romanian Roma (and others) begging in Sweden's heterogeneity and historical-geographical conditions. It also highlights the crucial structural aspect behind their “vulnerability”: their poverty.

assumed knowledge. The knowledge in question is the epistemological guarantee of the existence of one's self-consciousness or the anchoring of subjectivity by locating this supposed knowledge with the big Other. Biographically, the subject supposed to know is first encountered as the body's reflection in the Lacanian mirror stage (Lacan, 2021: 59) and then transferred to become the big Other. For the clinical practice, Lacan (2004: 232) also presents *sujet supposé savoir* as the expression of transference in the interaction between analysand and analyst or the fantasy through which the analysand projects the analyst as the omnipotent Other supposed to have all answers to the former's problems. However, the philosophical implications of the term "subject supposed to know" go further. Referring to Descartes' anxious journey to (re) finding God by placing Him as the absent subject supposed to guarantee his own consciousness and access to knowledge (*cogito ergo sum*), Lacan (2004: 36) argues that the subject supposed to know "by its very existence [founds] the bases of truth" and thereby says of Descartes "that there are in his own objective reason the necessary foundations for the very real, [to] find the dimension of truth." Indeed, even if one does not believe in a god, the subject nevertheless requires an external hidden guarantee of the coherence of its own consciousness and its access to the phenomenological world of knowledge, which in Lacanian theory can only exist as an illusory supposition.

The utility of "the subject supposed to know" is its emphasis on the relation of transference (Lacan, 2004: 232) in all matters concerning the search for knowledge and truth. Žižek (2009: 210, original emphasis) explains that in order "to produce new meaning, it is necessary to pre-suppose its existence in the other [since] only through this supposition of knowledge can some real knowledge be produced." In establishing his ideology critique, Žižek ([1989] 2009: 210–212) makes "the subject supposed to know" concept the central axis of ideological transference out of which he conceptualizes three different expressions of its mechanism: *the subject supposed to desire*, *the subject supposed to enjoy*, and *the subject supposed to believe*. The first one describes how the Lacanian subject is always already barred from its means to become a sovereign subject in the Cartesian sense. Its finitude makes it rely upon an Other-supposed instance for the guarantee not only of its own consciousness but also of what it desires. "Man's desire is the desire of the Other" (Lacan, 2004: 235); the subject's dreams, wishes, and knowledges are socially produced and never solely their own. In this way, "the subject supposed to desire" ultimately refers back to the instance of desiring itself, why this incarnation of "the supposed subject" is not further engaged with for the rest of this article – in this text, the subject supposed to desire functions as the (supposed) subject for which the other subjects are supposed to exist.

The subject supposed to enjoy is the Other supposed to enjoy in the Lacanian sense of having access to *jouissance*. This is the impossible enjoyment of reaching one's desire's goal, which the subject unconsciously believes would redeem its own inherent finitude. The subject supposed to enjoy is typically found in transference onto "small others" of phenomenological beings and is "one of the key components of racism: the [racialized Other] is always presumed to have access to some specific enjoyment" at "our" expense (Žižek, 2009: 212). Perhaps Žižek's greatest contribution to studies on racism and nationalism is the conceptualization of racism as the unconscious fantasy of the Other stealing or ruining the subject's access to *jouissance* (Stavrakakis & Chrysoloras, 2006; Zalloua, 2020; Hansson, 2023). Moreover, this ideological function is applicable to Othered social identities overall – including women, LGBTQ + individuals, disabled people, teenagers, and the impoverished and homeless (cf. Proudfoot, 2019). In this way, the fantasy of the subject supposed to enjoy can also generate desire to save the Other from its unbearable *jouissance*, which sincere concern Žižek (2009: 212) exemplifies with "the obsessional neurotic" whose "frantic activity is to protect, to save the Other from his *jouissance*, even at the price of destroying him or her (saving the woman from her corruption, for example)." This fused anxiety and desire for the Other recalls the colonial-racist formula "white men saving brown women from brown

men" (Spivak, 2015: 92) and the 19th-century bourgeois social question's desire to end poverty by teaching the demoralized poor temperance. The theoretical possibility of this fantasy (of the enjoying subject) being a fusion of jaundice, fear, and benevolence regarding the societal Other is crucial. The transference work within the cultural politics of emotions does not produce noncontradictory identities of singular emotions (i.e., love or hate) but malleable fluids that can embed several emotional dimensions simultaneously (love and hate; Ahmed, 2013). Thus, a dominant ideological fantasy of subjects supposed to enjoy can be mobilized into penalizing politics against racial and/or poor Others that can nevertheless be sincerely believed to be for the Others' benefit – while the subject unconsciously enjoys punishing the Others for their unbearable *jouissance*. One example of such political force is the EU's austerity measures against the "irresponsible" Mediterraneans following the latest financial crisis – legitimated as both a rescue mission and a punishment (Bousfield, 2018). Another manifestation of this logic is the Swedish state's ideological maneuvers against the racialized and impoverished EU *déclassés'* presence in Sweden.

2.1. The distinction between knowledge and belief

For Lacan (2006: 726–745), there is a difference between scientific knowledge and truth. Science can never reach the truth of the particular subject's desire, and one could argue that knowledge is based upon a foreclosure of the truth of the subject's self-consciousness. It is in this regard that Lacanianism introduces a distinction between *knowledge* and *belief* since belief lies closer to the truth of the subject's unconscious condition as a supposition. In this way, Žižek (1997: 42) eventually switched the positions of the subject supposed to know and the final incarnation of the big Other's supposition, claiming that *the subject supposed to believe* functions as "the standard feature of the symbolic order." According to Žižek, knowledge and belief are not symmetrical since ultimately

the status of the (Lacanian) big Other [is] that of belief (trust), not that of knowledge [...] I can BELIEVE through the other, but I cannot KNOW through the other. [Due] to the inherent reflectivity of belief, when another believes in my place, I myself believe through him; [when] the other is supposed to know, I do not know through him. (Žižek, 1997: 43)

The knowledge of the subject supposed to know is the knowledge of knowledge itself. Descartes' God knows why Descartes can acquire knowledge and thus what knowledge is "simply, because God wishes it so. It is his business" (Lacan, 2004: 225). Thus, the knowledge of the subject supposed to know is not accessible to the subject supposing it; in essence, it is a structurally necessary *supposition*. In contrast, belief is about the trust in the existence of meaning that needs to be applied to knowledge for the latter to have any function for the subject. Therefore, the belief of the Other is transcendental as the status of supposition itself.

This political primacy of (ideological, unconscious) belief before knowledge is crucial since it helps to explain Žižek's take on Marx's (1982: 163–177) commodity fetishism. The ideological power of capitalism's inversion of social relations to be expressed as a relation between commodities does not lie in individuals' lack of knowledge of how the social reality works. On the contrary, the problem is that people in general know this situation well, but their social relations make them act as if they do not know (Žižek, 2009: 30). Contemporary discrepancy between public awareness of global warming and the social practices intensifying the same is another example of such fetishist disavowal (Žižek, 1991: 34ff; Swyngedouw, 2010; Fletcher, 2018). In such cases, the political role of belief as on par with knowledge becomes clear if belief is understood as mainly found not in personal conviction but in jogtrot actions. Making a subdivision between belief and faith where the former implies "believing in" the existence of something (like ghosts) and the latter "to have faith in" something or someone, Žižek (2001:

109) explains that regarding the relationship between the subject and the big Other, one can have faith in the Other without believing in its existence. While the big Other “is just a virtual order, a shared fiction,” the supposition thereof nevertheless makes individuals “feel bound” to it “by some symbolic commitment.” This is how both capitalism and nationalism become mundanely reproduced notwithstanding what subjects actually know about these systems’ inconsistencies and injustices:

While capitalism is resolutely “materialistic” [this] cynical wisdom itself has to rely on a vast network of belief: the whole capitalist system functions only insofar as one plays the game and “believes” in money, takes it seriously, and practices a fundamental *trust* in others who are also supposed to participate in the game. [This] virtual status of money means that it functions like a nation: while the nation is the people’s substance, the cause for which they are (sometimes) ready to sacrifice everything, it has no substantial reality of its own —it exists only insofar as people “believe” that it exists, it is a Cause posited retroactively by its own effects. (Žižek, 2017: 303)

Just as Descartes needed God *qua* the subject supposed to know as an absent guarantee for his own consciousness’ sovereignty, capitalism and nationalism require an unconscious supposition of a big Other to transfer their lack of consistencies into a “cynical” belief of consistency. This logic applies well to Benedict Anderson’s (2006) remark on nationalism’s discrepancy between passionate identification and philosophical poverty (cf. Stavrakakis & Chrysoloras, 2006). For Mertz (1995), regarding nationalist and racist ideology, the transferred location of this supposed big Other is to be found in the state as the unconscious guarantee for the existence of nation, national identity, and race since the state’s structure functions as if these existences are ontological. While one should be careful not to equalize either the subject supposed to believe or the subject supposed to know with any actual phenomenological or metaphysical entity, it could be argued that in the Nordic context, the welfare state functions as a subject supposed to believe in the supposed national solidarity between rich and poor. By paying one’s taxes, the citizen-subject can delegate the solidarity to be performed by the welfare state’s distribution mechanisms, making the state-subject supposed to believe do the good for the suffering neighbor in one’s place. However, just as Žižek (2009: 33) argues regarding his example of how a sitcom laugh track can laugh on behalf of the viewer, this displacement does not make the subject’s interaction less sincere. Even if one never laughed, one might nevertheless have enjoyed the show through the Other’s laughter.² Similarly, it would be erroneous to conclude that welfare state citizens only purchase a letter of indulgence by paying their taxes since the act nevertheless is believed to maintain their solidarity with fellow citizens. These citizens probably also know that they cannot really know what their specific contribution supports, or that the tax function rather supports their own social insurances before an egalitarian redistribution. Nonetheless, all this knowledge does not undo their relegated faith in the ideological fantasy supporting this system’s effectiveness, which neatly enables the subject to go on with other businesses. Of course, the same *modus operandi* is implemented when supporting aid work with direct debit or pursuing “ethical consumption” (RSA and Žižek, 2010). The same possibility of double intentions and sensations exists as regarding the fantasy of the subject supposed to enjoy.

² Without complicating matters, it should be mentioned that this transference operation *qua* subject supposed to believe is also expressed as the delegation of enjoyment to an-Other instance, i.e., a subject supposed to enjoy on one’s own behalf. For the rest of this text, however, “the subject supposed to enjoy” is limited to imply the paranoid fantasy of the Other’s theft/ruination of *jouissance*.

2.2. Historicizing and spatializing ideological transference

This whole psychic-ideological economy’s reproduction is obviously fundamentally unstable. If the practices and social transactions underpinning the subject supposed to believe break down and the absence of the subject supposed to know thereby becomes palpable, the big Other’s nonexistence reveals itself alongside the finitude of social life and the subject’s existence. Accordingly, anxious longings for a restoration via *jouissance* is transformed into compensating, dominating fantasies of the subject supposed to enjoy. This structure implies sequential time, social change, and spatial difference – indeed, as Pohl and Kingsbury (2021) argues, Žižek’s thought engages with fundamental spatial concepts such as place, distance, and scale. Furthermore, from this also follows that there are political struggles in shaping the contents and appearances of the supposed subjects to benefit certain interests and fit into particular societies’ historical-geographical conditions – which results in competing ideological conceptions of the big Other, its belief structures, and its premiered and disavowed knowledge. In order to unveil and map a particular geopolitics of ideological transference, there is, in other words, a need to contextualize these relational transferences’ situation in space and time.

It is of uttermost importance to insist that the psychoanalytical hermeneutic approach is complemented with a historical-geographical understanding of the geopolitical scene in question, so that one reduces the traps of essentialism which psychoanalysis throughout its existence has (often rightly) been accused of (cf. Kingsbury & Pile, 2016). While contemporary psychoanalytic geography takes this imperative very seriously and aims to historicize its analysis, this historicizing risks ending up in fetishizing generalizations – thus reproducing other forms of political essentialism – if one is not careful to distinguish between the spatial-temporal implications of each and one of one’s applied concepts. One example of one such Lacanian generalization is a diagnosis which might at first appear as historically grounded but, in my view, ends with an uninformed conclusion – namely, the suggestion that the emergence of “neoliberalism” and “multiculturalism” has successively eroded collective beliefs in the big Other (cf. Kingsbury, 2017: 9) because of accelerated dissolutions of social ties and heightened individualization. Such a conclusion appears not only ahistorical but also incomparable with the Lacanian-Žižekian theory itself. Empirically, the (faith in the) big Other should not be subjected as a historical category but rather an “ahistorical” function to displace every social formation’s ontological contingencies. Thus, I agree with Zupančič (2014: 53, original emphasis) that these diagnoses of the big Other’s dissolution are a repression of the fact that “the existence of the multiplicity of individuals as solipsistic islands of enjoyment is precisely the form of existence of the contemporary *social link*,” i.e., the contemporary capitalist function of the subject supposed to believe. After all, “the real” of the synchronic Other’s nonexistence, described by Jameson (1977: 394) as “the diachronic evolution of History itself, the realm of time and death,” is only revealed temporarily in cracks of the big Other.

In this way, the social relationship to the supposed subjects (of the Other) are caught in a historical cycle of breakdown, transformation, and reconstitution driven by the dialectical changes of societies. Indeed, a capitalist economy is based upon a compulsive cyclical repetition of crisis cycles (Marx, 1992), and these economic crises correlate to social and political turmoil (cf. Streeck, 2017) accompanied by disturbances in dominant relations to the subjects supposed to know and believe. Nonetheless, while this general level of abstraction of capitalism (Ollman, 1993) reveals a temporal logic underpinning ideological transferences within the capitalist system as a whole, lower scale-levels of spatial-temporal abstraction needs to be applied in order to situate transferences’ *spatiality* – thus, their geopolitical implications. After all, transference is inescapably tied to geography (Kingsbury & Pile, 2016) since we can only study it through consequences derived from human action, and human action always takes place somewhere – and always in a place with a history. That is why, in what follows, a

historical-geographic setting of the empirical case of Swedish geopolitics on the EU *déclassés* in the mid-2010s is provided, in order to illustrate how one can reveal ideological transference as embedded in the realm of socio-political space.

3. The supposed subjects of Swedish ideology

The last 50 years' evolution of the Swedish exceptionalist ideology provides a perfect illustration of aforementioned cyclical movement of socio-economic recession and destabilization of the big Other. Originating in the 1930s from international observers, the imagining of Sweden as an exceptional country "was adopted fairly quickly by Swedish elites and the general public alike" (Jansson, 2018: 86). The "latest" Swedish exceptionalism, namely the state's noncoercive handling of COVID-19 (Angner & Arrhenius, 2020 April), proves how this global depiction of Sweden as a point of reference for unique positions still lives on. However, this ego-ideal narrative of Sweden as a "moral superpower" has been subjected to a cyclical eruption of crises corresponding to political-economic meltdowns of the 1970s and 1990s – only to be restored in a somewhat new ideological and social configuration (Andersson, 2007). The mid-2010s also saw such a conjuncture, as is later elaborated upon. In this social disruption of the big Other, the enjoying subject supposed to be responsible for this ruination was "the immigrants," which included formerly immigrated populations, labor migrants, refugees, and the EU *déclassés*. The concept of a Swedish subject supposed to believe also proves exemplary for the theory: after 50 years' continuous loss of exceptionalism and widespread knowledge of the discrepancy between the myth and reality, the faith in this myth nevertheless lived on. If the subject supposed to believe were located in a characterization apart from the welfare state itself, it would be in the Other Swedish citizen supposed to believe in the ideology in one's place.

What then about the Swedish subject supposed to know? Jansson (2018: 86) argues that the foundation of the Swedish exceptionalism—the welfare state project from the 1930s to 1970s—partly aimed to create a modern nationality crafted by "social engineers" who "would scientifically discover and devise the most efficient and best ways to do things." What might be "exceptionally" Swedish about this dimension of governing is not technocracy itself but the celebration of technocracy as something Swedish. Indeed, Swedish researchers have defended the state's COVID-19 strategy along this line: "Sweden's democratic system of government has a more pronounced epistocratic element than other comparable countries [...]. 'Ministerial rule' is expressly forbidden" (Angner & Arrhenius, 2020 April). Such statements reproduce the widespread idea that nonpolitical expertise (i.e., rationality) guides Swedish politics to an exceptional degree. Thus, it is not difficult to theorize that the trust in the Swedish state expert is an expression of the ideological transference to the subject supposed to know, guaranteeing not only the state's own legitimacy but also its governing in objective knowledge. The ideological twist is that what is also crucial to the Swedish ideology is the belief that this guiding expertise is *caring* (Barker, 2017). The state expert subject supposed to know is also in this sense a subject supposed to believe since the expert is supposed to make their recommendations based not only upon rational knowledge but also in support of Swedish benevolence reproducing moral exceptionalism. The ideological knowledge of this supposed subject is therefore grounded in, what I choose to call, a "caring rationality."

Before turning to the empirical case study of how Swedish politics made use of these incarnations of the subjects supposed to know and believe against the *déclassé* subjects supposed to enjoy, one theoretical clarification is necessary regarding the possible phenomenological status of the projected "representative" of the function of the subject supposed to know. Žižek (2000: 251) argues that this subject is often "embodied in a concrete individual [or] some quasi-empirical figure" such as God; Stalin; or the supposed authentic farmer, worker, or oppressed minority individual who is "the quasi-empirical embodiment of the big Other [as] a person elevated into the ideal Witness to whom

one speaks and whom one endeavours to fascinate." Nonetheless, in the final instance, an empirical person cannot formally (assume themselves to) be a "subject supposed to know," since the transference implies an infinite displacement of the function to the big Other beyond one's own finitude. However, this does not make it impossible for subjects to treat empirical individuals as subjects supposed to know in their lives (which was the concept's original utility for the psychoanalytic clinic) or for said individuals to conform to this projection while they themselves rely on the big Other (*qua* the subject supposed to know) as the ultimate guarantee of their own (supposed) knowledge. What this means for the present case is that from the perspective of their actions' consequences within a social matrix of power and communication, *concrete individuals can bear the role and function of an ideology's subject supposed to know* (i.e., they can function as the structural "point of enunciation" of the ideology's absent supposed subject of knowledge; Hook, 2021: 138).

4. The EU *déclassés* within the Swedish crisis of hegemony

Between 1982 and 2018, begging was not criminalizable in Swedish law on either the local or national level. In late 2018, however, a juridical reinterpretation of the Public Order Act issued by a Moderate municipal council bill introduced the municipal possibility to apply local "begging-free zones" (Högsta förvaltningsdomstolen, 2018) to punish the EU *déclassés*. Since Romania and Bulgaria's EU membership entrance in 2007, their citizens have had the legal right to reside in other member states' territories for three months. This right was increasingly used following its intersection with the financial crisis. In Romania, Roma minorities have been the foremost victims in a new free-market order where ethnonationalism has arisen to maintain longstanding divisions between the dominant society and Roma. After enduring centuries of slavery (until the practice's eventual abolition in the 1850s) and genocide during the Holocaust, Romanian Roma have faced persecution and discrimination throughout history and were worst affected by the massive reductions in employment opportunities following the global recession (United Nations Programme for Development and European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (UNDP-FRA), 2012). The disparity in living standards between Roma and the rest of Romanian society is fatal. Compared to the national average of 32%, 90% of Roma face severe material deprivation (World Bank Group, 2014).

While in Sweden, EU *déclassés* face another form of exclusion by the Swedish state authorities who (as a rule) deny their human rights to access to shelter, sanitation, health care, education, and, correspondingly, protection from assault and bodily harm (Amnesty International, 2018). Moreover, EU *déclassés* arrived to (and their presence actualized and enhanced) a growing crisis of hegemony on behalf of the Swedish state and its ruling bloc (cf. Gramsci, 1992) – especially symptomized by the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 and the tremendous rise in the popularity of the Nazi offspring the Swedish Democrats (SD; from 2.9 to 17.5% of the electoral votes for parliament between 2006 and 2018).

Considering the begging question, this hegemony crisis was expressed in two separate yet interrelated fields of collective uneasiness vis-à-vis "the beggars" territorial presence. Since the dawn of class society, the begging encounter has created anxiousness among populations (Hansson, 2023). This uneasiness' political basis is the begging gesture's inherent paradoxical ethical kernel of acknowledging and questioning property relations (Hansson, 2023), while its unconscious basis is precisely its capacity for destabilizing dominant normative practices reproducing the big Other (Proudfoot, 2019; cf. Kingsbury, 2017). In other words, the begging encounter tends to disturb the illusory bond between one's (supposed) subjectivity and its (supposed) instance of the subject supposed to believe in this identity. With the EU *déclassés*' three-layered Othered status as impoverished, racialized, and foreign, collective racist and bourgeois fantasies of the subject supposed to enjoy flourished among the Swedish electorate, most effectively captured by the SD's counter-ideology against the dominant ideology of moral exceptionalism.

While uneasiness regarding begging is universal in class society due to its artificial production and maintenance of scarcity through property relations, this universal reality has a particular historical-geographical expression in the political-economic structure of the Swedish welfare state apparatuses and institutions. While Sweden's inherently dual welfare system prioritizes labor participation before citizenship to guarantee welfare (Marklund & Svallfors, 1987), this system had become successively hollowed out by decades of neoliberal phlebotomy (cf. Hansson, 2023). Meanwhile, due to their formal national citizenship in another EU country combined with their unemployment and lack of formal education, the *déclassés* effectively stood outside the legal categories of citizenship, residency, asylum, and "undocumentedness." Thus, they found themselves in a Borromean knot of bureaucratic catch-22s counteracting their potential socioeconomic integration into the Swedish social formation. Without right to residence, they had no right to public job efforts. If they had a formal job, they would obtain this right to residence, but without housing, it is almost impossible to find jobs. While the state's ruling bloc *could* have resolved this knot, they saw themselves hindered by the growing ideological dominance of the racist fantasies of the subject supposed to enjoy among the (supposed) electorate. Decades of growing contradictions of the welfare systems and subsequent spurring inequalities (cf. Christophers, 2013) had intersected with growing immigration. In this way, the fantasy of the racial Other's theft of Swedes' enjoyment had grown to effectively block political considerations of guaranteeing minorities unconditional human rights that could not simultaneously be interpreted as unconditional rights on behalf of "Swedes" themselves. In sum, since neither housing nor a sufficient income were de facto birth rights of natives, the dominating ideology claimed that the subjects supposed to enjoy would ruin "Swedes'" access to welfare if they were guaranteed such goods.

2015 signaled the escalation of these racial and economic processes as the begging question intersected with the "refugee crisis" and opinion polls made the SD the second most popular party. Even if the latter's supporters did not amount to more than a fifth of the electorate, this change in political power relations made it necessary for the hegemon of neoliberalized social democracy to comply with this racist mobilization of the fear of the subject supposed to enjoy. While a radical turn to progressive politics might have had neutralized this fantasy – since implementing egalitarian social relations decreases anxiousness about others' need and desires at one's own expense (cf. Larsen, 2013) – the postpoliticization of the ruling cross-class faction (Mouffe, 2005) combined with a parliament tie between the left-wing and right-wing blocs made any turn leftward inconceivable. In other words, in 2015, the Swedish hegemon eventually chose to ride the global racist-populist wave, which was revealed with the "sudden" break in refugee reception at the end of 2015. Naturally, the penal turn had to target the EU *déclassés* as well, who while not legally deportable were structurally, in Agamben's (1998) words, even more "bare life" than the refugees (Hansson & Mitchell, 2018). However, both the refugee break and the clamp down on the "beggars" had to be conducted in a Swedish "third way" in compliance with the subject supposed to believe in the moral exceptionalism. After all, roughly 80% of the electorate did not support the SD, the dominant right-wing party and left-wing party had to neutralize its own idealist supporters and smaller cooperation parties, and perhaps the hegemon themselves kept faith in the Swedish subject supposed to believe. This big Other could not accept a begging prohibition since, in the words of a Social-Democratic minister suggesting legislation to encourage the EU *déclassés*' departure, "it should be possible to both give help and receive help in Sweden" (Marmorstein & Ohlin, 2017). It was in this realpolitical situation that a faith in a "benevolent violence" against the *déclassés* (Barker, 2017) became productive. Namely, until 2018, leading figures of the state, political parties (excluding the SD), and media continuously affirmed the *déclassés*' poverty and discrimination while simultaneously claiming that there was nothing Sweden could do for them except ensure that they returned home.

5. The "risk" of Others' enjoyment and belief in "the long term"

In 2013, when Swedish Roma rights and historical responsibility for state discrimination of Roma were prominent in the public debate, media reportages helped establish a dominant discourse depicting EU *déclassés* as genuine victims of discrimination (Selling, 2022). One symptom of this discourse was political scientist Bo Rothstein's (2013) suggestion of legislating a "third way" begging prohibition to criminalize giving instead of begging. This would combat poverty without judicially "punishing these deeply vulnerable, socially excluded and obviously suffering humans" since that would be "contrary to our humanity and conscience." From this standpoint, those who ought to be corrected were the donors; like sex buyers, their transactions contributed to subordination. Meanwhile, the EU *déclassés*' unclear socio-legal status had made municipalities handle their presence radically differently – some established provisional accommodation and offered schooling for their children, others did nothing. It was within this discursive and institutional situation that in early 2015 the Red-Green government announced a one-year, one-man state investigation to present a framework for how state and municipal authorities should handle issues regarding *déclassés* in Sweden (Statens offentliga utredningar (SOU), 2016). State lawyer Martin Valfridsson was assigned as the national coordinator for "vulnerable EU citizens temporarily residing in Sweden." Throughout the year, he appeared in the media to announce his professional conclusions about how to interpret the Swedish law correctly regarding the *déclassés*' social needs. Due to his power as a lawyer, the government assigned him a function (and he was received by authorities, media, and the public) as a subject supposed to know the objective answers to the begging question. In line with presented Swedish ideology, Valfridsson was an expert representing the state's knowledge, and his conclusions combined "rationality" with "care." Symptomatically, while all his recommendations aimed at preventing *déclassés*' already few accesses to social systems, he could not recommend a begging prohibition since "criminalizing humanity only creates a tougher society without solving any problems" (Wigerström, 2015).

Rather quickly, Valfridsson began to appear at events with Rickard Klerfors, the aid coordinator of the (not well-known) Christian aid organization *Hjärta till hjärta* (Heart to Heart) (HtH). At the time, HtH worked with Roma populations in Romanian villages, and Klerfors had worked in Romania since the 1990s. By writing articles in influential papers and giving interviews on how to help the poor Roma, Klerfors established himself as a prominent voice in the begging debate. Eventually, he was also elevated to a position of a subject supposed to know the benevolent solution to the begging question since he came to represent the knowledge of aid non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Even Klerfors opposed begging bans for ethical reasons, while he referred to his experience-based knowledge for his conviction that the solution to the *déclassés*' poverty was located in their home countries. Over there, Swedish professional aid organizations, acting as subjects supposed to believe in the place of Swedish residents, would help them "long term." Naturally, this conviction suited the Swedish hegemon's interest in promoting a dominant, caring rationality to neutralize both the populist-racist counter-ideology and the bleeding hearts of human rights advocates and sympathetic civilians. Thus, two actors representing the big Other of state and civil society, law and altruism, formal and empirical knowledge, and cynicism and faith together came to constitute a "subject supposed to know" function in the Swedish ideology on the begging question – representing a knowledge and belief that if only the *déclassés* went home, everything would be fine (for everyone).

To succeed in this ideological operation, these hegemon's mouthpieces had to embed their supposed knowledge in a narrative of belief in their public statements. Since "belief can only thrive in the shadowy domain between outright falsity and positive truth" (Žižek, 1997: 44), Klerfors and Valfridsson mobilized two concepts signifying this liminality: *risk* and *long term*. While these two "empty signifiers" are also among other policy buzzwords heavily utilized in planning to construct

ideological knowledge claims worldwide (Gunder & Hillier, 2009) (which becomes obvious if we interpret “long term” to be a synonym of “sustainability” or “resilience”) they are not totally empty, since they lodge the potential for libidinal and ideological belief.³ “Risk” implies a negative phantasmatic scenario that *might* happen. It is thus neither false nor true. It does not even have to be likely as long as the scenario appears possible. Meanwhile, “long term” implies a phantasmatic scenario that is literarily *displaced* in an even farther future and with unspecified spatiality. It is also neither outright false nor true because it also resides in the realm of possibility.

Using his supposed knowledge as an aid coordinator, Klerfors repeatedly presented the public with a supposed choice between short-term and long-term helping: one could either give money to someone who begs (short term) or donate to an organization (long term). Obviously, the short-term option is less good in its effect than the long-term choice since private donations catalyzed “into social change” are more “effective [than] to spare some change in a paper mug” (Klerfors, 2015b). While Klerfors agreed that direct donations and transnational remittances might be effective for some families, “in other cases, the middle generation’s absence [abroad] leads to social catastrophes.” The short-term option, then, is not only less rational but also riskier. Indeed, Klerfors asked, “Imagine if [private] individuals [with] good intentions instead [of giving to beggars] had lent the money to a legalization project, or to start a cooperative” (Fogelqvist, 2015). He suggested that aid organizations know how to transform “good intentions” into the good whereas individual recipients risk turning them into “social catastrophes.” Implicitly, the organizations are not subjects of risk. Moreover, Klerfors also claimed, “What has failed so far [for our fellow human beings] is the structures that keep them in a negative and subordinate state of dependency” (Klerfors, 2016). This is a tacit discursive equalizing of the “risk” signifier with a signaling of the (potentiality) of the Other’s enjoyment: the *déclassés* are not undeserving of help, but the aid workers *qua* subjects supposed to believe need to “save the Other from his *jouissance*” (Žižek, 2009: 212) derived from his “subordinate state of dependency” upon others. Simultaneously, Klerfors claimed to be a sympathetic subject supposed to know the mindset of the Other:

The majority of the migrants do not want to be here. They want more than anything to be at home, but [they do] not see any other income and survival options in the *short-term* [...]. My conclusion is [that] those of us on the Swedish side [should] put the brunt of our efforts into being involved and contributing to a change over there. (Klerfors, 2015a, emphasis added)

Here Klerfors also offered the public an ideological belief that they (“us on the Swedish side”) can *interpassively* partake in (Žižek, 1997) by delegating their solidarity (“contributing to a change”) to the supposed long-term professionals “over there.”

Eventually, Klerfors and Valfridsson joined forces and wrote a debate article urging the municipalities not to grant *déclassé* children schooling in Sweden. They knew this recommendation went against the UN Child Convention, so they argued for their conclusions in a manner of caring rationality. With a “too generalizing interpretation” of the Convention, “the good *risks* become the enemy of the best” (Klerfors & Valfridsson, 2015, emphasis added). That is, if the children are permitted to attend to school in Sweden, their parents will take them with them and risk interrupting their schooling back home. Therefore, “Swedish society” should not send “unconsidered signals regarding the children and schooling questions.” Klerfors contended that more than 100 children had canceled their schooling in Romania to travel to Sweden, and an anonymous principal lamented the parents who “sacrifice their children’s future for *short-term* gain” (again signaling the fantasy of the

subject supposed to enjoy). However, this supposed knowledge became publicly questioned. A Roma rights advocate questioned Klerfors’ assertion based upon his own visit to the same areas in Romania. Instead of 100 missing children, he found seven (Israelson, 2015). While Klerfors never responded with any proof of his claimed number, Valfridsson’s faith in him being a subject supposed to know was not affected by this discrepancy between supposed knowledge and actual empirics. Instead, Valfridsson together with the Minister of Social Affairs wrote a recommendation to the Swedish public not to place money in begging hands but instead give it to NGOs who were supposed to know how to redeem the “beggars” poverty:

Swedes [are] generally open and generous. [This] generosity also leads us to give to fellow human beings asking for money. [This money] is best utilized in the hands of [organizations working back home and with long experience of practical work]. By supporting *long-term* sustainable work for improved education, livelihood, health, and structural reforms, more will see a meaningful future before them and following generations in the home-countries. Let us continue to give money and tell our children that it is important to help the vulnerable. But let us do it in a way that leads to real, sustainable change. (Regnér & Valfridsson, 2015, emphasis added)

Except for the blatant celebration of the “open and generous” “Swedes” supposed to believe in the nationalist moral exceptionalism, it is noteworthy that the categories “education, livelihood, health, and structural reforms” were the same ones that HtH presented as its goals (Hjärta till Hjärta, 2015), feeding the suspicion that the state-subject supposed to know transferred its guarantee of expertise to Klerfors as its own subject supposed to know. Indeed, one journalist claimed that the supposed knowledge behind this recommendation was nothing but “belief and reasoning without facts” because when she tried to find the supporting facts, “none of the relevant ministers’ press contacts could give any answers” (Håkansson, 2015). Symptomatically, the Minister responded to her critics by confessing,

We believe that the donations are very well utilized [by the organizations], so that, in the *long term*, people can sustainably build their own lives with school, work, and housing. Sweden has a long-standing tradition of contributing to structural change in order to diminish economic vulnerability and implement certain rights. (Regnér, 2015, emphasis added)

She also explained that the government had donated US\$ 5 million to an EU fund and initiated a bilateral dialogue with Romania and Bulgaria, thus assuring the welfare state conducted some tax-funded belief on behalf of the Swedes. Furthermore, an influential editor supported the minister’s confession of relying upon a supposedly rational belief before knowledge. Acknowledging that begging is a “deep emotional question,” the editor advised civilians to ask themselves where their money “gives the best effect” (Helmerson, 2015). With this question, the state’s recommendation becomes “a totally reasonable perception.” Moreover, he acclaimed this state message as a compensation for the righteous position of not banning begging, thus ultimately missing the point of the message: to *practically* ban begging through caring rationality and benevolent violence by making citizens transfer their potential solidarity to the subject supposed to believe.

6. The state report “supposed to know”

The Swedish hegemon’s “practical begging ban”, I argue, was to make sure that both authorities and citizens withheld their monetary assets so that the *déclassés* would not have any choice but to leave the territory. When Valfridsson’s state report was released February 1st, 2016 (SOU, 2016), for example, it advised the municipalities to grant neither schooling nor public accommodation solutions to EU *déclassés* and their children. The report was immediately treated as law by municipalities and authorities even though it did not contain any legislative

³ See also the works of Gunnar Olsson (cf. Abrahamsson and Gren, 2012) for Lacanian perspectives on planning and maybe even the first geographical engagements with Lacan’s thoughts.

changes (see also Hansson & Mitchell, 2018; Lind & Persdotter, 2017). In other words, state officials treated Valfridsson as the subject supposed to know the law on their behalf. In the report, while insisting that the *déclassés* did not have any social rights in Sweden (save perhaps emergency help in life-threatening situations), Valfridsson stuck to his faith in both his own supposed knowledge and in civil society's subject supposed to believe:

Considering the arguments and sources of knowledge that have emerged during the investigation, it is the coordinator's definite opinion that monetary donations to vulnerable EU citizens lead to the greatest opportunities for *long-term* change through organizations that, in a structural and persevering way, give the greatest opportunities to *long-term* change and working in the countries of origin. (SOU, 2016: 10, 91, emphasis added)

Valfridsson also heavily invoked the risk signifier to convince people not to give money to *déclassés*:

To donate money to the one begging *risks* cementing the beggar role and not leading to any *long-term* change for the group. The children's schooling *risks* suffering and the beggar role *risks* becoming inherited by the next generation. (SOU, 2016: 10, emphasis added)

In another section, Valfridsson argues that "by being here they also *risk* losing out on eventual opportunities for livelihoods in their home-countries" (SOU, 2016: 91). He also assumes to know the perspective of the *déclassés* themselves when, similarly to Klerfors (2015a), he argues, "The majority of those coming here to beg do not see their future here. They want back to their home-countries" since "it is not realistic to think most within the group could get jobs in Sweden" (SOU, 2016: 91). But what is this "long-term" help "back home" believed to be possible? According to the report, it is "focus on education, livelihood, health, and structural changes" (SOU, 2016: 10), which are HtH's categories.

Here, we should pause and ask what *knowledge* Valfridsson used to reach his conclusions as the state's subject supposed to know. The report *does not refer to any research* to support its conclusions. The only references to empirical knowledge supporting Valfridsson's conclusions are a couple of trips to the *déclassés*' home countries (where he once visited one of HtH's projects) and some quotes from a conference by the chief economist of the Swedish governmental aid organization, the ambassador in Romania, and a Romanian minister. All three argued that begging is not a long-term solution (SOU, 2016:6: 88–90). In sum, there is no empirical data to support the supposed knowledge that giving money "*risks* cementing the beggar role," that access to schooling *risks* harming schooling (without considering how discriminatory the schooling situation is Romania), or that access to municipal land for accommodation *risks* producing "slum communities" (SOU, 2016:6: 70). Namely, there was no need for empirical knowledge since the message was communicated through the medium of the state-subject supposed to know. What was needed, however, was the appeal to belief supporting a supposed knowledge, brilliantly captured by the risk signifier. The latter requires no proof, only a scenario supposed to be realizable and therefore synthesizing knowledge with belief. One could nevertheless argue that the lawyer presented one kind of scientific knowledge in the report, namely the references to the law. However, Valfridsson's interpretation of the Swedish law is only one interpretation; it disavows the legally binding force of international human rights conventions (Amnesty International, 2018) and draws subjective conclusions from the legal text. In other words, Valfridsson's own legal knowledge supporting his inferences had to rely upon a subject supposed to know beyond the text itself, namely a subject supposed to know that his conclusion really was the authentic law, and that this law's message was to remove the beggars through benevolent violence. This supposed subject was, I argue, the big Other supporting the Swedish state and state rulers' legitimacy. Nonetheless, the Swedish big Other is supposed to believe in international solidarity and altruism, which is why when asked what he thought of Valfridsson's insistence that Swedes stop giving to beggars, the

Social-Democratic prime minister answered, "People are allowed to do what they feel like doing themselves. I have chosen to donate regularly to the organization Heart to Heart, it is my choice to do that" (Svensson & Jakobsson, 2016). The reader should notice that of the 40 Swedish NGOs working in Romania (Ljung, 2018), HtH was among the least familiar to the public.

7. The long-term development

What about Valfridsson's subject supposed to know how to redeem the *déclassés*' poverty in the long-term "back home"? In the national media, Klerfors announced HtH's launch of a job training program in Romania teaching Roma to weave baskets. Ironically, several of those begging supported themselves this way before begging abroad since it no longer paid off. However, Klerfors (2016) explained that HtH was to sell these baskets in Sweden: "We want the customer to know that by buying the commodity, one contributes to fellow humans not having to beg" – i.e., by buying this commodity, Swedes buy the relegation of their belief to HtH. Klerfors assured the public that the project was a legal social enterprise with pensions and social fees paid by HtH's intermediate Romanian partner. Nevertheless, when a Swedish public service investigation program (Kaliber, 2016) began to investigate the project in spring 2016, it found that the social enterprise did not exist. No one had paid pensions or social fees. The 25 Roma employed made US\$3 per basket while the baskets were sold for US\$35 in Sweden. The participants explained that it is impossible to weave more than four baskets per day even with their children helping. Furthermore, they had never signed any contracts. By this time, several employees had departed from the project and returned to begging. There seems to have occurred a miscommunication between HtH and their Romanian partner, or the latter fooled HtH. As it turned out, even HtH took a risk.

After this, Klerfors and with him the civil society's supposed subject of belief vanished from the debate. Instead, as the 2018 national election approached and the "refugee crisis" had been curbed by the penal turn, the state rulers of the largest left-wing and right-wing parties began to incorporate the SD's counter-ideology and promised to save Sweden from the foreign specters of subjects supposed to enjoy. Since the *déclassés* did not stop being impoverished when people stopped giving to them and the social authorities excluded them, the Minister of Finance had to admit that the numbers of "beggars" had not decreased and that the government's efforts in the home countries "obviously" had not been enough (Jeppsson, 2018). Stating that her (aforementioned) minister colleague's recommendation still stood, she gave it a new rationale vis-à-vis belief by highlighting the fantasy of enjoyment: "everyone giving to beggars should know one *risks* contributing to human trafficking." Here the risk signifier's ideological primacy is apparent. It did not matter whether the risky evil was "no long-term solutions" or "criminal exploitation." What mattered was the signaling of not giving to begging people, but with a humanitarian face. While a few trafficking cases had been revealed by the Swedish police around this time, this knowledge alone could not legitimate moral exceptionalist Sweden's criminalization of one of the last legal means to obtain a livelihood when structurally unemployed without sufficient social security nets. Thus, one year after he had stepped down as coordinator, Valfridsson suddenly reappeared in the debate to function as the subject supposed to know how to guarantee the caring rationality of outlawing begging. Without having continued his research on the matter, he announced on national radio his newfound support for a national begging ban out of benevolence: "When one criminalizes the most vulnerable group in society, one does this to protect very vulnerable groups" (Segura Moberg, 2017). After this statement from the subject supposed to know, opinion formers such as this chief editor could more effortlessly support a begging ban: "All experience shows that begging is destructive for all affected parties. According to Valfridsson, the conclusions from [state authorities and NGO aid organizations] are unequivocal: begging is never the way out of poverty" (Dahlberg, 2017). Another editor who wanted to ban begging

because of urban encounters with litter could also suppose she was supported by expert knowledge: “Martin Valfridsson, the government’s coordinator [has] also changed his mind” (Abramowicz, 2017). Speculations and moralizations therefore became transferred into omnipotent, unequivocal experience.

When the national election occurred in 2018, the forthcoming government, whether led by the Left or the Right, was expected to make a political decision to regulate begging. However, the electoral result made the two major blocs equally strong, causing parliamentary turmoil to form a new government that continued for 129 days. Amidst this political chaos, The Supreme Administrative Court surprisingly ruled a municipality’s bill for local begging-free zones as lawful, thus making begging an order issue, allowing each municipality to vote on whether to restrict it. Since 2011, lower administrative court levels had dismissed different municipal attempts to ban begging locally because these prohibitions could neither legitimate the subsequent restrictions on the freedoms of speech and movement nor fit into the space of the Public Order Act’s regulative capacity against order disturbances. It was legal commonsensicality that the begging practice could not proportionally risk leading to public disorder calling for police intervention. However, regarding the first issue, this bill prescribed spatially demarcated begging-free zones and was thus not a de facto territorial prohibition (cf. Mitchell, 2020). Regarding the objection on the proportionality of order issues, the Court explained that it should be up to the authorities to know what could risk becoming an order disturbance (Högsta förvaltningsdomstolen, 2018), enabling politicians to take on the function of the subject supposed to know on behalf of the law. This way, the Swedish Court guaranteed that begging was already possible to forbid since the solution was found within preexisting law, relieving the parliament and state from a formal political decision on the begging question and enabling them to maintain their ideology of moral exceptionalism.

8. Conclusion

The theoretical message of this article can be summarized by Lacan’s (2004: 232) formula “as soon as there is a subject supposed to know, there is transference.” Indeed, since they are different expressions of the same fundamental mechanism of ideological transference, this also goes for the presence of subjects supposed to believe, enjoy, and desire. Navigating the unconscious geopolitics of transference does not enable localization of these functions at individual actors or institutions frozen in time and space but is always further transferred from the identified point of enunciation. It is therefore crucial to be relational in one’s analysis and always be conscious of what vantage point or perspective in the political matrix one is looking through during one’s analysis. Since this case study is but one preliminary exercise in studying the geopolitics of transference by mapping the unconscious topology of power relations underpinning the production of ideological knowledge, I conclude with a set of research questions for further empirical studies along this vein. One should constantly ask oneself: what part of a knowledge claim is supposed and thus transferred; who is transferring; where the supposed knowledge, enjoyment, or belief is directed; what the relationship between proclaimed knowledge and its supporting belief is; what knowledge can or cannot support the dominant ideological belief structure at hand; and finally, whether the proclaimed knowledge or belief is treated as such by social actors or whether they or their surrounding institutions act in other ways. The Althusserian understanding of ideology highlights practices’ power over ideas’ content (Žižek, 2009), and this article’s analysis had to compare the discourse with the greater historical material and realpolitical conditions, and actual political development in connection to said discourse; otherwise, it would not be possible to analytically distinguish between the dimensions of knowledge, belief, and supposition within the ideology production.

The empirical analysis of this article has itself relied upon a major supposition, namely that the speech acts of actors such as Valfridsson

and Klerfors bore political power and shaped (both governed and governing) subjects’ attitudes and decision makings vis-à-vis the EU *déclassés*’ (lack of) wellbeing. Confessing to and embracing this leap of faith, I want to take yet another one by daring to presume that it is possible that said ideological actors themselves believed in their supposed knowledge – or at least kept faith in the big Other of Swedish moral exceptionalism while fetishistically disavowing the fact that they then should have known better. It is a politically important potentiality to consider that political deception can simultaneously be an act of self-deception in favor of a subject supposed to believe that one is nevertheless speaking the truth. Indeed, Lacan (2004: 139–40) would argue that such an act is an act of the truth of the subject’s desire.

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Data availability

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