

Constituting the Crisis: A view from the South by Tshepo Madlingozi

For some southern European countries one outcome of the Eurozone Debt Crisis has been the *constitutional* overthrow of popularly elected rulers by non-elected technocrats. At the same time these governments are being coerced into adopting and implementing unpopular laws and policies, in line with the requirements of global capitalism as represented by regional and global financial institutions. As a consequence of these undemocratic, but constitutional, measures perceptions and discourses of colonialism are growing in these countries. Arguing against simply dismissing these perceptions and discourses as over-blown, and insulting to previously colonized people of the Global South, this paper offers tentative reflections on these perceptions and discourses. This is done by deploying the metaphor of the 'abyssal line' coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos. Santos (2007) argues that modern Western thinking and politics are based on abyssal thinking in that they rely on metaphorical cartographical lines that carve the world between 'this' side of the line and the 'other' side of the line. On this side of the line conflicts are mediated through the tension between social regulation and social emancipation; on the other side of the line, conflicts are resolved through appropriation and violence. Santos argues that originally and historically the other side of the line coincided with a specific social territory, namely the colonial zone. One way of thinking about how the crisis in southern Europe is being constituted (and keeping in mind petitions for southern European states to be forced out of the Eurozone; to almost de-Europeanize) is perhaps to see this as a process that involves the expansion of the other side of the line and the gaining of strength of the logic of appropriation and violence. This paper attempts to do this.