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Greek Crisis and Inequalities: Anthropological Views

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Introduction—Greek Crisis and Inequalities: Anthropological Views

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This Special Issue titled *Greek Crisis and Inequalities: Anthropological Views*, published as Supplement 5 to *Urbanities-Journal of Urban Ethnography*, springs from the Conference on 'Urban Inequalities: Ethnographic Insights', held in Corinth in June 2019 and organized by the International Urban Symposium in collaboration with the IUAES Commission on Urban Anthropology and the University of the Peloponnese, and endorsed by City University of London.[1]

The experience of uncertainty during the economic crisis which continues under the cloak of Covid-19 is the subject of this Special Issue. Specifically, this collective effort is about the 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1977) of ordinary people who, by being caught in the whirlpool of the economic crisis, have inadvertently and unwittingly been moved from one relatively security context to a harsh, anti-social and rigid regime of constant insecurity and uncertainty. This regime includes a large number of men and women, indigenous and immigrants, who although may once have 'somehow been successful', currently work, mentally or manually, either under flexible terms of employment, occasionally in rotation, or seasonally, formally or informally, or are unemployed, low-income and uninsured. In the current fashionable terminology, they are classified as *precariat*; they are those whom Marx (2010) identified as a reserve labour army, emphasizing that their existence is the means of production and reproduction of the existing dominant system. In this light, the contributions that follow concern neither soulless numbers and statistical correlations nor the explanation of economic crisis on which much has been said (Amin 2013, Spyridakis 2018). They deal with agents whose life trajectories have been negatively affected by the crisis. Hence, the discussions do not concern an essentialized situation but an analytical category; they unravel a dynamic process of transition to a different mode of existence which is also a framework for those who are about to enter a similar path of social degradation. In other words, the contributions offered here focus on the lives of a social category whose emergence is not a new historical event, but whose rapid increase tragically reminds us that, 'all that is solid melts into air'.

These dynamics take place in a context of high unemployment, of widespread social inequality and insecurity being legitimated as state of emergency (Pardo and Prato 2018), where actors do not have the opportunity to plan their future, being deprived of options for dealing with the difficult condition of their lives. In addition, they are forced to accept unstable employment regimes, inadvertently endangering the process of their social reproduction,

[1] I wish to thank Italo Pardo and Giuliana B. Prato for their comments on a previous draft of this Introduction, as well as the Board of *Urbanities* for the editorial assistance.

forcing them to enter social programmes aimed more at appeasing their dissatisfaction than at overcoming the crisis trap.

Specific emphasis is given, here, to the way in which agents who have entered the insecurity context, perceive their position, their subjectivity and their orientation in it. In other words, at the epicentre of these articles lies an interest about the way in which reality is made conscious and understood by the actors, who in turn actively react upon it (Bruner 1986). This is of utmost significance since, as Willis and Trondman put it (2000: 7), the emphasis on lived experience provides the opportunity critically to transcend super-structural and super-theorized approaches to the human condition leading to a reflective understanding of social knowledge through the voice of actors as they experience the conditions of their existence.

In this sense, the contributions that follow focus on the facts of a perpetual condition of liminality in a post-Keynesian, post-industrial context where people have been forced to leave in symbolic and real terms their former roles and positions, following a process of destabilization characterized by feelings of ambiguity and confusion. Vulnerability is a central component of this path. As has been argued elsewhere (Spyridakis 2013), those embedded in the context of a neoliberal fundamentalism that facilitates a negative social inclusion, deregulated labour relations and easy redundancies, are gradually becoming vulnerable social beings entering fragile social relationships (Castel 2000) that threaten not only their material survival but also their identity and entire lives. Trapped into a situation determined by distant economic power structures and pedagogical political technologies supporting the lesser social protection in favour of a new 'invisible hand', precarious people seem powerless to defend themselves and are led into a 'grey area' in terms of identity and material life. This reversal of the 'unintended' effects of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' brings to mind Pardo and Prato's point (2021: 9) that, according to Smith, people's economic choices — based on the realisation that cooperation with others is in their self-interest — can constitute '*an invisible hand*' that promote the public good as an 'unintended' consequence of those choices. However, in their Introduction to the book that originated in the aforementioned Corinth conference, Pardo and Prato also point out another aspect of Smith's theory which seems particularly relevant in today's world; specifically, the danger that 'large bureaucratic forms of government […] would generate further poverty' (2021:10). In such a context, they note, 'politicians, bureaucrats, regulators, those who exercise legal force have their defined goals which they pursue through legal coercion; […] In so doing the government affects the "invisible hand", not the other way around […] Contemporary neoliberalism and the attendant market deregulation do indeed need a supporting political apparatus that attempts to impose trendy, or "smart" templates to empirically different situations.' (Pardo and Prato 2021: 11).

Neoliberal ideas have become the mainstream policy model across the E.U. The economy is increasingly cut off from social needs and citizenship and is gradually being integrated into a myopic, cost-benefit set-up where the main philosophy of 'corrective' interventions is guided by a theological belief that unhindered markets distribute goods, services and happiness more efficiently (Kwak 2017). Pardo and Prato (2021: 6-7) suggest that in 'a global scenario vastly

marred by the gap between citizens and governance' it has become particularly relevant and urgent to address empirically the diverse forms of 'inequalities, their production and entrenchment, and the legislative and executive performances that go with them', asking what 'necessary (Lukes 1991: 31-32) balance between ideological interventionism and indiscriminate liberalism' (Pardo and Prato 2021:7) could be achieved for the benefit of society. Precarious entities are not only placed in the middle of the complex relationship between the local and the global but are also experience the catastrophic effects associated with structural adjustment programmes and restrictions on public spending. From an anthropological point of view, the work of Paul Durrenberger and Judith Martí (2006: 12-16) showed the negative burdens that the philosophy of this model has placed on the underprivileged's backs. Following this line of argument, the ethnographies in this Special Issue show that agents have been deprived of alternatives that could 're-insert' them in society, ironically recalling similar 'interventions' in eighteenth century England in the form of Enclosure Acts.

Being that as it may, this condition needs to be read against the awkward relationship between dominant political decisions and the management by those affected by them, which depends on the gradual revision and rearrangement of both social rights and the notion of citizenship. In this view, it is important to keep in mind that citizenship takes place in a context where, as Pardo and Prato aptly noted (2010: 12-18), people experience the structural transformations of power and welfare state in the western world. This process influences national public policies aiming at implementing and reproducing specific ideological visions for the world through their decisions. For Comaroff and Comaroff (2000: 302), this situation stems from a global process of de-nationalization and internationalization of production, which: 1) undermines the ability of states to maintain their economic systems, rendering obsolete wages and their negotiation; 2) undermines domestic production by encouraging the reduction of labour costs through the flexibility of labour relations and the recruitment of cheap labour; 3) broadens the gap between poor and prosperous regions; and 4) pushes workers to compete with each other in a context of minimal protection. At the same time, the state is gradually losing its power by becoming involved in a contradictory situation. On the one hand, it must support and protect the logic of the market on which it depends; on the other hand, it must prove that it shields democracy by protecting the principles of equality and participation in the democratic process. However, this seems to be both a difficult equation and the main reason for the exercise of smart social regulations through the art of governing precarious bodies (Shore and Wright 1997). Recent anthropological reflection on state sovereignty and the 'dangers of processes that make the nation-state a secondary player under outside forces' (Pardo and Prato 2010: 3) recognizes that in the European context 'this problematic is complicated by national political establishments' implementing ever-increasing casuistic regulation in the context of a bureaucratically-minded EU centralizing strategy.' (Pardo and Prato 2010: 3; see also Prato 2010: 133 n.2 and 141).

Yet, this picture is not totally black. As the ethnographic material on the Greek crisis suggests, agents strive to expand the scope of their action in order to improve their position.

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Hence, the articles converge to capture people's actions in 'managing their existence' — in the sense originally defined by Pardo (1996) — in a very anti-social context. Pardo's analysis of 'the relationship between objective conditions of restriction and inequality and actors' ability to negotiate these conditions' (1996: 18) has shown how people's 'modes of behaviour and thought draws on *strong continuous interaction* between tangible aspects of existence and symbolic, moral and spiritual aspects', arguing that 'this interaction marks people's ability to explain their own lives, negotiate "risky" choices […], and construct a sense of fulfilment and self-worth.' (1966: 11). This concept lies at the heart of anthropological scrutiny, taking into account that people are not structurally defined puppets but entities with ideas, dreams and actions orientations.

In this light, Theodoros Fouskas and George Koulierakis' focus on the social discourse on the repercussions of migration in Greek society in an attempt to demystify negative perceptions, stereotypes and myths regarding immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees in urban localities. The perceptions of, and practices towards, migrants and refugees in Greece have been characterized by a strong contradiction. On the one hand, as in other European countries, the social discourse on solidarity, support and humanitarianism is widespread; on the other hand, often described as 'scruffy and dirty', migrants and refugees have often been seen as 'unwanted individuals or a threat', as a 'health time-bomb', 'criminals', 'dangerous', 'terrorists' — individuals who 'alter the homogeneity of the host country', who are 'uneducated, uncultured not wanting to attend schools', who 'take the jobs of native-born workers', who are 'responsible for the downgrading of various urban areas'. The social discourse in Europe and Greece ignores the role and contributions of third country nationals to the advancement of the receiving societies. In addition, the literature focuses almost exclusively on the social effects of migration in receiving countries and societies, disregarding the repercussions of migration on the migrant and the refugee.

Konstantina Bada examines the social dimensions of the museum as a cultural institution. In the context of modern cities and of major social inequalities and exclusions, her article considers the extent to which museums can contribute to building democratic and progressive societies. Indeed, numerous museums either make promises of, or directly engage in, practices that promote respect for diversity, equality, accessibility and the idea of social inclusion. In this, they appear to contradict the rationale that develops cities as places dedicated to the exclusive cultivation of relations of power, inequality and social exclusion. At the same time, the tendency towards the commercialization of museum collections and activities, as well as the growth of the cultural economy, are becoming increasingly visible. This results in the exclusion of many social groups from access to and participation in museum activities. It is, however worth noting that a new tendency is emerging, coming from people who experience social exclusion, inequality and marginalization (the homeless, the immigrants and the poor). This tendency is about developing 'alternative museum sites', hangouts and projects where material items, experiences and oral testimonies are gathered and exhibited. Taken together, these activities

cultivate a feeling of belonging and community, particularly in multi-ethnic and economically marginalized regions.

Georgios Kouzas' contribution is about women street vendors working in the centre of Athens, where they sell products, usually of their own production, like food or crafts, including aprons, socks and knitted sweaters. Most of these street vendors are in a borderline state, as they lack a formal trader license. This is why they either sell their products alone on street corners, so that they can run away if needed, or at the 'fringes' of street markets, including the central market in Athens, so that their presence does not 'bother' licensed traders. Kouzas focuses, a) on the problems with which women street vendors deal daily, selling products 'informally'; b) on their strategies; and c) on the significance of their gender in this context.

Panayiotis Gouveris addresses the ways by which divorced parents manage their children's health. He looks at examples of high-conflict divorces in the context of the current debt crisis in Greece. He concludes with a description of medical child abuse: parents who neglect the real needs of their children in order to acquire or maintain parental authority. At the same time, Gouveris describes the inability of the Greek courts to accept a model of joint custody that would eliminate gender and family inequalities.

Maria Panteleou suggests that the labour and economic precarity that plagues the majority of migrants in the modern globalized world should be seen in the light of past cultural strategies. She argues that the strategies that migrants have employed in order to face similar challenges during their initial movement in countries of destination should be examined in conjunction with current strategies. This approach highlights the continuities and the transformations in the ways of responding to diverse 'crises'. The case study of Albanian migrants who work 'seasonally' in Corinth and live in the wider region of Corinth shows how they handle their social networks. They currently shun the Albanian social networks that have helped them to find a job in Greece in the 1990s because they see them as potential competitors. They still use the logic of networking in relationships but now they engage with Greek regional employers using the connections that they have developed among these employers. The latter activate their own network of 'acquaintances' with other employers, thus allowing Albanian migrants to work in a variety of spatial contexts. So, migrants face modern economic and labour challenges by transforming their own cultural strategies.

Giorgos Bithymitris and Orestis Papadopoulos address liminality in the making, as manifested by traineeships in the Greek tourism sector. Drawing on a body of ethnographic material collected between 2016 and 2017, they examine the experiences of young trainees in tourism-related enterprises in a national context of mild economic recovery. Their primary focus is on the impact of the selected training scheme on the trainees' self-image and their perceptions of work, occupation and careers in the tourism sector, the so-called heavy industry of the Greek economy. Their findings suggest that instead of enjoying a meaningful and inspiring career path, the actors learn to live in and in-between transient states for long periods of time as they prepare to navigate a deregulated labour market. Through the lens of liminality, they aim to develop a complex understanding of the unsettling and disruptive condition that

pertains to the threshold position of informants, to the transient spatial-temporal characteristics of Continuing Education and to aspects of the transformations and transitions that have shaken Greek society and economy during the last decade.

Dimitris Yannakopoulos's article is about the rural area of Agrinio in western Greece, where monuments and infrastructures reveal the deep connection between land, people and the cultivation of tobacco. Although this cultivation has decreased since 2006, the uncertainty brought about by the economic crisis has now led people to turn, once again, to tobacco. Based on traditional economic practices, many tobacco-farmers sell their product by-passing both state intervention — that is, avoiding taxes — and the middlemen, who usually benefit the most. Using family ties, they produce and create networks through which they sell great amounts of raw tobacco maximizing profit. Field research conducted from 2015 to 2017 indicates that these people take advantage of a large culturally and socially informed consensus in the region regarding informality. Gaps between legality and legitimacy appear as a consequence of the absence of the state as a regulatory agency. The result is a livelihood based on the revalidation of old practices and the production of new local views of legitimacy, morality and value.

Finally, Maria Drakaki et al. address the hot issue of NEETs in the context of EU and of Greece especially. The paper initially focuses on the definitional issues and the theoretical insights concerning the socially vulnerable group of NEETs and the potential parameters of ending up a NEET. Further, the paper aims at bringing to the fore the regional dimension of the issue and focusing on the relation between youth unemployment and NEET rates. Additionally, based on a recent EEA-funded large-scale Project entitled "NEETs2", it proceeds to the analysis of some of the key quantitative and qualitative findings regarding the impact of the multi-parametric economic recession on NEETs' and, in general, Youth's employability and life course in Greece, including evidence-based insights on their survival strategies and public trust.

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Demystifying Migration Myths: Social Discourse on the Impact of Immigrants and Refugees in Greece[1]

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This article is based on the analysis of statistical records and media coverage. The discussion focuses on the demystification of negative perceptions, stereotypes and myths regarding immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees in urban localities, examining the social discourse on the repercussions of migration in Greek society. A strong contradiction has characterized the perceptions and practices towards migrants and refugees in Greece. On the one hand, as in other European countries, the social discourse regarding solidarity, support and humanitarianism is widespread. On the other hand, migrants and refugees have often been seen as 'unwanted individuals' or as a 'threat', a 'health time-bomb', 'criminals and dangerous', 'invaders/intruders', individuals who 'alter the homogeneity of the host country', people who are 'uneducated, uncultured and do not want to attend schools', and who 'take the jobs of native-born workers'. Social discourse in Europe and Greece ignores the role and contributions of third-country nationals to the advancement of the receiving societies. Also, academic literature focuses almost exclusively on the social effects of migration in the receiving countries and societies, disregarding the repercussions of migration on the migrant and the refugee.
Keywords: Immigrants, refugees, social exclusion, social integration, social discourse, Greece.

Introduction

Migrants are characterized by diversity, and the host society shows different responses towards them (Prato 2009a, 2020). Addressing negative perceptions, stereotypes and myths towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Greek society, one cannot ignore the role of media coverage of migrants before, during and after the 'refugee crisis' of 2015. The shocking photo of the drowned Syrian refugee child who washed up on the shores of Turkey on September 2015 (Smith 2015), as well as the hundreds of lives lost at the Mediterranean Sea from capsized boats overloaded with refugees, have brought the migration and refugee crisis to the world's attention (IOM 2017). However, as Europe and the world struggle to deal with the problem, many questions involving social, ethical, legal, political and economic concerns have arisen in relation to the problematic of integration (Prato 2009b, Andrews 2018, Ciubrinskas 2018, da Silva 2018, Giordano 2018, Rosbrook-Thompson and Armstrong 2018, Grillo 2002, Pardo 2020).

Greek society has experienced massive flows of migrants from neighbouring Balkan countries and the Republics of the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s, as well as from Africa, the Middle East and Asia in early 2010 (Fouskas and Tsevrenis 2014). In the late 1980s, Greece was mostly a country that received immigrants, rather than a country from which citizens emigrated. Census statistics prove that, in 1981, there were 180,000 foreigners residing in Greece, amounting to 2% of the total population, 63% of whom were from the most developed countries. In the 1991 census, although there were no significant changes in numbers, less than 50% of foreigners were from developed countries. However, in the 2001 census, the number of foreigners had more than quadrupled, including 762,000 individuals residing in

[1] We wish to thank James Rosbrook-Thompson, Italo Pardo and Giuliana B Prato for their comments on previous draft of this article, as well as the Board of *Urbanities* for the editing.

Greece without Greek citizenship; these were 7% of the total population, which at the time was just over 11 million. The most recent census of 2011 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, ELSTAT 2011) registered 912,000 foreigners in Greece, an increase of 150,000 individuals from 2001.

Between 2015 and 2017, the in-coming refugees were mainly from Syria. The current migration flows are mixed, including migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (Fouskas 2017, Fouskas et al. 2019a, Fouskas et al. 2019b). Under the 'hotspot approach' of the European Commission's European Agenda on Migration (EC 2015), an initial response to the exceptional flows involved the establishment of Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on the islands of Lesvos, Kos, Chios, Samos and Leros (Table 1).

RIC	**Lesvos**	**Chios**	**Samos**	**Leros**	**Kos**	**Total**
Occ./Cap.	19,333/2,840	5,513/1,014	7,573/648	2,331/860	3,341/816	38,091/6,178

Table 1. Reception and Identification Centres - Occupancy/capacity Source: Ministry of Citizen Protection/National Coordination Centre for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum (NCCBCIA) (27/02/2020).

According to the Asylum Service (2020), the number of asylum applications by Third Country Nationals (henceforth, TCNs) in the Greek territory overmultiplied between 2013 and 2019, from 4,814 applications in 2013 (a monthly average of 688 applications) to 77,285 applications in 2019 (a monthly average of 6,440 applications). Regarding the recognition rate of refugee status, in 2013, the positive rate was 15.5%, while in 2019 it was 55.9% (Asylum Service 2020). The countries of origin with the highest recognition rates were Yemen, Syria and Palestine; those with the lowest recognition rates are Georgia, Albania and India (Asylum Service 2020).

According to the National Centre for Social Solidarity (2020), the estimated number of unaccompanied minors was 5,389 (92.7% males); 8.8% are under the age of 14. In both the islands and the mainland, there is total of 1,533 shelters — places of long-term accommodation — while 841 minors are in temporary accommodation (Safe zones/Emergency hotels). As of 31 January 2020, there are 542,813 TCNs residing legally in Greece (Ministry for Migration Policy 2020).

A strong contradiction has characterized the perceptions and practices towards migrants and refugees in Greece. On the one hand, the social discourse regarding solidarity, support and humanitarianism is widespread similarly to other European countries. On the other hand, according to newspapers and other media reports, migrants and refugees have often been seen by society as unwanted individuals or as a threat (Leontitsis and Tsagroni 2020, *Public Issue* 2017, The TOC 2020), a 'health time-bomb' (To Vima 2011), 'criminals and dangerous' (To Ethnos 2020), 'invaders/intruders' (To Ethnos 2021), individuals who 'alter the homogeneity of the host country' (Kathimerini 2020d), people who are 'uneducated, uncultured and do not want to attend schools' (*IN.GR* 2002), who 'take the jobs of native-born workers' (Kathimerini

2003, Avgi 2020, Aggelidis 2017) and who are 'responsible for the downgrading of various urban areas' (Onisenko 2010).

The abovementioned contradiction became more evident between 2015 and 2018, when the flows of refugees and migrants increased significantly. The island of Lesvos makes a representative ethnographic example. According to several media reports particularly during 2015, in Lesvos, the unconditional care, response and acts of solidarity provided by local communities and civil society to the incoming migrant populations were more pervasive than in other European and international contexts. Every day, Greek fishermen carried out several rescues. Individually and collectively, citizens showed outstanding solidarity and support to the refugees, providing every possible form of assistance and care, and engaged in collective and organized actions and awareness-raising/sensitisation campaigns. Across the country, professionals like medical doctors, teachers, students, entrepreneurs and others, provided humanitarian assistance (Imerisia 2015).

Nevertheless, in November 2017, Lesvos residents 'went on strike' to protest against European policies that had turned their island into a 'prison' for immigrants and asylum seekers (Kathimerini 2017). Islanders shut businesses, shops, municipal offices, nurseries and pharmacies, and dozens rallied in a central square, calling on the government to transfer asylum-seekers to the mainland, shouting that 'Lesvos is not a place of exile'. More recently, in February 2020, police officers clashed with migrant and refugee protesters as they marched from the Moria camp to the capital Mytilini to express their intolerance towards their appalling living conditions in the camp (Kathimerini 2020b). Prato's ethnographic work (2009b) on Albanians examines the dramatic shift in local people's attitude from solidarity, acceptance and enthusiasm to mistrust, discriminations and hostility due to various reasons, including mistrust linked to increasing reports of some migrant groups' involvement in illegal activities.

The events described above affect the relations and image of migrants and increase the aversion of Greek society towards foreigners, including extreme signs of racism and xenophobia. In 2018, the Racist Violence Recording Network (2018) recorded 117 incidents of racist violence and over 130 victims of such violence. In 74 cases, migrants or refugees were targeted due to ethnic origin, religion or skin colour; also targeted were migrant community associations and human rights advocates. Triandafyllidou (2015) maintained that public opinion in Greece remained overall welcoming to migrants and refugees. However, Glorius (2018) stated that respondents to a survey mostly agreed that it was a national responsibility to help refugees, although there was a decrease from 85% in 2015 to 70% in 2017. Negative attitudes were registered both to immigration from third countries and to immigrants' contribution to the country, while public opinion reacted positively to some acts of kindness by migrants (Wessendorf 2008, Poulakidakos 2018, Fouskas 2019b).

Anthropological and sociological studies (Nail 2016, Greenhill 2016) show that the social discourse in Europe and Greece ignores the role and contributions of migrants to the advancement of the receiving societies. Also, with only a few exceptions (Fakiolas 1999, Foner 2012, Fouskas 2014a, Joly 2000, Ohndorf 1989), academic literature focuses on the social effects of migration in receiving countries and societies, disregarding the repercussions of

migration on the migrant and the refugee. The discussion that follows is based mainly on the analysis of statistical records and media coverage about TCNs in Greek society and draws on sources from the fields of Social Anthropology, Sociology of Migration and Social Policy in an attempt to address and demystify negative perceptions, existing myths, prejudices, misperceptions and stereotypes on demography, employment, religion, education, the ghettoization of urban areas and delinquency.

How Much do Immigrants and Refugees Affect Greece's Demographic Problem?

According to Eurostat (2019), during 2017, a total of 4.4 million people migrated to one of the 28 EU Member States, while at least 3.1 million people were reported to have left an EU Member State. Among the 4.4 million immigrants, there were an estimated 2.0 million citizens of non-EU countries, around 1.0 million people who migrated to an EU Member State of which they had citizenship, 1.4 million citizens of an EU Member State different from the one to which they migrated, and some 11,000 stateless people (Eurostat 2019). On 1 January 2018, there were 22.3 million people residing in an EU Member State with citizenship of a non-member country, accounting for 4.4% of the EU-28 population. In 2017, Germany reported the largest total number of immigrants (917,100), followed by the United Kingdom (644,200), Spain (532,100), France (370,000) and Italy (343,400) (Eurostat 2019).

Greece is no exception to the general European demographic problem, arising mainly from a low birth rate and an increased life expectancy. This results in the increase of the average age of the population, with a significant proportion of people who are over 65. According to Martzoukos (2011), the main reasons causing the low birth rate in the Greek population are the abandonment of traditional Greek life patterns and the adoption of new social standards; the decline of the values of marriage, family and children; a loosening of morals; physical and mental fatigue; the over-protection of children; parents' professional occupation and social-materialistic eudemonism; increased interest in economic reassurance; unemployment; sterility; abortion; urbanisation; traffic accidents; drugs, smoking and alcoholism; ageing population; emigration; national and global insecurity. On the other hand, increased immigration is making Europe a multi-ethnic society — in the sense of 'poly-ethnic' (Prato 2009a) — in terms of race, religion and culture. Therefore, the need to focus on particular issues regarding the new social composition is essential for social cohesion and normality.

Do Migrants Take the Jobs of Native Workers?

International scholars and researchers who have studied the complex nature of the Greek labour market in the period 1990-2020 argue that TCNs operate for extended periods within the limits of informal work (Williams et al. 2016; Fouskas 2016b, 2019a; Fouskas et al. 2018). Undocumented TCNs are subjected to irregular and exploitative employment, often falling victims of human trafficking networks and organised crime (Fouskas et al. 2018). The unequal division of labour entraps TCNs almost exclusively into the informal sector of the economy, where employers gain economic profit by avoiding social security contributions and hiring people without contracts, including individuals who have second jobs but declare only one. In

Greece, TCNs do manual labour in agriculture,[2] construction, crafts, domestic work, food and hotel services, cleaning,[3] personal care services and itinerant trade (Fouskas et al. 2018). These jobs are not attractive, offer no social prestige and are socially inferior (Watson 1980). Pardo's analysis of migrants' employment in the informal sector (2020) contributes to unravelling how, due to uncontrolled irregular migration, the positive relationships and economic collaboration between locals and immigrants have transformed into polarised, dangerous and unliveable realities. In his study of the Naples case, some who arrive legally overstay beyond their temporary permit and then disappear, becoming caught in a limbo under appalling conditions of slavery and exploitation. At the same time, Pardo notes, the progressive worsening of the situation of co-existence breeds intolerance and conflict between indigenous people, legal immigrants and irregular migrants.

Greece is first among the 21 OECD country-members, with 24% of Greek GDP being formed by informal economic activities (Schneider and Williams 2013: 52-96). Moreover, the country has one of the world's highest percentages of uninsured workers (37.3%) and the highest percentage of working irregular immigrants (4.4%), followed by the USA (3.2%) and Italy (2%) (Schneider and Williams 2013: 52-96). Here, immigrants and refugees have become part of a cheap workforce reserve that is continually renewed, while the existing division of labour entraps into low-status/low-wage jobs migrants, who are classified in terms of class, gender and nationality (Psimmenos 2011). As we have said, migrants largely do unregistered jobs outside the margins of formal employment that are considered to be unattractive, without social prestige and inferior by the Greek workforce. However, they do provide economic profit and social status attainment for the employers and the customers (Portes et al. 1989, Parreñas 2000, Anderson 2000).

Immigrants mostly do precarious jobs that lack all the standard forms of labour security (Vosko 2006) and create enormous and complex barriers to labour organisation strategies, due to the isolated, atomized and non-unionized nature of migrant employment (Choudry and Thomas 2012; Fouskas 2014b, 2016b). This makes these immigrant workers more vulnerable in the labour market (Spyridakis et al. 2020). According to Eurostat (2017), non-EU citizens are more likely to become economically inactive and there is a higher proportion of inactive immigrants (21%) than inactive native-born who are willing to work (16%) — such migrants'

[2] In the Nea Manolada area of the Peloponnese, farm owners have exploited and abused immigrants repeatedly. In 2013, twenty Bangladeshi workers were shot during a dispute over back pay (Kathimerini 2013). The incident occurred in the region of Ilia when some 200 pickers reportedly demanded six months' worth of unpaid wages from their employer. The workers were involved in an argument with three Greek supervisors, at least one of whom fired at the immigrants. It is thought that as many as thirty workers were injured in the incident, several critically. The farm owner, who was allegedly not present at the shooting, was arrested but the three supervisors were not. The case (Chowdury and Others v. Greece) was brought before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Court found there had been a violation of Art. 4(2) ECHR on the prohibition of forced labour.

[3] When an Egyptian immigrant window cleaner fell to his death (Kathimerini 2010) while working at the government building of the Greek Ministry of Labour, it was found that he did not have social insurance and that safety rules had not been followed.

inactivity has been labelled 'involuntary inactivity'; notably, according to the OECD, in Greece, there is a low number of inactive immigrants who would like to work (OECD/European Union 2015). In 2019 (Eurostat 2020), despite falling for six consecutive years, the unemployment rate in the EU Member-States among people born outside EU remained 6.3% higher than that for the native population.

Are Religious Spaces of Migrants Dangerous?

Religious spaces are of great importance, not only for religious observance. In his analysis on irregular migration, Syrigos (2011) mentions that in Greece there are no mosques in the inner-city areas, except in Thrace, where there is a substantial Greek-speaking Muslim minority. As a result, Muslims in these areas practice their religion in informal spaces. During festivals such as Ramadan and Eid-ul-Azha, they practice their religion in the open, mostly in stadiums. Arguably, even if an official mosque was built, the prayer rooms would not disappear, as they are scattered throughout neighbourhoods and serve daily needs (Syrigos 2011: 241). In May 2009, a violent demonstration took place in the centre of Athens, in which Muslims protested against an alleged insult to the Qur'an by a Greek police officer (Kathimerini 2009; Syrigos 2011: 241). The problem of Islamic radicalism is worsened by the fact that the majority of devout Muslims who have arrived in Greece do not speak Greek and have been marginalized (Syrigos 2011: 241). It has been observed that members of the immigrant communities retain their cultures only at the level of associations and among family members and friends (Sedmak 2011). However, there is substantial evidence from across the EU on mosques as hubs of radicalisation, and misconstrued comparative attempts have been made between the role of churches and mosques among the immigrant communities (Syrigos 2011).

In contrast to such misconstructions, ethnographic studies show the positive socialising role of Christian churches for many immigrants. For example, Romaniszyn (1996) has explored the role of the Polish church for undocumented Polish workers in Athens. For irregular immigrants the church is a space where they are welcomed and respected; a place where a special collectivity is created and useful information on jobs and housing is exchanged. Gradually, despite individual mobility and uncertain status, Polish immigrants were able to create and maintain a special collectivity there, which, although invisible and temporary, allows them to exchange information on available jobs, apartments or rooms for rent, and places available in vehicles travelling back to Poland (Romaniszyn 1996).

Are Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees a 'Health Time-bomb'?

Greek society was significantly negatively affected when a study carried out by the Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (HCDCP/KEELPNO 2012) was published. According to data from the mobile health units of HCDCP/KEELPNO in Omonia Square, Victoria Square, Attica Square, Larissa Square, Karaiskakis Square, Amerikis Square and Votanicos, there has been an increase in the rates of sexually transmitted diseases, such as genital warts (HPV), syphilis and gonorrhoea. There were also outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as hepatitis and tuberculosis, recurrence of diseases which had been eradicated, like polio,

and multiple cases of infection. These rates were attributed to the increase of male and female prostitution (legal and illegal) and the massive influx of undocumented migrants, who enter the country without having undergone vaccinations in their countries of origin (HCDCP/KEELPNO 2012). The following data obtained by HCDCP/KEELPNO through recording the medical history of immigrants were indicative of the situation regarding vaccination (see Table 2):

Afghanistan	70% vaccinated; 30% unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated.
Pakistan	68.30% vaccinated; 31.70% unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated.
Bangladesh	100% unvaccinated.
Rest	No adequate vaccination coverage.

Table 2. Vaccination Coverage of Immigrants Examined by HCDCP/KEELPNO Unit. Source: Hellenic Center for Disease Control and Prevention, October 2012 (09/06/2011-25/09/12).

The impact of migration on public health is of particular concern to Greek immigration policy because most immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees are from Balkan, Asian and African states. As these people's epidemiological profile is completely different from that of Greeks and other Europeans, they pose a high risk to public health, also due to poor living condition both in their countries of origin and during their stay in Greece. Legally (Law 4368, in Government Gazette 2016), asylum seekers, persons without social insurance and the vulnerable are entitled to free access to basic health, pharmaceutical and hospital care, including psychiatric care (AIDA 2020b). Nevertheless, in practice, both foreigners' and the local population's actual access to health care services is hindered by significant shortages of resources and capacity, as a result of the austerity policies implemented in Greece and the lack of adequate cultural mediation in the health service (Fouskas et al. 2019b, 2019c). The resulting health challenges exemplify the formal and informal barriers that immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees face in accessing healthcare. Such barriers include legal restrictions, such as a stop to granting social security numbers to new immigrants (To Vima 2019, Kathimerini 2020a), denial of service provision, fear of being denounced to the Authorities and penalisation of health professionals' assistance to irregular migrants. Other factors that influence people's access to health care include corruption, under-the-table payments ('fakelaki' in Greek), language and cultural barriers, as well as lack of familiarity with how the national health insurance and the health system of the host country function.

A Provisional Insurance and Health Care Number (PAAYPA) is currently issued by the Asylum Service upon a migrant's completion of the application. For the following six months, this PAAYPA allows the asylum seekers to gain access to health care and to the labour market (Government Gazette 2020, Kathimerini 2020c). The situation is complicated by the conditions in the Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on the Greek islands, where TCNs face overcrowding, health problems, extreme violence and traumatic events resulting in physical and mental health issues (AIDA 2020a). At the same time, there is a lack of medical staff and cultural health mediators (AIDA 2020b). The combination of a restrictive legal framework with

the problems that arise in practice exacerbate the inaccessibility of health services for immigrants.

TCNs who do precarious, low-status, low wage jobs seem to develop attitudes which question the social importance of health care services and their significance in their lives (Psimmenos and Kassimati 2003, Psimmenos 2007, Fouskas 2016a). At the same time, following the COVID-19 emergency and social distancing, there has been a decrease in the kind of pro-immigrant mobilisations and solidarity that characterized the 2015-2018 reception crisis (Mazzola and Martiniello 2020). On 4th August 2020, a 48-year-old legal immigrant from Cameroon became a scapegoat for some passengers travelling by train from Athens to Thessaloniki. During routine checks at one of the train stops, he was found without a ticket for his destination, Karditsa, and was reportedly forced to leave the train, also due to complaints from passengers that he was a suspected case of COVID-19 (Naftemporiki 2020). All passengers reacted with panic and aggressiveness towards the Cameroonian and wanted him to get off the train. The train inspector asked him to sit on the floor of the wagon until the train reached the next station, Lianokladi. There, the authorities were waiting. He was made to leave the train and was transported, with police escort, by ambulance to the hospital of Lamia, where he was checked and found not to have any relevant symptoms of COVID-19. In another incident that took place in Chios on 12th August, a Greek was arrested following a complaint from the Racist Crime Observatory about a racist post on social media calling to action against the refugees; in the post, the Greek stated that 'they are destroying land properties and that are Wanted Dead or Alive' (Ta Nea 2020).

Is Education Unnecessary for Immigrant and Refugee Children?

In Greece, Spain and Italy, more than 40% of young immigrants are early school leavers (Dumčius et al. 2012: 3). Moreover, there are complaints from immigrant parents claiming that not enough attention is paid to their children's unique needs. Migrant parents feel tolerated and not accepted in Greek society, and Greek parents believe that the quality of education is negatively affected by the presence of immigrant pupils (Triandafyllidou 2011: 27-28). Until 2013, in Greece, there was little support for newly arrived migrant children at regional, local and school level, and there were no clear guidelines for teachers, parents and local communities (Dumčius et al. 2012: 8). Moreover, the vast majority of students in several schools in central Athens were immigrant children, as the geographic concentration of immigrants in urban community ghettos led to migrant children being overrepresented in particular schools resulting in school and residential segregation (Burgess et al. 2004, Dumčius et al. 2012, European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019). Frequently, parents are unable to support their children's learning needs due to their irregular jobs, precariousness, lack of time and education. They face subjective difficulties, too; for example, when registering their children at school (Dumčius et al. 2012).

Moreover, immigrant children are characterized by background diversity and different needs that require flexible and inclusive tactics (Fouskas 2016c). Before 2016, Greece had a non-systematic educational support model characterized by the randomness of the support

provided. There is no clearly articulated national policy to support the integration of newly arrived migrant children; furthermore, insufficient resources have been allocated for such policy, which has often been ineffectively implemented. In 2016, new measures of access to early childhood education for immigrant and refugee children were implemented. The Ministry of Education established a programme of afternoon preparatory classes (Reception Facilities for Refugee Education-RFREs), which is implemented in public schools near immigrant camps or places of residence (UNHCR apartments, hotels and reception centres). The educational programme addresses all immigrant and refugee children without discrimination. It aims to ensure that, after a transitional period of preparation, children who remain in Greece receive psychosocial support and education and achieve a smooth integration into the Greek educational system. Additional support is offered through the Reception Classes (RCs), which are specifically designed for teaching the Greek language to immigrant and refugee pupils with little or no knowledge of the language. In December 2019, the estimated number of refugee and immigrant children in Greece was 37,000 (UNICEF 2019); as of June 2019, 12,800 of them, who are of school age (4-17 years old), are enrolled in formal education (UNICEF 2019). Article 51 of Law 4636/2019 (Government Gazette 2019) states that asylum-seeking children should have access to the education system, and that facilitation is provided in case of incomplete documentation.

Although the refugee education programme is highly welcomed, there are still issues to be solved. On the one hand, school attendance rate should be improved, and particular action should be taken in order to guarantee access to education to children in the islands (AIDA 2020c). On the other hand, various schools have registered several cases of anti-immigrant sentiments and shows of intolerance of third-county nationals' stay among parents and guardians of Greek pupils in various cities, such as Lamia, Chios, Oreokastro and Polygiros. Specifically, there is direct opposition to immigrant and refugee education and to reception facilities for refugees' education.

Are Immigrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees Responsible for the Ghettoization of Urban Areas?

There has been a continuous flow of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Greece. They have found shelter mainly in already deprived districts in the city centres (Psimmenos 1995, Rerres 2010). As pointed out by Pardo with reference to the Naples case (2020), the authorities' reiterated neglect of inner-city areas and neighbourhoods contributes to their degradation and creates a fertile soil for potential conflict between old and new residents. Thus, the real estate market is frozen, property values plummet constantly and apartments and stores are rented or sold below their value. Moreover, entrepreneurs leave these areas as their sales decline, and they find themselves unable to co-exist with the recession, street-crime, prostitution, drug use and drug dealing, begging. Environmental degradation contributes to the deterioration of the local quality of life, as the number of old and abandoned buildings increases, as do trash, low lighting, poor policing, traffic, concentration of services, itinerant trade and lack of infrastructure.

Consequently, consumers' purchasing power (shrunk by the recession) is transferred to markets in the suburbs. In this context, the Control Unit of Flea Markets and Outdoor Trade carry out inspections to eradicate illegal vending; for example, the sale of fake, counterfeit, pirated and illegal merchandise and tobacco (Hellenic Ministry of Citizen Protection 2012a). At the same time, special Police operations are conducted in collaboration with the Financial and Economic Crime Unit to detect the warehouses where these items are stored (Hellenic Ministry of Citizen Protection 2012b).

During the refugee and immigrant reception crisis of 2015, numerous citizen initiatives, volunteering, squatting in uninhabited buildings, self-management, and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants emerged in city centres, towns or public areas in the mainland and in the islands (Fouskas 2019b). Abandoned buildings have been converted into living spaces for immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees; there, men, women, families and sometimes young children are crammed into rooms and apartments in basements and warehouses that in many cases present health hazards as they lack basic facilities. Migrants from African and Asian countries live 5-40 together in abandoned apartments in the city centre or large rented rooms. They often pay high rent to owners or to the tenants from whom they sub-rent. One may reasonably assume that the profit of the owners is mostly untaxed. The lack of opportunities for interaction hinders mutual understanding among various groups and reinforce racial and ethnic stereotyping (Fong 2009: 48). Often, immigrants' petty-thieving or criminal acts of violence contribute to social polarisation and to aggression towards foreigners irrespective of nationality, gender or legal status.

Are Immigrants, Asylum and Refugees Responsible for Increased Crime?

The presence of immigrants, asylum and refugees in the country has been directly linked to crime, even though their presence is marginal. In many cases, violence is intra-community, and they are victims of criminal acts (Balatsou 2010). As migrants who engage in criminal activity (street crime, theft, burglaries, and robberies) are more visible, the image of violent criminal activity by migrants is strengthened (Tsiganou 2010: 80). It should be emphasised that the vulnerability of immigrants, the exploitation of their irregular status and the inability to enter Greece legally for work purposes, lead to an increase of organised groups' criminal activity (Balatsou 2010: 50).

There is a negative stereotypical association between immigration and crime. The equation 'illegal migrant=dangerous criminal' has become embedded in the social consciousness, leading to an incorrect supposition that there is some specific immigrant groups' ethnic predisposition to commit certain crimes (Tsiganou 2010: 81). This notion dominates even when the immigrant's legal status is regularised. Some migrant groups are over-represented in the crime statistics (Tsiganou 2010: 81) only because they happen to be more numerous (Balatsou 2010: 50). Similar to other European contexts (Pardo 2020), the most common criminal actions in which irregular migrants are involved along with Greeks and individuals of other nationalities, or with criminal gangs of Greeks or foreigners, include drug peddling, prostitution, human trafficking, smuggling of tobacco and other merchandise (like

CDs and DVDs), illegal vending, petty theft, pickpocketing, bag-snatching, forgery and counterfeiting, burglaries, robberies, beatings, online fraud, scams and protection rackets.

Moreover, of the 9,467 people held in the detention facilities, 5,221 (55%) are foreigners (Hellenic Ministry of Justice, September 2017). The criminal tendencies and patterns of immigrants match those of the Greeks and are incorporated into the existing underworld networks (Tsiganou 2010: 81).

One has to be careful when interpreting data on crime, concerning both Greeks and migrants. One should also be aware of the role of the media and politicians in the criminalisation process, the social construction of the migrant and the use of migrants as scapegoats (Lazaridis and Wickens 1999), which generates stigma against minorities and reinforces the fear of crime.

Racism is strongly associated with poverty in urban areas, where 'moral panic' produces the social exclusion of certain individuals — the poor, the 'other' with a different skin colour, and so on — who are demonised in the media and viewed as dangerous (Fernandes and Morte 2011: 83 and 90). The ultimate example of racist attitudes in the media reflects a widespread belief that crime is on the increase especially due to black youth and immigrants (Fernandes and Morte 2011: 90).

Conclusion

No one can ignore the social controversies, the policy inadequacies and the tragedies that accompany migration. Nor can one ignore the precarious life that immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees of both genders and all ages endure. They struggle to survive at the margins of society, while their social and human rights are encroached upon. In Greece, the escalation of migration concurred with the conversion of the country from one that sends migrants to one that receive migrants. Greek policy regulating the entry requirements for migrants, the reception mechanism and their social integration is vague and confusing and co-exists with various pressures and the inadequacy of state mechanisms.

Public opinion in Greece has wrongly been imbued with feelings of fear based on the view promoted by the media and some political parties that the country will be 'flooded by massive migration, and social cohesion will be threatened' by 'them'/'the foreigners'/'the others'/'the criminals'. That is, claims such as 'massive and sustained influx of migrants and the large volume of asylum claims could threaten social stability in Greece and security in the centres of large cities of Europe' create polarisation and intolerance to diversity while instrumentalizing the plight of thousands of migrants. However, such assertions generate multiple questions. These claims, one notes, apply to the precarious, low-status/low-wage work and undeclared employment involving the inflows of migrants, who are exploited as a cheap and flexible workforce; yet, the global economy and the formal and particularly the informal sectors of the labour market are benefiting from migrant workers.

In recent years, Manolada and other areas of rural Greece have been at the centre of several cases involving violence against immigrant workers. Such tragedies, which remind us of colonial attitudes towards natives treated as slaves, do not happen only in the agriculture sector. In the urban centres, there are numerous incidents of work accidents in construction sites

and factories, as well as instances of abuse of domestic workers. In most cases, these events are not recorded or remain hidden and even if they become known, the trade unions fail to act. The membership of the Greek trade unions does not include most third-country nationals, due to the informal, marginal nature of their work; this contributes to making many migrants vulnerable in the labour market and susceptible to exploitation and precariousness in the informal economy sector. As workers from Eastern Europe, Asia or Africa who protest against poverty wages and squalid living conditions are not supported by the trade unions, their actions are unsuccessful and exposed to loopholes in the law, State indifference and fear of employers' reaction and job loss.

This is a complicated situation. The dynamics that we have outlined result in the failed integration of third-country nationals, contributing to their stigma; this stigma dominates even when their legal status is regularized, allowing immigrants to be used as scapegoats. Immigrants are often blamed for all the evils in modern Greek society, ranging from the economic crisis to unemployment and petty crime. At the same time, there is much evidence of racism and xenophobia, which have negative consequences for both Greeks and immigrants, forcing polarisation in public opinion. The increasing pressure from immigration, the prolonged targeting of immigrants and the fact that for decades the State has not taken adequate measures and has not implemented policies that promote integration and encourage peaceful coexistence and social cohesion has led to the rise of extreme-right groups and nationalism.

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Society and Museums Today. Museums 'From Below'?[1]

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In the context of modern cities and of the major social inequalities and exclusions they generate, this article considers the extent to which museums contribute to building democratic and progressive societies. Indeed, numerous museums either make promises of, or directly engage in, practices promoting respect for diversity, equality, accessibility and the idea of social inclusion. In this, they appear to contradict the rationale that develops cities as places dedicated to the exclusive cultivation of relations of power, inequality and social exclusion. At the same time, the tendency towards the commercialization of museum collections and activities, as well as the growth of the cultural economy, are becoming increasingly visible. This excludes many social groups from access to and participation in museum activities. It is found, however, that increasingly vulnerable groups (homeless, immigrants, the poor, etc.) tend to develop 'alternative museum sites', where they gather and exhibit material objects, experiences and oral testimonies about their life memories and construct or renegotiate their identities. Together, these activities cultivate a feeling of belonging and community, particularly in multicultural, but also in economically marginalized, regions.
Keywords: Cultural heritage, museum, vulnerable people, inclusion, exclusion, diversity, integration, belonging.

Introduction

In light of the undeniable population mobility that is primarily tied to globalization and in particular to the social phenomena of global migration and tourist mobility, modern cities, as recipients of mobility, are subject to the constant pressures and contradictions created by the social and, especially, economic dimensions of contemporary urbanism[2] that actually appears captive to the destructive capitalism of its current neoliberal phase. Under the above phase of capitalism (Harvey 2007), the modern city is transformed into a conveyor belt and an instrument of power relations that are geared towards extracting profit from every activity that develops in the context of urban life. The modern city's varied and extreme versions of social inequality show how it is ultimately subject to exploitation by capitalism, and that life in it merely reflects the process of exploitation. In this context, the question then is whether the marginalized people of the modern cities develop cultural actions and re-actions that can claim and create new forms of social life and also social relations that exceed the limits imposed by dominant paradigms of sociability and legitimacy (Pardo and Prato 2019). Stavrides answers this question positively by introducing the relatively new term 'commoning', through which he opens up such a perspective. The term refers to discrete public and private sharing spaces that emerge in the large, modern city as 'common spaces'. These are open to public use and subject only to sharing practices that define and produce goods and services that share. For practices taking place within them that are not just about sharing but about encouraging creative encounters, these spaces promote values that are shared by and involved in sharing processes. The core of his

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[2] Prato (2009), Pardo and Prato (eds 2012) and Pardo (2020) have significantly contributed to the anthropological approach to modern urbanism, multiculturalism and to mainly neglected or invisible aspects of cultural diversity in cities.

argument is in fact that 'commoning can remain commoning only if it keeps expanding to include newcomers' (Stavrides 2016: 221).

Modern cities actively participate in the global stage of urban development, innovation and competition and work to demonstrate their unique comparative advantage over other cities (Spyridakis 2009). They do so by showcasing aspects of the city that could earn them any one of these labels — that of a 'smart' city, 'creative' city, 'green' city, 'hybrid' city, 'sustainable' city, 'cultural' city, 'intrastate' or 'digital' city. These efforts are made in order to achieve a high standard of living and to attain visibility and a high ranking in the preferences of varied organizations and companies, as well as among tourists and their own citizens. Most of these forms of urban development can be referred to with the term 'soft power' (Mouliou 2015).[3] Indeed, culture and cultural heritage are considered a strong type of soft power, and museums and exhibitions, in particular, are viewed as the most powerful agents. Dicks refers for example that according the Bazelgette Review (2017: 11), a Government-commissioned independent review of the UK's, 'on current trends, the Creative Industries (arts sector), could deliver close to £130bn GVA by 2025 and approximately one million new jobs could be created by 2030' (Dicks 2019: 31). As Lord and Blankenberg point out, where cities exist, there are museums, and 'powerful cities have omnipotent museums' (2015: 9, 19). The great importance of modern museums urges us to explore their social dimensions, the relationships between them and social groups that experience marginalization and social inequality. It is also important to explore the ways in which particular social groups establish their own museum spaces and give their own meanings. It is noted that the term museum covers a wide variety of places in which cultural objects are protected and exhibited for public benefit (there are therefore museums indoors, outdoors and in households; monuments, buildings, settlements and protected landscapes, etc.). The museums also include virtual reality sites (virtual museums). Recently the term has also come to refer to informal, perhaps temporary, actions which organize a space where a social group or a community collects, deposits and often exhibits objects, oral testimonies, memories, materials and intangible objects that represent the experiences, meaning and identity that the group or community attributes to itself.

The research data come from my on-site research visits, during the last five years to various types of museums in Greece and across Europe, including many visits to museum websites and to some online museums. The time of my site visits in museums was almost always very short, so I chose to work as a visitor or as a careful observer who recorded every

[3] The term soft power was put forward by Joseph Nye to identify this form of power as a power that tends to derive from intangible, cultural or ideological resources (Nye 1990: 188-197). According to him, the current definition of power is being transformed. It is becoming increasingly unclear as coercive power loses its force, leaving space for cooperative power or indirect power arising from the above-mentioned resources or from others such as information, technology, knowledge, popular culture or political cohesion (Nye 1990: 31-35). More specifically, he describes soft power as power's second face, one which is intangible and based on 'the ability to shape the preferences of others'; it is, in other words, based on attraction (Nye 1990). However, Yukaruc notes that the concept of soft power is not particularly original and shares similarities with the Gramscian understanding of power (Yukaruc 2017: 497).

kind of movement and information. My interest was in exploring the relationship between museum and society, in identifying the social character of the museum and in ways in which communities and social groups participate. Ethnographic research was actually conducted at the Victoria Square Project in Athens (2017) at the Museum of Greek Folk Art — renamed as 'Museum of Modern Greek Culture', especially at the permanent exhibition 'People and Tools. Aspects of work in pre-industrial society' (at the end of 2015), and in many local, folk museums in Greece.

Throughout their history, museums have always had a dynamic public image as a field of expression and exposition for the important ideas that defined societies. However, in recent decades museums have frequently undergone radical transformations, re-adjusting or re-inventing their principles, policies and practices. As a result of these impressive and imaginative constructions, they have converted themselves into landmarks, magnets for tourists and citizens, turning a comparative advantage in projects for urban revival which are being attempted following the radical transformation of cities as regards the structure and bases of productivity. Museums are also involved in the new logic of urban economic development, although they attempt to base their contribution to it on the principles laid out in their social role. For example, the implementation cultural/museum clustering programs[4] in museums in Berlin, Amsterdam, Copenhagen and London amongst others, reflects these ongoing changes (Cook and Lazeretti 2008).[5]

The Social Dimension of Museums

As public institutions, museums have the potential to contribute to social cohesion, to substantially influence the ways in which individuals and societies perceive themselves and their relationships with others (Newman and McLean 2004: 16). The social and above all political importance of the museum as an institution was recognized during the 1960s. However, it was during the 1970s and 1980s that the museum came to prominence both as a strong cultural, educational and research structure, and as a social institution with a political agenda that was more interested in the people than it had been in the past. It was this socio-centric view of the museum that gave birth to the new museology (Vergo 1989). Since that time, the museum has tried to operate as an open site for contact and communication, for the involvement of communities and different social groups. In many cases, museums also encourage open debate on controversial social issues, either those which are still open wounds

[4] The concept of the cluster was first advanced in 1990 by Michael Porter. It has since attracted a great deal of attention from politicians and academics. The concept has come to be regarded as a strategic tool for local economic development. Museum clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected museums which work closely with local suppliers, tourist attractions and public sector entities (Cook and Lazeretti 2008).

[5] The creation of museum networks (as in London, Athens and Paris) is also closely linked to the strategy of cultural clustering, although in a different way (Konsola 2011). An important network is the 'Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO)' which was founded in 1992 (https://www.ne-mo.org/), the Athens Museums and Cultural Institutions Network (2009), http://www.athensmuseums.net/index.php?lang=en&lang=gr&lang=en and many others.

or those which reflect a city's difficult cultural heritage (MacDonald 2009: 1-4) such as the holocaust (The Jewish Museum in Berlin).

It should briefly be stated that the museum is an institution that was and is intertwined with the city, but not with the entirety of its social and cultural reality and identity (Bennett 1995). In the ideological climate of Romanticism, during the creation of Western nation-states (Boswell and Evans 1999), the goal envisaged was to showcase a language and culture common to all, as elements that would reinforce cultural identity. During this period, the focus of museums in the West was monopolized by organizing the concentration and display of items of high artistic and aesthetic value, familiar and appropriated works from the art and culture of civilizations (from Egypt, Greece and so on). In other words, a choice was made to promote a cultural heritage that corroborated the economic, political and cultural power of the nation, constituting the dynamic field that would participate in the process of creating a single and dominant national identity (Kaplan 1994, Kaftantzoglou 2001, Bounia and Gazi 2012). The latter would also be strengthened by the development of folklore museums which, through the reproduction of a rural cultural foundation for every nation, established historical depth for national identities (Bennett 1999: 380–393).[6] For their part, ethnographic museums[7] created images and identities of the non-Western Other as seen by the Western colonizer (Barringer and Flynn 1998); that is, as primitive, uncivilized, bizarre or exotic beings.

Within this museological perspective, the culture and daily life of the majority of a city's inhabitants was hardly an object of collection and exhibition (that is, in a real rather than an aesthetic dimension). At the same time, the working classes and other social groups, as publics, had limited access to museums. Although the project of making museums public and fully accessible was already under way in the 18th century (for example, the Louvre and British museums), access remained the privilege of the few, until the mid-20th century, notably of the social elites or those initiated to the arts. Towards the end of the 19th century, the state and museums' interest in the cultural enrichment and education of all classes and social groups through their participation in museums found expression in several ways. However, given that for citizens the museum functioned as the face of the state, it developed particular ideological, political and cultural messages and values — of guidance or control, for instance, of the habits of the working classes, which led indirectly to their exclusion from the museum (Bennett 1995).

[6] In discussing the historical development of museums alongside that of the fair and the international exhibition, Bennett sheds new light on the relationship between modern forms of official and popular culture.

[7] Western ethnographic museums collect and classify non-Western peoples and their cultures, thereby creating a shared identity of superiority for Western civilization against the 'primitive Other'. From this perspective, the ethnographic museums of the 19th and 20th centuries contributed significantly to the consolidation and scientific justification of colonialism and the hegemony of Western Europe over the non-Western world. Since 1970, the view of the role and importance of the ethnographic museum has changed. Today it is understood as representing not only world cultures, but also the world's interconnectedness. Ethnographic collections are therefore regarded as representative bodies of cultural diversity in the present, as well as of traditions that have suffered upheaval (Barringer and Flynn 1998; Thomas 2016; Chambers et al. 2016; Solomon 2012: 88-91).

It was from the mid-20th century onwards that substantial changes in museums' understandings of their roles, policies and practices were enacted. More pluralistic tendencies arose, both with regards to providing uninhibited access for all, but also in relation to practices that incorporated hitherto overlooked items and historical subjects that had emerged after the 1970s. However, museums continued, by and large, to serve not only as fields of expression and exhibition of the important ideas that defined societies, but also foundational political mechanisms for the production and dissemination of messages, ideological or otherwise. It is indicative that since ICOM's creation in 1946, it included a definition of new museums and political practices. After 1956, in particular, these played a central role for museums and museum professionals, becoming a reference point within the international museum community. In 1960, U.N.E.S.C.O. also formally declared that 'Its member states are obliged to take appropriate measures to ensure that their museums are open to all without discrimination on the economic and social level'. Thus, museums gradually changed their mission and philosophy, rethinking their 'endoscopic' policies of a few decades ago and, above all, trying to reach a wider audience, beyond the traditional elite of the skilled and educated. These messages were supported by the authenticity of exhibited material, presented as 'objective' in relation to truth/knowledge. Further, through museums' opening up towards society, chiefly via their educational, entertainment-oriented character, they acquired a new identity, new values, policies and practices. These were based on the idea of promoting creative interaction between objects and social subjects (Miller 1987; Gialouri 2012: 25-30; Solomon 2012: 75-124).

A museum's value lies precisely in its possession of objects. Thus, it inherently reflects and creates relationships between people and objects. Moreover, it also reflects and creates social relationships. This is because objects have the power to mobilize diverse mental, mnemonic, imaginary and emotional processes, which create an impact both on the items and on social subjects' identities (Tilley 2001: 260). While visitors are of course called upon to follow the trajectory and interpretation put forward in the museological narrative (Voger 2000), they always retain the possibility of engaging in a solo dialogue with the objects, giving meaning to and interpreting them and their discourses in their own way. Being a privileged space for the reformulation and development of relations between subjects and objects, as well as for developing a sense of belonging and shared identity, museums can bring to the surface myriad stories. Interdisciplinary perspectives, oral history and new technologies all contribute significantly not only to reflecting relationships, conflicts and contradictions in the museum, but also to articulating the above. For instance, by using oral history, some museums make the most of their oral history archives[8] in order to strengthen people's sense of belonging to a place and a community, to address traumatic memories and/or to promote reconciliation (Solomon 2013: 59-75; Mouliou 2016: 51-70; Nakou 2005; Nakou and Gazi 2015). It is after all the case that oral history was associated, during its initial period, with the political demand to give voice to and highlight the perspective of social groups and subjects who had been excluded from official history (Thompson 2000).

[8] For example, the Museum of London has more than 5000 interviews that were recorded with the participation of residents.

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Museums as Fields of Coexistence and Sociality: Tolerant of Diversity

Since the turn of the 21st century, the key concepts of what has been defined as contemporary or new museology have included participation, adaptability, participatory democracy, social justice, empathy, inventiveness and creativity. These have risen to salience in a context of intense migration flows and mobility, social insecurity and increasing social inequality in cities. The title of the 7th International Conference that was organized at the Benaki Museum on the 30th November 2017 is indicative; it read, 'Museums as agents of change. Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion'. The conference emphasized[9] the importance of museums and cultural institutions as pillars of society and as ideal spaces for communication and connection between people (Bennett 1999). The following statement is characteristic of the event's tone:

> 'Museums and cultural institutions can change people's lives. They are pillars of healthy communities and ideal spaces to connect people. While communities around the globe address issues of immigration, religious expression, cultural diversity, discrimination, gender identity, and equality, the commitment of museums to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion has never been more important.' (Excerpt from the text of the invitation of the 7th International conference, titled 'Museums as agents of Change: Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion', Benaki Museum, Athens, 30 November 2017).

Museums today are therefore not merely cultural organizations with defined spaces, functions and actions. Rather, to the extent that they interact with society and aspire to become part of it, their role goes beyond defined spatial, exhibition and organizational boundaries (Bennett 1995: 59-64). From another angle, the power of museums to govern or regulate the social values and attitudes that underpin a sense of citizenship, and to define[10] community groups and identities, has also, to a significant degree, been proven (Bennett 1995). For this reason, many professionals and academics consider that museums should take on the responsibility of acknowledging and representing cultural and community diversity, which in fact has obvious relevance for community consultations (Sandell 2002, Witcomb 2003, Watson 2007a).

Based on the recognition that it is the people who give value to the objects and collections and that 'there is not any meaning for the museum if it cannot forge associations with people' (Crooke 2007: 131), museums have been developing more collaborative projects between themselves and communities, in which the community is present. In addition, of course, an extensive bibliography that includes critical commentary about these collaborations has also grown up (Watson 2007b; Sandell 2003: 45-62). Under the umbrella of the above ideas and

[9] https://diavlos.grnet.gr/event/e976. The conference included four keynote addresses of the following speakers: Dr Nicole Ivy, Director of Inclusion, American Alliance of Museums (USA); Georgia Krantz, Independent Accessibility Trainer and Consultant (USA); Sarah Plump, Research Associate, Research Center for Museums and Galleries (UK); Jess Turtle and Matt Turtle, Co-founders, Museum of Homelessness (UK).

[10] It is usual to treat communities as something that is 'collected' or acquired; the consultation consists in 'telling' communities what they need (Watson 2007b).

practices, a history and memory of silenced issues such as those of migration, labour, slavery, the holocaust,[11] excluded communities[12] and others have emerged. Examples in Greece include the Hansen Museum in Spinalonga, the Holocaust Museum in Kalavrita, the Ai Stratis Museum of Exile in Athens, the Makronisos Museum of Political Prisoners. Indicatively, I will refer to the Museum of political exiles of Ai Stratis that could be considered a place of counter memory, in the words of Foucault (1997). Counter memory in the sense that its founders and the museum items 'opposed' to the official policy of forgetting / amnesia of exile and camps. In place of the non-memory version, they put the emergence of their history and their collective/social memory. The pioneers in the establishment of the museum (1988) are Greek citizens who during the civil war (1946-1949), the post-war years (1950-1962) and the military dictatorship (1967-1974) suffered due to their political beliefs — mainly leftists — an unbridled state violence and repression (confinements in exile camps, deportations, executions, etc.), (Panourgia 2013, Voglis 2004). Thousands of men, women and children spent much of their lives in some 100 isolated geographical areas of Greece — and more than 40 were barren islands of this country. Ai Stratis, a small island in the North Aegean, was the place with the longest-running exile and received more than 10,000 political prisoners, men, women and children.

The museum's collections[13] are composed of the remaining traces of the exiled life. Objects, personal files, documents, memories and oral testimonies, images and art projects, show experiential aspects of the daily life of the exiles. As museums exhibit and document, they open the exile wound, and represent political and social relations of power, conflict and violence. They represent mainly a difficult heritage, which, however, in the museum place can be managed and interpreted by the social subjects.

Numerous museum exhibitions have also been dedicated to contemporary international migration which is seen as an increasingly globalized phenomenon, displaying qualitatively new characteristics (Castles et al. 2014: 19). The most recent ones narrate the challenge of global migration in a more or less critical, longitudinal manner. In Italy, for example, new permanent exhibitions focus both on Italians' perceptions of migration and on migrants' perceptions of themselves in their new context. Other museums also respond to these issues with temporary initiatives. In the 'Mare Internum' exhibition at Rome's Ara Pacis Museum, a transparent room, overlooking the city, was set up as a memorial to the victims in the Mediterranean. A boat made of fragments of wood from boats that have carried migrants towards the coasts of Lampedusa acts as the object and sign of people seeking refuge and hope for a better life (Boccalatte 2017: 6–8). An exhibition was also organized on the island of

[11] See for example the Jewish Museum in Berlin which uses targeted architectural symbols to narrate a difficult heritage's experiences and memories (Mac Donald 2009).

[12] During the 1960s and 1970s, community museums tended to be created and run by activists rather than museum professionals. A community museum is a museum serving as an exhibition and gathering space for specific identity groups or geographic areas. They are usually multidisciplinary, and may simultaneously exhibit the history, social history, art or folklore of their communities. They also emphasize collaboration with — and relevance to — visitors and other stakeholders, and, as a result, often appear more overtly political than other museums (Watson 2007a, 2007b; Kadoyama 2018).

[13] https://www.exile-museum.gr

Lampedusa itself, entitled, 'Towards the Museum of Trust and Dialogue for the Mediterranean'. Interspersed objects from ancient times till the present referred, in varied ways, to contemporary trauma in the Mediterranean Sea. Personal items belonging to refugees and migrants who had drowned trying to reach the island served as living witnesses to the drama.

The many functions and practices which museums have assumed in relation to current migration (Mouliou 2018: 11-20) show that they are engaging with contemporary urban life, namely with the critical issue of tackling new social inequalities and the social exclusion of otherness, xenophobia and so on. Thus their goal of acting as both mediators for a renewed kind of world citizenship and sites of inclusion and communing, are their most important functions, as organizations like the Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAMOC, CAM) and the International Committee for Regional Museums ICR Organizations claim.[14] The project 'Migration: Cities (Im)migration and Arrival Cities', the preliminary results of which were discussed at a first conference in Athens (6-8 February 2017), and in later conferences in other cities, is indicative of this trend (Mouliou et al. 2019: 40-44). It is noteworthy that there is no museum of migration in Greece,[15] although it was, until 1970, a country closely tied to the experience of emigration and later a host country for a large number of immigrants and refugees. It seems that museum theory and practice in Greece is not yet ready to embrace the social purpose of the museum and to integrate other communities and identities. Nonetheless, in 2018 the Museum of Greek Folk Art and Greek Folk Musical Instruments — Foivos Anogianakis Collection — renamed the 'Museum of Modern Greek Culture', presented the exhibition 'New Homelands'[16] within the framework of the European FAIDRA project (Family Separation through Immigration–Dramatizing Anecdotal European History). Key themes in this exhibition were immigrant adjustment and social inclusion, as well as the relationships of cohesion or family breakdown.

Another Tendency: Towards the Cultural Economy

At the start of the 21st century, one can say that some museums have radically transformed, adjusted and re-invented their principles, policies and practices (Dicks 2019). A growing number of museums (mega museums in particular, such as the Getty Centre in Los Angeles, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or the Tate Modern in London) appear to have entered a

[14] CAMOC, Museums City Review 2017/1, p. 39 (http://network.icom.museum/camoc/)

[15] During the last decade, however, there has been a strong interest from citizens in the establishment of an immigration museum in Piraeus, in the port from where thousands of Greek migrants left for America from the beginning of the 20th century and later for other destinations (Australia and New Zealand). Among other actions, citizens call for the collection of objects, printed documents, oral life stories of immigrants, economic support, etc. (MoM http://mompiraeus.blogspot.com/2010/03/ellis-island.html. Despite their efforts its establishment has not been possible.

[16] http://www.mnep.gr/gr/ektheseis/proigoumenes/kainourgies-patrides/. Several also temporary exhibitions have been sparked by the current refugee crisis. See, for example, the Folklife and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia-Thrace, where the exhibition, 'What would you take with you? Uprooting | Borders' was organized (http://www.lemmth.gr/-/esy-ti-tha-epairnes-mazi-sou-xerizomos-borders-2016).

new era of existence, which has led to new struggles over their role and mission (Mathur 2005: 697-700). The tendency towards the commercialization of museum collections and activities, as well as the growth of the cultural economy, have become visible in many vast cities 'that represent the emblematic initiatives of the global capitalist cultural economy' (Scott 1997: 324). According to Scott, the modern museum 'comes to the fore as one of the most dynamic scenarios of capitalism at the start of the 21st century' (Scott 1997: 323). Searching the 'cultural logic of the late capitalist museum', Krauss also recognizes that in museums there is a deep shift both in their identities and in the ever more corporate nature of their frameworks of operation (Krauss 1990: 3-17). It is evident that the ICOM's museum definition no longer reflects contemporary museums' challenges and manifold visions and responsibilities. According to the ICOM Statutes, 'A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment'.[17]

New Responses: To Create for Ourselves a Place in which to Be Together

In the last decade, a new form of museum has been emerging from social groups that experience insecurity, vulnerability (Spyridakis 2018) social exclusion, inequality and marginalization in a variety of ways. It is connected with the creation of spaces in which, in the present, peoples' items and experiences are gathered, created and exhibited. Further, in these spaces, activities that cultivate a sense of belonging and community take place, particularly in multicultural but also in economically marginalized regions. Museums such as the Museum of Homelessness[18] in London, the Victoria Square Project[19] in Athens and the currently active Hansens Museum

[17] Adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August, 2007. In 2016, a new Standing Committee was appointed to study the current definition. The Committee on Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials (MDPP 2017-2019) explores museums' shared but also profoundly dissimilar conditions, values and practices in diverse and rapidly changing societies.

[18] The Museum of Homelessness (MoH) Founded in 2015. This is a community driven social justice museum, created and run by people with direct experience of homelessness. As the curators emphasize: 'Together we collect and share the art, history and culture of homelessness and housing inequality to change society for the better. Together we find hope in deeply divided and difficult times.' (https://museumofhomelessness.org/).

[19] In the popular consciousness of Athenians, Victoria Square symbolizes the movement of refugees and immigrants. It is a meeting point for different populations. Victoria Square Project is a social and cultural space where various activities take place. It aims to create a sense of belonging and of community in a very multicultural yet economically degraded area. Referring to the importance and meaning of the Victoria Square Project, its main participants emphasize that 'on a larger scale, the Victoria Square Project is renegotiating what the concepts of "citizen" and "participation" mean. We want to break the isolation of privacy that exists in cities such as Athens and together with the local community to co-decide and create our neighbourhood identity.' Referring to the dynamics of future museums, Dr Nicole Ivy, director of the newly formed Department of Social Inclusion at the American Museum Association (AAM), believes that the inclusion of all people is essential to the sustainability of future museums and the development of meaningful local relationships. She also notes that a successful example is the

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in Spinalonga, bring different experiences, imaginaries and memories into contact with each other, giving rise to new compositions and hybrid ties, and also new tendencies and shifts. The Victoria Square Project is an indicative example. In 2015-2016, when many immigrants and refugees made their way to Europe through Athens and Greece, the Victoria Square, located in the centre of Athens, has become a campground for refugees and immigrants. A year later the square, became a place of an open artistic activity that took place in the framework of *documenta 14*. The aim of the artists was to operate the Victoria Square Project as an open action, based on the creative participation of the people of the square and the neighbourhood and to bring together the local society. Many and more people of the area are now involved in all kinds of activities. The participation of immigrants and refugees was expressed immediately and in many ways. Various events, handicrafts, discussions, rough exhibitions of small objects, brought by immigrants and refugees from their homeland (a small wooden box, an old suitcase, a pair of damaged shoes, a traditional dress, pictures, disks with music, photographs), virtual and memorial journeys in the daily life of the past, took place in the small space of the project and the surrounding open space. Looking at the ways in which the immigrant and refugee communities involve, express and communicate their particular cultures and identity, we can find out that integrating into a modern society, goes through tolerance of diversity and otherness. 'We also have a culture, many things to say and show', said a Moroccan woman to me. It's about the emblematic persons of diversity, who are both 'here' and 'elsewhere' at a threshold that leads to precariousness but also hope. So, through the 'museum spaces' — which in essence are not fixed or crystallized, but dynamic and interactive sites — vulnerable people invent and create hybrid and temporary identities and roles, suspended between past and present. Although they operate outside of and beyond institutional frameworks, these initiatives fully realize the true meaning and content of the terms participation, coexistence, diversity, accessibility and integration.

Conclusion

It is primarily urban societies across the world that are confronting social inequality, immigration, cultural diversity and discrimination. Modern cities are under constant pressure to showcase their unique comparative advantage over other cities, to achieve a certain quality life and to gain visibility and a high ranking in the preferences of organizations, businesses, tourists and citizens. Thus, culture and cultural heritage are viewed not only as providing the potential for a comparative advantage in the revitalization of cities, but also as channels for communication, coexistence, social inclusion and integration. In response, a wide range of cultural institutions and organizations, including museums, have emerged. As public institutions, museums have the potential to contribute to social cohesion, to substantially influence the ways in which individuals and societies perceive themselves and their relationships with others. It was after the 1970s that the social character of the museum and its social dimension expanded. However, from its inception as a public institution, the museum

Victoria Square Project Museum. Interview in the http://www.huffingtonpost.gr. See also https://museumfinder.gr/ta-mousia-tou-mellontos/, December 2017.

has never constituted a neutral or passive cultural space that merely preserves and exhibits the cultural past. Museums have always been living social spaces in which culture was not only represented, reproduced and consumed, but in which creative encounters, conflicts, tensions and exclusions manifested themselves. These centred around museums' aims of controlling or asserting ownership over the past and more importantly, the present. Museums are in other words spaces in which relations of power but also of resistance and the edification of powerful cultural identities are expressed. They are spaces in which newly formed identities, interwoven with the crisis of heterogeneity, vulnerability and inequality, are reciprocated and demonstrated.

From the beginning of the 21st century, the tendency towards the commercialization of museum collections and activities, as well as the growth of the cultural economy, have at the very least become visible in many vast cities 'that represent the emblematic initiatives of the global capitalist cultural economy' (Krauss 1990, Mathur 2005). Alongside this, more and more people are experiencing extreme forms of insecurity, vulnerability and social exclusion, especially in times of crisis. The insecurity experienced by large swathes of a city's population reflects, of course, the neoliberal capitalist reforms that have reshaped the landscape and social fabric of the modern city. What is remarkable, however, is that a new form of museum is emerging, presided over not by a cultural institution or museologists, but by the aforementioned individuals and social groups living in modern cities in precarious conditions. The form of the museum — created by marginalised social groups — seems to be an emerging possibility of reaction and creative alternatives. For the time being, in the above museum spaces, peoples' items and experiences are gathered, created and exhibited. Further, many activities that cultivate a sense of belonging and community take place, particularly in multicultural but also in economically marginalized regions. Finally, the museums of the precarious and marginalized people appear to be capable of creating places and activities that cultivate participation and the sense of co-belonging to a community. As such, they stand in juxtaposition to relationships of power, inequality and exclusion.

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Women Street Vendors: An Ethnography of Informal Trade in Athens[1]

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This article focuses on women street vendors in the centre of Athens, selling their products either as wandering peddlers or at stationary stalls. They usually sell their own hand-made goods, including aprons, socks and sweaters. For most of these women, their legal status is marginal, in the sense that they do not usually operate under a trading license. They prefer to sell their products on isolated street corners or at the outskirts of open street markets, so as not to interfere and collide with certified traders. Here, I am focusing on the daily issues of women street vendors, on their effort to sell their unlicensed goods, the strategies they employ and the significance of their female gender.
Keywords: Women, street vendors, urban anthropology, informal trade, survival strategies, multi-sited ethnography.

Introduction

In this article, I examine an issue which remains unnoticed by social sciences in Greece: the presence and professional activity of women who work as street vendors around central Athens. This research is the sequel to a broader research program dealing with the ethnography of elderly workers on the streets of central Athens (Kouzas 2017: 131-155). Here, I will be analysing the case of nine women street vendors selling their hand-made goods, such as knitted clothes, socks, wooden constructions (especially toys), even food prepared at home, or products bought from wholesalers, such as books, plastic trinkets and decorative items. These women held stalls on Athinas Street and Stadiou Street or they occasionally wandered around the centre of Athens. Furthermore, three of my nine informants were immigrants from Georgia, Albania, and Bulgaria, while six were Greek.

I will be emphasizing on three focal points: the adversities faced by these women, many of whom do not possess an official trade licence, the strategies they employ in order to survive and the importance of their gender — in other words, whether or not they might suffer further discrimination from other traders or passers-by because of it and how it might expose them to additional challenges in the streets of Athens, especially late at night or in the early morning.

Women Street Vendors, Informal Trade and Precariousness

Sociologists and anthropologists dealing with informal trade employ many terms, such as 'non-normal', 'flexible' or 'marginal work' to define it (Williams and Windebank 1998). The classification of any human activity, such as work, between 'informal' or 'flexible' is certainly not an easy task. In recent years, both terms have been used indiscriminately, almost interchangeably. Nevertheless, as Spyridakis has noted (2018b: 43), the two terms are not identical and are historically defined by several contributing factors, such as the background of the area in question, the history of particular types of employment in a country, the degree of industrialisation and technological development and the political system in place. 'Flexible' work expresses the 'degree of adaptability' to the demands of the capitalist system of

[1] I do thank Dr James Rosbrook-Thompson, Dr Italo Pardo and Dr Giuliana B. Prato, both for the editing and their comments on previous draft of this article as well as the Board of *Urbanities*.

production, while 'informal labour' is conceived as 'non-formal', to be distinguished from the official one (Kesteloot 1999: 56-57). Our times are typified by the insecurity of work and constant change. Braverman (1974: 18-21) stresses that informal labour is not a negative consequence of our times alone. He notes that the spread of formal, waged labour has never ceased to be linked with and give rise to flexible, informal or unstable forms of employment.

The concentration of populations has led developed societies to an overabundance of workforce, the 'industrial reserve army'. Consequently, informal labour co-existed with formal forms of work even before the 1980s. This tendency is even more powerful in the post-Fordist era. It maintains three main features: the constant spread of informal work, the variability of informal work depending on age, gender, professional group and certainly on the locale and the co-existence — even to the degree that they complement each other — of formal and informal work. Several types of work are usually classified as informal labour, such as work performed at home or unpaid overtime, undeclared labour that complements basic income, marginal work or work at family-owned businesses, unwaged or voluntary work (Narotzky 1997: 58-60). Therefore, the concept of informal labour is frequently associated with unregistered economic activity. Hart (1973: 63-64) made the term more specific when he described the phenomenon of small-scale production, frequently also linked with marginal and/or illegal economic operations. Unfortunately, many studies are marked by a bi-polar approach between formal and informal labour (Williams and Windebank 1998: 21-24). Usually, informal labour and the activities associated with it are presented as something negative compared to the existence and development of the formal economy. As opposed to working in a developed form in the capitalist economy, the vocabulary and concepts of social and financial backwardness have been used to study informal work. However, such an approach distorts and inferentially marginalizes the work of thousands of individuals. Moreover, it fails to focus on the interdependence of formal and informal work within a single economy (Pardo 1996). Given the current fluidity in systems of production, the formal and informal sectors increasingly sustain each other. For example, the informal sector employs migrants lacking the necessary paperwork for a legal residence in a particular country (Spyridakis 2013). This tendency towards informal labour appears to have grown particularly strong in Europe over the last ten years, due to unfavourable financial developments (Pardo 1996; Leonard 1998: 17-18). It has also spread in developed economies, such as Greece, where there is also a large concentration of migrant labour.

Female labour out in the street has only been examined by a minority of social scientists. This issue informs the majority of studies on informal trade performed by street vendors. One, of course, needs to clarify the concept of informal trade, which has been discussed both by Geertz (1963) and Nisbet (1967: 73-90). Nisbet (1967: 74-76) notes that social anthropologists started using the terms 'formal' and 'informal' in the late 1960s, whereas other disciplines, such as economics, had already been employing them (see also Bromley 1979). He states that, in the case of street trade, the most frequent term used is 'informal trade'. In Nisbet's view (1967: 74-75), this tendency is explained by the characteristics of street trade itself, which place it firmly within the notion of informal trade, since the whole process of transaction involves the

exchange of minimal monetary sums, while vendors rarely pay tax or issue receipts. Besides, one requires no special skills to be a street vendor and the trade is, therefore, open to anyone. Finally, street trading is characterised by fluidity. Many people practice it for short periods before moving on to other types of work. It is, therefore, an opportunistic occupation for most, intended to supplement income (Hart 1973: 61-65; Narotzky 1997: 220-223). Of course, as Spyridakis stresses (2018a: 113-133; 2018b), work under such fluid and uncertain circumstances, lacking any sense of schedule or predetermined income, renders those who practice it highly vulnerable. As early as the 1960s, fieldwork-based anthropological studies were already dealing with city street vendors. The study by Geertz, *Peddlers and Princes* (1963), examining street vendors in Indonesia, the work of Gutkind (1968: 135-166) on street vendors and professionals who constantly change employment in the villages and cities of Africa, and the study by Nisbet (1967: 73-90) on street vendors in Chile are typical examples.[2] Such studies are representative of the main features of anthropology in the 1950s and 1960s. They employ a holistic approach toward people who live and work as street vendors; mainly, they focus on specific geographical areas, such as small rural communities or city neighbourhoods and deal with male street vendors. However, since the 1990s and 2000s, research on street vendors has undergone significant change: instead of focusing exclusively on rural areas, research now deals just as much with street vendors in large urban centres (Pardo 1996; Pardo and Prato 2017: 1-19) implementing multi-sited ethnography, as formulated by Marcus (1995: 95-117).

Also, an emphasis has been placed lately on researching the importance of women street vendors, whose role is as vital as that of their male counterparts. However, what might be the reason behind them not attracting enough attention by anthropologists and sociologists? Sandra Wallman (1979: 18-24) offered an answer to this issue when she pointed out that both in the case of dependent workers (employees) and in the case of jobs involving a more comprehensive social interaction, such as street vendors, historical and anthropological studies used to emphasize on a male dominated perception of reality. This perspective arose because men's work was associated with the concept of public space and productive work, while women's work was inherently linked to private space and was, therefore, more associated with notions of caring and the upbringing of children. Similarly, in the case of street vendors, until the 1960s, anthropological research had been focusing on male street vendors, while women remained absent. However, besides failing to capture reality, such a perspective also confined women in a conceptual framework concerned solely with their role as wives and mothers. Thankfully, research from the 1990s on women street vendors (Dimas 2008: 1-20; Saha 2011: 301-326; Chakraborty and Koley 2018a: 400-403, Chakraborty and Koley 2018b: 14-20) introduces the concept of gender and its significance in the creation of work identities. This research work sheds some light on the manner in which female street vendors create their own identities in contradistinction to those of male street vendors and other traders in general and how the representations about women, femininity and work act either as integration or exclusion

[2] See also Pardo 1996.

mechanisms from labour. It also demonstrates how the notion of gender influences relationships between men and women in the same field of work.

Today, most anthropological research on women street vendors focuses on a variety of issues. These include an analysis of the construct of femininity (Chakraborty and Koley 2018a: 400-403), work conditions and the adversities faced by women street vendors, work strategies, the codes of value in such environments, and, of course, the emotions generated in this line of work, and, in particular, the pride felt by these people who can make a living from it for both themselves and their families.

Working on the street is primarily characterized by precariousness and social vulnerability. Spyridakis (2018b: 22) correctly notes that precariousness, rather than being a static condition, is a process of constant motion, involving employment precariousness and mobility from one place to another in search of work. Although there is no unanimity about the actual meaning of the term (Spyridakis 2018b: 17), it is related to unstable work conditions characterized by insecurity, low income and risks arising from social and economic conditions of uncertainty. In this aspect, I will present examples drawn from the working lives of women street vendors and their survival strategies, to illustrate the precariousness and social vulnerability they face.

Almost all informants in this study experience precarious conditions and social vulnerability on a daily basis. This happens for various reasons. First, their work is informal, as defined by Pahl (1984: 114-115). Second, they are immigrants and refugees, people who, as Bauman (2004) put it, belong to those who experience marginalization and live in the fragile conditions of a fluid world. Third, as Kalleberg (2011) argued, they are women involved in a male-dominated area of work.

Research Methodology

My research draws on ethnographic data collected during the years 2015-2016, through my ethnographic fieldwork in the centre of Athens, as part of my post-doctoral research at the University of Athens (Kouzas: 2017: 131-155). I particularly examined the daily routine of male and female street vendors at Kotzia Square, Athinas Street and the central meat and fish market of Athens. The research process has been quite adverse, since these informants were understandably reluctant to be interviewed or provide information regarding their lives and work and, additionally, they were constantly on the move with their merchandise, making it difficult for the interviewer to approach and interact with them. To overcome such obstacles, I implemented some well-established methodological principles of ethnography combined with modern methodological techniques (Pardo and Prato 2013; Krase 2018: 72-73). I used semi-structured questions so that the informants could reply freely and potentially add any information they considered relevant. In addition, I took a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus 1995: 110-117) and followed them along their usual itinerary, in the hope that I would be able to obtain a first-hand experience of their work activities and the difficulties they face and to document their strategies (Burawoy 1998: 12-13). Eventually, I managed to interview a total of nine women, Greeks and immigrants, who talked about their lives and, therefore, their

work experiences. As I noted above, my research emphasized on specific focal points rather than on their lives as a whole.

Problems Faced by Women Street Vendors

Anyone uninformed on the lives of women street vendors might think that their main problem is of financial nature. However, as Gutkind (1968: 135-166) has shown in his famous work on women working in African markets, female vendors usually encounter different adversities, which are often overlooked. For example, in the aforementioned case, women in the markets of Africa had to resolve the practical issue of childcare, but they also had to face the disapproval of their husbands for having a job of their own, especially in a field of work that is traditionally considered more appropriate for men, such as trade. However, in the process of my ethnographic research, I came to the conclusion that women street vendors in Athens had different problems to deal with.

First of all, there are those issues directly associated with their line of work. Only two out of the nine informants possessed trade licenses. They presented this as, probably, their main problem, since they could be arrested by the police at any time. Besides, their relationship with the other traders in the same area, be it street vendors or store owners, is usually quite problematic. In the view of my informants, licensed traders with an established turf treat them either with contempt or hostility. It is not rare for street vendors to be arrested due to complaints made by their peers. Of course, this kind of competition between licensed and unlicensed traders is commonplace. As Bestor (2004: 42-56) has demonstrated in his study of relationships between traders in the central fish market of Tokyo, licensed traders were hostile towards street vendors for two main reasons. First, because they felt it was unfair to pay taxes and social security contributions, while unlicensed street vendors did not have to bear such burdens. Second, there was a clear issue of social and professional prestige involved. A trader, who enjoyed a *de facto* higher status than a street vendor, often aimed to punish the latter by denouncing them and to be able to frame this as a success in the eyes of their peers, thereby acquiring a reputation as a protector of group interests. This is another aspect of the informal economy, pointed out by Bromley (1979), who studied the relationship between economy and culture – that is how individuals construct their living conditions.

A typical example comes in the words of Sonia, a 58-year-old woman from Albania:

> ‘I never got a license; I was not interested in doing so; it is my fault, but this is how we did it in my country. Here, to sell socks and pyjamas, I have to produce so many documents for the Ministry and the Municipality of Athens, that it seems crazy. I can always work without a license.’

Would it be possible to examine such a view in the context of discipline/non-compliance with the laws in a Foucauldian sense? I believe not. The discussions I had with the informants convinced me that they really could not comply with formal state mechanisms. They merely continued to adhere to the mentalities and perceptions acquired in their countries of origin, viewing as usual and rational what the western world might consider obsolete or impractical. However, different people have different perceptions on norms and standards.

Their second main problem is the discrimination they have to endure because of their gender. Female workers are a part of the population that is particularly vulnerable to informal work. In Hoyman's (1987: 67) view, the matter concerns the whole world rather than merely non-western countries. This is attributed to the bisected model that held sway in the post-war world, according to which the man was supposed to work outside the household and the woman performed her domestic 'duties'. Frequently, however, women were compelled to perform secondary, informal work, to contribute to the family's finances or to ensure a personal income. This situation worsened for many women who, either because of political developments (for example, the collapse of socialism) or armed conflict in Asia or Africa, were compelled to migrate to Europe, where once more they had to undertake informal work. This placed them in a position considerably more vulnerable than their situation before migration. They found themselves in a foreign country, with no permanent accommodation or a stable income, while their husbands, who were also migrants, did not have steady employment. Such is the case of the women that I examine in the present article.

Their position is vulnerable, due to the increased financial needs as women and wives, together with their daily struggle for survival. 47-year-old Matina commented on these issues:

> 'Often enough, people at the market underestimate us for being women. They tell us to go home and cook and do some dish-washing and leave trade to the men. Nevertheless, is this behaviour acceptable in 2016, when women and men are supposed to be all equal? I think that many male traders are trying to intimidate us, so that we do not steal their clientele. For example, I have been here for four years and people have got to know me and they buy socks from me. This is something that many traders' envy.'

Indeed, women street vendors have to operate in a man's world, such as the male-dominated world of street trade in Greece. The fact that most women in Greece until the 1970s were homemakers also contributed to this male domination. Working outdoors and, in particular, on the street was also a confirmation of male identity. Even later, from the 1980s onwards, as an increasing number of women entered the labour market, most of them worked as employees, while the number of women who run their own business remains low, even today.

Besides gender-based discrimination, women street vendors encounter other difficulties (Kim and Lee 2016: 77-81), arising from working at night or in shady parts of Athens. In connection with this, Matina stated:

> 'I often have to work under challenging conditions: among drug addicts and drug dealers. All this scares me, but after all these years I have learnt to deal with it. A tough life has made me equally tough…'

My research revealed that those female traders can adequately deal with their demanding and competitive working environment and male traders. In the third part of this article, I will be dealing with the significance of the female gender and the difficulty of working as a woman in the male world of street trade.

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My interlocutors did not refer as much to their financial problems. Even though most of them stated that they earned between 400 and 600 Euros per month, they did not regard this as a problem, considering it a natural result of the crisis that has plagued the Greek economy for ten years now (Christodoulou and Spyridakis 2019). Tatiana, a 68-year-old woman from Georgia said:

> 'I make about 480 Euros per month. You might say, 'This is not much.' Yes, it is true that this is not much, but it is enough to live on, not just me, but also my daughter who is sick. The amount of money that you have to live with also depends on how you are used to get by. To some, this would seem little, but, for me, it is enough.'

There are another two factors, which might explain why women traders do not consider their financial situation to be their biggest concern. Pertinent to this is the fact that, after a decade of the economic crisis in Greece, salaries and profits have plummeted and views on work have changed. Now any job that ensures one's survival is to be valued, in contrast to a past habit which involved a contempt to any labour, with the exception of really well-paid or office jobs (Spyridakis 2013). This means that people do not evaluate work and income based on the same criteria as ten years ago, which now seem out of date. This lowering of expectations, irrespective of being a problem in itself or not, remains fundamental in the world of work in contemporary Greece.

Survival Strategies

My fieldwork over the years of 2015-2016 led me to the view that female street vendors in the centre of Athens, far from acting randomly, apply a range of general survival strategies. These strategies entail the continuous reproduction of patterns of behaviour, which are constantly readjusted in response to the changing circumstances of daily life. In the case of women street vendors, I chose Bourdieu's approach (Bourdieu 1977), which combines 'objective conditions' with individual, 'subjective' considerations. Given the latter, acting subjects are individual persons possessing independent skills for selective action, aims, and pursuits, in other words operating under complete freedom in a society which is the synthesis of the individual actions of its subjects. Bourdieu introduced the concept of *habitus*, which originates in 'objective reality' and, in turn, creates practices that are the response of the individual to daily challenges (Ciubrinskas 2018).

In contrast to entirely predetermined actions, *habitus* is the product of the internal dispositions of the individual. Bourdieu did not formulate this as a system of 'rules'. Instead, he employed it as a system of predispositions located within the individual to act in specific ways. Such ways were directed both by his or her daily habits and by his or her social circumstances.

Such strategies can be regarded from another perspective. As Pardo (1996) stresses in his anthropological work on Naples, individuals adopt strategies that frequently seem irrational to the outsider but result from the precariousness inherent in informal work. Surrounded by risk and instability, those who work on the streets, such as the women examined in the present

article, adopt, as Pardo maintains, a system of strategies that are founded on networks of contacts — consisting of familial or social relations — and attempt to exploit various possibilities, various chinks in the armour of the capitalist system. This adoption of various survival strategies, apart from aiming to ensure financial survival, which is of vital importance, reveals their own 'moral way of life', the winning of a personal bet, as it were, to surmount negative circumstances at work and society.

In my research, I attempted to decipher the women's responses to their daily circumstances. It was not an easy task, since each none of them acted on strictly personal criteria, which means that one cannot speak in general terms about the entirety of their strategies. Nevertheless, the data allows for a classification of some of those strategies, as follows.

Occupation of Space

I call the occupation of a specific spot on the street a 'post'. A proper post is always of crucial importance for these women for two reasons: First, because it directly affects their income and second, because it helps them overcome some of the problems they have to face at work.

The following account is of importance here:

> 'I am always careful where I place my cart with the clothes, so I do not obstruct others or have any problems with the other traders. And I wouldn't want to have any problems with the police either, because I do not have the necessary papers for the street vendor license. And it is not just that, but it is also important for my protection against the various threats in the streets, such as, for example…' (56-year-old Eleni).

Securing a good location is an issue that concerns all street vendors. For example, Chakraborty and Koley (2018a: 400-403), in their research on street vendors in Jamshedpur, India, mention the importance of issues involving the use of space in the flea market, and, of course, the competition among street traders. From my research, I concluded that the occupation of a particular space involves many factors. Women try to occupy posts where there is heavy commercial traffic to sell products more easily (for example, at the entrance or exit of the central meat market of Athens or the central points on boulevards). At the same time, selling products at busy central points ensures another type of protection from potential threats (Gutkind 1968: 155-156), such as thieves, drug addicts, or other minor criminals. My interviews made it plain that not only do these women know the importance of positioning in order to survive, but, at the same time, through their daily movements, they develop strategies for the use and exploitation of space which extends beyond commercial activity. For example, they prefer to choose spots which offer quick hideouts from the police, when they show up. As I have already pointed out, since they lack the necessary licence, their activities take place in an illegal context.

Choice of Time

The time of the day these women choose to spend in the streets is also the conscious result of a strategic choice. Being outside in itself does not yield results, unless a general time management strategy is employed. Elona, a 72-year-old seller of wooden accessories, told me:

> 'People have this saying, that time is money. Nevertheless, for me it is not just money, it is much more, because depending on how I allot my time in the market, I can earn money or stay clear of various troubles. Therefore, timing is something fundamental for me in terms of my daily life on the street.'

As Alfred Gell (1992) has pointed out, time is different for each individual, a separate matter from one's objective experience of time; that is, how our time passes, depending on whether our current experience is pleasant or unpleasant. However, time is also socially and culturally constructed. We determine it and we exploit it for our own benefit, in order to satisfy our various needs. For women street vendors, this is standard practice, given that they do not have the eight-hour work routine of office workers. Time also has various 'densities', as Gell notes (1992: 30-32), in the sense that female street vendors are exposed to many daily experiences, both positive and negative. My fieldwork made it clear that female street vendors are selling the most during rush hours, either in the morning or in the evening, when commuting workers feel more relaxed. The end of the month, when salaried workers and pensioners are paid, is also a crucial period in the cycle of time, similarly to the Christmas and Easter holiday. Likewise, there are several lesser celebrations, such as St. Valentine's Day, which always trigger more significant trade activity. On such days, women street vendors work longer hours, aware that they will be increasing their profit. By contrast, the worst days for sales extend from the middle to the end of the month. Finally, there are women street vendors who sell food, such as hot-dogs and sandwiches, for whom the most profitable hours are either late at night, for example 2.00 am, when nightclub-goers are getting back home, or very early in the morning, from 5.00 am to 7.00 am, when early-starters, such as manual workers or street cleaners, go to work. For the untrained observer, who has no experience of working on the street, all these aspects of time management are certainly not self-evident and perhaps not even expected, but for women street vendors, they are an integral part of their daily practices.

Contact Networks

The establishment of communication networks and contacts is another strategy of crucial importance for street vendors. However, these contacts are much more than that. As Christakis and Fowler (2009) point out, these structural interconnections serve various goals and involve specific operational methods within each social or professional group. Sixty-year-old Eleni had a similar impression, when she told me:

> 'Here, I have genuine relationships with people, both traders and residents. I have known them for twenty years, and whenever I need help, they will offer it. However, I will help them too, whenever necessary. It would not be an overstatement to say that with some of them, we are like relatives.'

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My fieldwork made it clear that women street vendors create similar networks of contacts and relationships and are constantly concerned to expand them. Such networks consist of relationships between them and other traders in the area, residents, passers-by and other workers in the centre of Athens. These networks function in several manners which serve both as encouragement and protection. They promote trade, in the sense that they share information on the available products, serving as living advertisement for lesser-known merchandise, increasing both clientele and profits. However, at the same time, the networks also provide warnings of potential hazards for women street vendors. These women have developed information transmission networks involving shopkeepers in the area, notifying them of thieves or other offenders. Furthermore, when they face such problems, they can call on the help and protection of the shopkeepers in their vicinity. Such networks, therefore, ensure both the promotion of their products and the security of their daily lives.

Promotion of Merchandise

As pointed out by Geertz (1963), the concepts of promotion and advertisement are inherent in the culture of daily life. However, other social anthropologists, who have examined societal or professional groups in non-western settings, such as Africa or Asia, have also pointed out the significance of advertising by street vendors as a means of survival in daily life (Narotzky 1997: 182-184). In general, most of us tend to link advertisements with companies, but street vendors also employ strategies of promotion to attract passers-by.

Maria, who lives in Aspropyrgos, Attica, but sells dolls in Omonia Square daily, discussed these strategies. She said:

> ‘There are some things that you have to do in order to attract the customer; having new merchandise, promoting it and attracting attention. If you just sit there doing nothing, you are not going to advertise your products and sell them. I even pay compliments to my customers in order to sell.’

Maria told me something that was repeated by other women street vendors, who had adopted basic promotional practices. In general terms, these are as follows: a) The vendors orally stress the quality of their products, b) They comment on their merchandise in order to attract passers-by to their carts, c) They try to make themselves likable by praising their potential customers, d) They indirectly accuse other traders of promoting poorer quality products and demanding higher prices.

I also noticed that women street vendors sometimes extemporised in promoting their products, depending on conditions and circumstances. Thus, they varied their advertising methods, depending on whether they were addressing children or older persons and they varied their compliments depending on whether they were addressing men or women.

None of these manoeuvres are fortuitous. Here we have ‘inventive adaptation’ as Spyridakis (2018: 198) puts it. Those who employ it, do so consistently, considering it a rational attitude towards life in general. It is also an attitude that is morally right for the people engaging in it, since it helps them overcome their difficulties. In his anthropological study of Naples, Pardo (1996: 34-42) talks of a dynamically ‘continuous interaction’ on the part of these

individuals who survive in the world of informal work and are aware of their societal vulnerability. They nevertheless continue to struggle and contend as far as they can through their work and in symbolic terms. As Pardo also notes, such actions are not new phenomena during the recent crisis. Instead, they respond to a set of historical circumstances that reveal the adaptation of these individuals to a new and particularly harsh environment, which they certainly did not choose, but which they are now compelled to experience for the long term.

Conclusions

This article aimed to unveil some aspects of the daily lives of female street vendors in the centre of Athens and stress the importance of this occupation in terms of work culture overall. Above all, their labour belongs undoubtedly to the world of informal work. Their trade is unregistered and they have no official permission to practice it. It is precarious, frequently a supplement to the primary family income, and involves tiny amounts of cash. Apart from financial matters, the vulnerability experienced by women in this informal line of work extends to another set of relevant issues unprotected by any worker's rights. Women street vendors have no insurance coverage for healthcare and will certainly not be awarded pension at any time, although they have worked hard for decades. As for society's view on them, their work is certainly not highly regarded, as it is considered an opportunistic job that belongs to the world of undocumented economic activity. In the eyes of an outsider, such an occupation wavers between legal and illegal work and belongs to the margins of society.

Simultaneously, leaving aside a narrow economically-oriented view of the subject, one arrives at various conclusions in anthropological terms regarding the very nature of street vendors' work and how they strive to survive. As for the problems that female street vendors face, their income, which is anyway low, is not their main preoccupation. The racism that migrant female street vendors encounter and the sexism that all women traders face seem to pose more significant issues. Another major problem lies in the aggressive attitude of many shop-owners, who disapprove of them precisely because of their capacity as street peddlers. Contrary to an uninformed conviction, the vendors, far from acting randomly, employ particular strategies. As Bourdieu (1977: 28-31) stressed, such strategies are not to be viewed as a set of strictly repetitive actions designed to lead to a result. They should be approached to answer problems that arise every day that need to be resolved in order for these women and their families to survive. Four main strategies for dealing with daily life emerged from my research. These are: the appropriate use of space, choice of time, the exploitation of networks of contacts — also fundamental for the promotion of commercial activities — and strategies involving oral advertising, also for the promotion of merchandise.

Thus, the hierarchy of problems faced by women street vendors is very different from what is generally believed, while they also organise their methodology of work in ways much different than an external observer might have imagined. In its manifestation as street trade, informal trade has its own rules of organization and operation which can only be unveiled by anthropological fieldwork.

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Health Aspects of Parental Alienation Syndrome: Greek Crisis and Gender Inequality in the Legislation[1]

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In this ethnographic study, I discuss the ways in which divorced parents manage their children's health. I look at examples of high-conflict divorce in the present period of the Greek debt crisis. I conclude by describing a phenomenon of medical child abuse: parents who neglect the real needs of their child in order to acquire or maintain parental authority. At the same time, I describe the inability of Greek courts to accept a model of joint custody that would eliminate gender/family inequalities.
Keywords: Parental Alienation Syndrome, medical child abuse, domestic inequality.

Introduction

In this article, I focus on the effects that high-conflict divorce can have on the decisions that parents make with regard to their children's health. I will discuss the Greek setting, where the model of sole maternal custody is judicially dominated (Paravantis 2014). This judicial process creates conflict situations and inequalities that do not necessarily promote the interest of the child. Over the past decade, Greek justice has repeatedly dealt with civil litigation of parental conflict over the management of their children's health: vaccination, paediatrician selection and consent to surgery are some of the causes of parental conflict. I will attempt to approach the above phenomenon as a special variant of Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS).

In 1991 Gardner attempted to describe a new psychiatric syndrome: Children who are exposed to parental divorce disputes resort to sudden and inexplicable emotional rejection of one parent (usually the father) ('my dad is the worst, my mom is the best'). The child classifies the victim-parent as his or her 'enemy' and emerges a non-negotiable aggression/hatred that is indirectly or directly rewarded/reinforced by the perpetrator-parent. In severe cases of the syndrome, the victim-parent completely loses communication/contact with their children and lacks any knowledge of their health, education and upbringing. The other parent resorts to false allegations of abuse (sexual, physical or emotional) and promotes himself/herself as the protector of an abused child. In milder cases of the syndrome, the perpetrator-parent expresses discomfort with the other parent's involvement in the child's daily life: He/she cannot tolerate the other parent's presence in school or extracurricular activities, he/she does not allow free parent-child communication (insists on judicial decision) or shared parental actions, such as birthday parties (Gardner 1991, Bernet et al. 2010, Warshak 2001).

Gardner's diagnostic effort received strong criticism from the scientific community and feminist organisations (Bruch 2001, Faller 1998, Peris and Emery 2005, Zirogiannis 2001). However, in 2019 the World Health Organization included the terms 'parental estrangement' and 'parental alienation' in the index term of ICD-11 (International Classification of Diseases).

[1] I wish to thank Dr James Rosbrook-Thompson and the Board of *Urbanities*, for the editing and comments on a previous draft of this article.

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Also included as a new autonomous diagnosis was 'Relationship Disorder between a Minor and a Guardian' (ICD-11 code: QE52).

Since 2009, Greece has been going through an unprecedented financial crisis. The influence of the International Monetary Fund forced the country to reduce dramatically public social spending (Efthimiou et al. 2013). During this period, an explosive increase in divorces was observed. In 2008 the number of divorces decided by the country's courts was 13,163, while in 2017, the number was 19,190 (a 46% increase) (Greek Statistical Service). In 2005, the first organised father's movement, called SY.GA.PA. (Association of Father's Dignity), was founded. It has grown to comprise 3,000 members in five years. It consists mainly of divorced fathers who demand the establishment of joint custody (equal/shared parenting) either by exerting political pressure or by resorting to public protest. At the same time, they were seeking the establishment of family courts and the involvement of social services in the judicial process. In September 2016, the newly elected left-wing party (SY.RI.ZA) set up a law-making committee to evaluate a co-parenting legislative proposal. However, successive electoral battles and intense political debates did not allow completion of the commission's work. In 2019, the newly elected right-wing party (Nea Dimokratia) announced the reconstitution of a committee on the same subject. So far, there has been no progress: 'When you hear of many cherries, hold a small basket (Greek proverb). Nothing will happen. They will cheat us again. All they care about is our vote…' (Giannis, 32, member of SY.GA.PA.). In the context of participatory observation, I followed the members of SY.GA.PA in their meetings for two years (2014-2016).[2] My presence in the field has confronted me with an unprecedented correlation between *unequal* parenting and medical child abuse that I will present briefly.

Health Case Law

According to the Greek Civil code, custody of a minor child refers to everyday issues such as upbringing, education and the determination of the child's home (Article 1518). The custodial parent can change their child's school without the other parent's consent. However, there are concerns about health decisions: *Can a parent take a health decision without the consent of the child's other parent?*

The Supreme Court of Greece ruled in the 1321/1992 decision that: 'The mother has the right to decide on her own, only on current and daily matters and not on issues critical to his life (such as naming, choosing a religion, serious surgery)'. According to legislation, serious health issues require the consent of both parents. However, each parent's perception of the seriousness of a health intervention is different.

Dimitris is 32 years old and works as a high school teacher. He and his wife separated when their son was two years old. The child is now an adolescent, but his parents' dispute has not stopped:

[2] The research findings are based on in depth open ethnographic interviews with 29 informants carried out using the snowball technique (divorced parents, children, mental health practitioners and lawyers). The research was conducted during 2013-2014.

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> 'She put braces on our child, without telling me anything! I saw him the other day, and he was afraid to smile. He didn't want me to see his teeth. She teaches the child not to tell me anything. Can you believe it! She had to ask me! It is a serious health issue. She only wants my money. When I was a kid, no one had braces in his teeth.'

In exceptional cases, Greek courts have recognised that sole maternal custody does not favour the child's interest and have ruled toward a shared parental health responsibility. Number 1079 Supreme Court's decision accepted the father's request for shared custody in health issues. The mother's negligence caused the above decision, as she did not care about the paediatric examination of the child, who was also facing increased health needs. In particular, the court ruled that the mother did not accompany her child to pre-arranged medical/paramedical appointments, thus violating the child's right to health. Furthermore, the court accepted the father's request to accompany his child to medical appointments himself. Really interesting is a decision of the First-Degree Court in the city of Komotini (2012), which granted the mother sole custody of the minor, but added the following condition: 'The mother obliged to inform the father of any visit of the minor to a hospital.'

The Court of Appeal of Athens (4948/2015) entrusted the mother with the custody of the minor children, however, also entrusted the father with the part of custody that relates to education and medical/health care. The motivation reads:

> '... it is not necessary for the mother to exercise the sole custody. It is necessary, in particular, to get certain areas of custody, the father of the juveniles. He has to cover directly the costs relating to medical and educational activities of the children as he requires (cost for the private school, language learning, and private insurance contract). This plan, which is believed to eliminate a climate of tension between the two parents, will ultimately support the interests of the children. For the rest, the custody of the minor children should be entrusted to their mother.'

A recent ruling by the First-Degree Court of Athens (2019) addressed an unusual health issue: The mother, as a supporter of the anti-vaccine movement, refused any vaccination of her child. The father was desperate. The court eventually ruled that the mother should be entrusted with sole custody, but noted that: 'In matters of child health care (including vaccination), a co-decision between the parents is required, taking into account the mother's refusal to consent to the vaccination of the child.'

The period of the financial crisis was accompanied by the emergence of medical litigation in parental disputes. The perception of the 'valuable sole maternal custody' seems to be challenged in a *healthy* way.

Divorce in the Era of Crisis

Greek family law — *de facto* — defines the mother as the triumph winner and the father as the absolute loser. On the one hand, almost every divorced mother can '*grasp'* the sole custody of her child. As a consequence, she can manage and receives the full amount of parental financial support (child maintenance), receives state benefits (for example, lower taxes), and keeps the

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family house. Finally, she may sue the father for parental abduction (a felony). On the other hand, almost every divorced father loses custody of his child. He has to accept just a strict visitation plan (usually two weekends every month and one evening every other week). He is obliged to pay child maintenance, and he loses all of the family state benefits (for instance, parental leave or tax exemption). He has to leave his previous home and his household, and he may sue the mother only for denial of court-ordered visitation (misdemeanour, a lesser criminal act).

The above condition worsens in the era of the present financial crisis. Stelios, a former track driver, stated:

> 'When I lost my job, I was relieved. I supposed that *no job* meant *no child support* (maintenance). After all, I wasn't responsible for unemployment. Guess again! She repeatedly sued me for delays in child support payments. How could I pay? I had no money in my pocket! I explained everything to the judge. Waste of time. The prosecutor behaved as if I were a criminal. He insisted that unemployment was my fault and I lost my job on purpose to avoid payments. I am not responsible for the Greek crisis! That's insane! I spent three months in prison and five more in community service. I am not a drug dealer; I am just a father! When I was in jail, my daughter didn't know it. There was a special visiting room inside the prison for parental communication, but I was a total wreck. I made some wooden toys for her inside the prison. Just that.'

Until 2015, filing a lawsuit for misdemeanour required a state fee of 10 Euros. However, following a government request, in August of 2015 the Supreme Administrative Court of Greece legitimized a huge 1000% increase, from 10 to 100 Euros. As a result, every unemployed or low-paid father lost access to the justice system. Giannis, 28, a night watchman, said:

> 'In the beginning, it was different. She (the mother) was afraid. If she didn't allow me to communicate on Wednesday with my daughter, I sued her. Yes, we had lots of trials, but I could see my child. Now it's different. I get paid 580 euros every month. I can't give 100 euros every Wednesday. Now she is not afraid. She knows I can't afford to sue her anymore. She has unchecked power. I can do nothing to protect me and my daughter's rights. Yesterday was my daughter's birthday. I believed I could see her; after all, it was Wednesday! (visitation day) In my dreams. I couldn't even wish to her on the phone. No answer! I was ready to sue. Finally, I preferred to spend some money on a birthday present than a lawsuit. I send it by post. I don't know if she will give it to our daughter.'

After divorce, each father experiences a 'life shrinking'. He has to live on less money, less space (house) and less child time. In a way, he has to accept his new, '*less life*'. In the words of Panayiotis, a 34-year-old teacher,

> 'My daughter never asked me why our house is too small. After all, that's how she has used to. *Mom's house is big, dad's house is not.* Just a room, a bed, and a table.

> I painted one side of the wall pink to make the room look a bit girly. When my daughter leaves, I don't sleep in the bed. It's her bed with her pillow and her sheets. I prefer the floor. Now she is seven years old. When she will enter adolescence, what will I do? We can't stay in one room.'

The acceptance of paternal financial exhaustion by the judicial system ends up against the child's best interest. The minor has to live in the same period in two different economic environments. As a consequence, he/she experiences a unique variation of a painful 'class struggle'. The sufficiency of space, time and goods in the mother's environment opposed to the lesser/poorer/shorter paternal presence. This correlation between gender and abundance establishes a biased representation in children's cognitive and emotional development. Panayiotis added,

> 'I tried to explain to my daughter that it is not my fault (the lack of money/custody). She replied without hesitation: *Dad, it's not my fault either that you are not a woman.*'

(Fictitious) Illness as a Parental Passport

Greece lacks family courts. The responsibility for parental disputes appertains to common criminal and civil courts. One parent can sue the other for infringement of a court order for child contact or parental abduction. It is not uncommon for a child to come along with his/her arrested parent at the police station, because he/she returned late to the other parent. According to the Athens Police Department (document 1016/2014), in November 2014 the police handled 193 cases of violation of court-ordered parenting plans.

During my study, the most common claim made by fathers with respect to the cancellation of father-child contact was a sudden illness allegedly fabricated by the child's mother. Michalis, a 50-year-old military man said:

> 'They (mothers) tell you that the kid is sick. She doesn't let him even talk to me on the phone. When they go to court, they get a medical certificate from a friendly paediatrician, and they are acquitted. At first, I filed a lot of lawsuits, all for nothing. My son got sick every other Friday, just before my visitation. Is it possible?'

Sotiris is a 54-year-old computer teacher. He and his wife separated when their son was eight years old, and their daughter was three. His wife accused him of sexually abusing their daughter. After seven years, he was acquitted. The mother was convicted of false accusation. He reported:

> 'Everything was done slowly. At first, she (the mother) was claiming that our daughter got sick only in my home. She was telling me that I don't dress her warmly, that I don't feed her properly, that my house was dirty. Then, I went to pick up the kids, and she gave me only our son. She said our daughter was sick. She was sick all the time. I had the kids one week in Easter 2012. My daughter had a urinary tract infection. I applied an ointment to her genitals. She was four years old;

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> she couldn't do it herself. Then, her mother claimed that I raped our daughter. I was shocked. If I see my daughter in the street, I will not recognize her. I haven't seen her for more than a decade. I was acquitted, so what? My daughter still believes that I am her rapist. Her mother convinced her.'

In the above example, maternal promotion of fictional diseases is a prelude to false allegations of abuse. The child herself cannot understand when and how she is ill or abused. She obeys the instructions/wishes of the strong parent (mother). The symbolic message she receives is: 'When you are sick, mom is happy.' The daughter's illness (real or fictitious) delights the mother, as she can use it against the father in the courtroom. In this — distorted — case, a child's health becomes a judicial weapon that gives happiness and satisfaction to the custodial parent.

Lazarus is a 44-year-old businessman. He won sole custody of his nine-year-old son, who is on the autistic spectrum. He does not allow mother-son communication claiming health reasons. He said:

> 'The kid receives daily psychiatric medication, a bunch of pills. It wasn't easy to calm him. He was violent and upset. Now he is ok. He has his habits, his routine. This is autism. When he visits his mom, he gets upset. Last Christmas, he stayed in his mom's house for a week. She didn't give him any medicine. Unfortunately, she can't admit that our son is autistic. The kid is in danger in his mother's house.'

In the case of Lazarus, there is a real child's disorder. Lazarus uses autism as a tool for parental alienation. In all of the above cases, I found that meeting the health needs of the child is not the main concern. The dominant parent negotiates the health of his/her child according to his/her own emotional needs.

Double Medical Life

Lack of communication between parents forms a double medical life for the child. That is, the medical management of one parent can conflict with the health culture of the other. Dimitris, a 33-year-old bailiff said:

> 'Believe it or not, we don't use the same name for our daughter. I call her Eirini and her mother call her Sophia. We didn't reach an agreement. She has chosen a paediatrician who supports homoeopathy. She considered vaccination unnecessary. I went to a classical paediatrician. I fully vaccinated the child, without informing her. Even if I had no custody. She sued me. She wanted to convict me because I vaccinated my child! I'm not a criminal. I'm a father!'

It seems that the custody battle turns into a medical war and ends up as a criminal court case. Any medical intervention/omission in the child's body turns into a parental defeat/victory. Dimitris secretly vaccinated his child on the assumption that he is a *medical Robin Hood*. On the other hand, his ex-wife considers him a criminal.

Stella is 27 years old. Her parents divorced when she was six. She has experienced a long-lasting parental battle. She said:

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> 'We were visiting dad. If my siblings or I were sick, mom would give us a bag of medicines. However, dad didn't trust her. He thought that she was poisoning the medicinal bottled to blame him. When we were back to mom's house, she was measuring the liquid in the bottles. Absolute paranoia. My parents didn't talk at all to each other. At first, I was anxious. Then I got used to it. When I was nine, I had surgery on my stomach. Mom didn't say anything to my dad. I was angry. I was thinking: why my dad didn't come to the hospital? Mom says she informed him. She is probably lying. They still don't speak to each other.'

This double medical life could be classed as a form of child abuse. The child can be deprived of proper medication and parental support, with his/her health status ending up as a permanent cause of emotional distress.

Conclusions

Financial gains from marriage are remarkable: Shared consumption, more safety against recession, unemployment or other painful life events (for example, health problems) and higher creditworthiness. (Shore 2010, Stevenson and Wolfers 2007, Hess 2004). According to the dominant perception, after divorce, mothers have to overcome severe financial difficulties, while fathers become richer (Kurz 2013, Hilton and Anderson 2009, Spivack 2020). However, the present research suggests that during a long-term recession occurs quite the opposite (Greek crisis paradigm). Each father has to manage the loss of his home, his job and the symbolic loss of his child. Greek courts prefer to interpret the father's unemployment as a fraudulent personal choice rather than an imposed social condition.

> 'When we divorced, she grabbed our son and went 800 km away; To the other side of Greece! I couldn't stand being away from my child. I went there; I rented a studio apartment in the same neighbourhood. However, I knew I wouldn't find a job. I am unemployed for two years now, but I don't regret it. I had to choose: Child or job. I decided on my child. I may end up in jail. (He doesn't pay child support) but I still don't regret it. I know she's having a hard time too. But when the child stays with you, you can share your food; you can share your room. The child still grows day by day, with or without money. I can find food; I can't find money or a job.' (Nikos, 42 years old)

In times of recession, access to justice becomes unequal. A weak, divorced parent (mother or father) is unable to have his or her voice heard. However, this does not necessarily mean that a compromise — out of court — parental communication is sought. They 'prefer' to set up a health court in front of a doctor who takes on the role of an accessible and free judge. The dominant/winner parent can decide on the health of his or her child without the consent of the other parent. A child's health becomes the new capital in a narcissist parental *transaction.*

The ethnographic example of SY.GA.PA. reveals irrationalities in applied Greek family law. The custodial parent can exclude the non-custodial parent from education, daily life and

health management of their child. Choices about health disregard the best interest of the child. We are facing a new kind of medical child abuse.

This phenomenon is much more noticeable in the current period of the Greek financial crisis, as public health and social protection benefits have fallen dramatically. Greek judges have no medical and social experts by their side, resulting in poor decisions. At the same time, the absence of family courts pushes parental disputes towards criminal justice and long-lasting proceedings. When the court dispute is over, the child is already an alienated adult.

A model of a shared parenting plan (especially in health management issues) may be the antidote for this medical variation of Parental Alienation Syndrome. For example:

- Parenting agreement in choosing a paediatrician and a dentist.
- Free access to a child's medical information (data) for each parent.
- Both parents will accompany their child to medical visitation.
- Parents will contact each other in cases of emergency.
- Parenting agreement about who will provide their children with health insurance.
- Co-payments of extra medical expenses (for example, dental braces).
- Parents have to keep each other informed of all critical medical information concerning their child (appointments, incidents, past conditions).
- Both parents' homes should be stocked with the same medications, equipment, foods, and other supplies that their child will need when they stay with either of them.
- Keep the child's health information, doctor's contact information and other contact details on hand in both homes.
- Inform the paediatrician of the divorce and provide him/her with permission to communicate with both of the parents.

The treatment of child abuse brings to our mind the intervention of the police, the prosecutor and the doctor. However, the treatment of Parental/Medical Child Abuse demands quite the opposite: The absence of law enforcement and unnecessary medical procedures (removal from the medical and judicial environment). Parental equality is, in fact, a new way of defending children's health.

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The 'Crisis' in Albania before the 'Crisis' in Greece: The Case of Albanian Migrants in Corinth[1]

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This article looks in a diachronic perspective at the labour conditions and precarity of contemporary Albanian immigrants in Greece. The discussion examines past cultural strategies and current new tactics to address immigrants' 'cultural' approaches to different 'crises' and look at how they have either remained stable or have changed over time. Using the case study of Albanian immigrants who work 'seasonally' in the city of Corinth and live in the wider region, the discussion analyses the way in which Albanians handle their social networks; in particular, it focuses on the shifting relevance of old and new networks in finding a job. The discussion considers the declining relevance of the old Albanian social networks that helped them to find a job in Greece during the 1990s; they now consider the members of these networks as potential competitors. In contrast, the Albanian immigrants who have settled in Greece have built new networks, specifically with Greek regional employers, using the relationships that they have developed with Greek nationals. The article shows how Albanians trigger a wider network of 'acquaintances' with other employers, which opens up job opportunities in various contexts and concludes that immigrants tackle modern economic and labour challenges by transforming their own cultural strategies.
Keywords: Albanian migrant crisis, labour, social network, Greece, Albania.

Introduction

It is widely accepted that the modern globalized financial fluidity is a result of political, economic and social decisions occurred at international level but influence the way in which national governments operate, thus affecting ordinary people's everyday life. However, Papataxiarchis (2018: 229) argues that in describing such globalized financial fluidity as a 'crisis', there is a risk of confusing the emic and etic dimensions of this process.[2] Furthermore, previous assessments of the current situation as something new have failed to highlight the possible continuities (or transformations) of equally determinant past historical moments, which people may describe as 'crisis'. In this article, I follow Hirsch and Stewart (2005) on the relevance of the 'subjective' dimension — as meaningful historical[3] and temporal moments —

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[2] Papataxiarchis (2018: 228-232) points out that, in Greece, the everyday use of the word 'crisis' carries political and ideological connotations, which, he argues, blurs the boundaries between the exercise of politics and the analytical usefulness of the word in anthropology. He suggests (Papataxiarchis 2014: 17-32), that the word 'crisis' should be used to study the locals' point of view (emic), and that the word 'trouble' would be more appropriate for analytical purposes (etic) because it would highlight the historical aspect of the current (insecurity) events in the country; that is, the specific political, economic, social and ideological processes that have been taking place in Greece since the 20th century.

[3] The word 'historical' is used here as a derivative of 'historicity'. Hirsch and Stewart (2005: 261-263) define 'historicity' as a dynamic social process that examines the links between the past, the present and

to examine the strategies that people adopt to address everyday challenges to find out whether the current socio-economic conditions in Greece create new responses to these challenges or simply redefine old, familiar attitudes.

The present discussion attempts to widen the existing anthropological literature on the Greek 'crisis', which deals mainly with native Greeks, by looking at Albanian immigrants who have lived and worked in Greece since the 1990s and are now facing the same social, economic and political challenges as the native population. I shall address immigrants' culturally structured ways of responding to different 'crises'. I draw on data collected during my fieldwork (2015-2017) through participant observation and semi-structured interviews with Albanian immigrants aged between 38 and 50 years, who have lived and worked in the city of Corinth and two nearby villages since 1998. All names of the interviewees have been changed in order to ensure their anonymity.

Albanian immigrants in Corinth have lived through two different temporal and spatial conditions, subjectively defined as 'crises'. The first relates to life in Albania, either during communism or after the collapse of the communist regime. The second crisis occurred around 2008 in Greece. Albanian immigrants link both 'crises' to the precarious labour and economic conditions that they had to face, and the ways in which they ensured their livelihood.

The 'provisioning' approach (Narotzky 2005) may explain how Albanian immigrants followed different formal economic and informal non-economic paths in order to gain access to goods and services (Narotzky 2005: 83) during the 'crisis' both in Albania and in Greece. Specifically, the historical and culturally-constructed conditions of institutionalized public provisioning of goods and services (Narotzky 2005: 81-82) of communist Albania staggered after the collapse of the regime in the 1990s. In the reasoning of Albanians, the first 'crisis' was caused by the withdrawal of the state's provisioning of goods and services and the shrinkage of the official, public employment sector. That 'crisis' motivated them to turn to informal social networks of relatives and 'friends' to migrate to Greece in order to secure employment and thus their livelihoods. Anthropological studies have shown the importance of informal social networks in gaining access to material and non-material resources both in 'normal' conditions (Pardo 1996) and during 'crises' (Spyridakis 2017, 2010). The work of Spyridakis on Greece (2017, 2010) shows that the ability of people to build informal social networks helps them to acquire goods, services and rights that may not be available in times of financial 'crisis', including the right to work. Such informal networks are governed by different moral and cultural values depending on the context. In his study on Naples, Pardo (1996) shows that people cope 'in a pragmatic way with the paradox of being forced to seek rights as favours' (Pardo 1996: 157), and choose to acquire such rights in ways that agree with their own moral code.

The cultural logic of Albanians' networking is controlled by relations of trust similar to those described by Pardo (1996), who explains that trust is fundamental in the construction and dynamics of informal networks. Among Albanian immigrants, such relations are based on

the future and the ways in which the past and the future are intertwined in the present. This approach does not assume that events and time of events unfold in a linear path.

personal acquaintanceship with co-nationals (Narotzky 2005: 89), who provided non-material assets during the 'Albanian crisis' (assistance to find work in Greece) and are, then, transformed into material goods (labour) during the Greek 'crisis', which they 'subjectively' experience and describe as a 'second crisis'. In the current unstable situation in Greece, new informal non-economic ways of provisioning material and non-material goods play a decisive role in ensuring their livelihoods; specifically, throughout the 2010s, Albanian immigrants have relied on the new social networks and relations of 'trust' that they have built with Greek employers in Corinth. This approach is similar to that described by Prato (2010) in post-communist Albania. Following Pardo (1996), Prato stresses precisely the relevance of 'trust' in the construction of new networks, and in the expansion of existing networks, to navigate the uncertainties that followed the collapse of the communist regime.

The next two sections address the ways in which Albanians have responded to different 'crises' in both a temporal and spatial context. This comparative approach will help to bring out continuities and transformations of culturally specific modes of behaviour in dealing with 'crisis'.

The 'Crisis' in Albania

The majority of Albanian immigrants in Corinth view the collapse of the Communist regime in the 1990s as a 'crisis', which they say was different from what they are experiencing now in Greece. This distinction is exemplified by Arben's description during our discussion in the courtyard of his home in a Corinthian village in May 2017. Arben, a 40-year-old informant from Berat, said that, among other things, 'the wages are now low with the crisis.' However, when I asked what he meant by the expression 'now with the crisis', he replied:

> 'What we have here is not a crisis. It is a small crisis. When the regime fell, when Albania went bankrupt, nobody knew what to do, whether to stay in the country or leave. Then, we left with means that your mind cannot imagine […] Money? Work? Food? We had nothing. Not even a piece of bread […] *That* is a crisis, and we, the Albanians, know what a crisis is.'

Arben's statement illustrates the way in which Albanian immigrants see and construct the concept of 'crisis' in a spatial and temporal frame different from the Greek one; specifically, with reference to Albania in the aftermath of the collapse of the communist regime in the 1990s. Arben remembers that Albania's 'bankruptcy' — which was reflected in the country's failure to ensure employment, food and money — led many Albanians to migrate to unknown destinations using any means available. When compared to the Greek context, their past experience and memory of that 'crisis' determine Albanians' view of the current conditions in Greece as a 'small crisis'. Thus, the 'crisis' becomes contextualized and acquires a new, subjective dimension that makes Albanians feel that 'they' are familiar with 'crises' or, more accurately, as Arben puts it, 'we, the Albanians, know of crisis'. The rhetoric of the Albanian immigrants seems to respond to what Knight (2015a: 3-4) called the process of 'cultural proximity' through which, especially in times of rapid social change, people tend to view significant past events as culturally close to the present, despite being temporally distant. In the

case of Albanian immigrants, these past events are either the communist period or the collapse of the regime.

Albanians' response to the Albanian 'crisis' of the 1990s resulted in migration abroad and in the re-emergence of the *kurbet* — the traditional mobility practice of Albanian society since the second half of the 15th century, which resurfaced after the overthrow of communism and the opening of borders. Many Albanians fled the country, migrating mainly to Greece and Italy in search of better living conditions (Papailias 2003: 1064; King and Vullnetari 2003: 18-19; King et al. 2006: 413-414; Prato 2009: 92-97; Vullnetari 2012: 59-60; Gregorič Bon 2016: 64-65 and 2017: 302-303).

The Albanians among whom I carried out my fieldwork migrated to Greece in 1990, soon after the collapse of the communist regime. Initially, they worked and lived in various regions of Greece, before settling in the Corinth area in 1998. They were mostly employed as seasonal workers. Strictly speaking, the word 'seasonal' implies that work is available only in a limited season of the year. However, in the case of Albanian immigrants the seasonal work is neither exclusive nor restrictive in the sense that they welcome any available job and, thus become employed throughout the year; for example, as agricultural workers during the summer, or as construction workers, house painters, and so on, at other times.

Their mobility in pursuit of work was based on the social networks of their co-nationals. Groups of ethnic Albanians were scattered throughout Greece, and they provided information on the jobs available where they were based. As a result, in the 1990s Albanian immigrants were constantly on the move working a wide range of multiple 'seasonal' works in different places.[4]

Edi, a 43-year-old man from Elbasan, who lives in the region of Corinth and works in the wider area, says that in the 1990s his social ethnic network helped him to gain access to several job opportunities. Edi's reliance on his ethnic network seems to be based on the concept of the so-called 'known', a person who can be trusted. Let me explain. During our conversation, Edi repeatedly described those who helped him find various jobs in Greece as people he 'knew'. He explained:

> 'The known is not one person. At first, the known was my cousin in Crete. I was there one year, working seasonally in the fields. Afterwards, my brother followed. Then, I went to Veroia, near the border, you know. He told me that work was available there, seasonally, harvesting peaches, crop and so on. I stayed in Veroia for two years and half. Then, my groom told me 'come to Athens, I can help you'. Many Albanians working in construction did two jobs per day.'

[4] The connection between the spatial distribution of Albanian migrants and the kind of work they undertook is described by King (2008: 298-299), Vullnetari (2007: 50) and King and Vullnetari (2003: 37-38). However, my study has not confirmed this connection. The aforementioned scholars report that in urban areas, such as Athens, Thessaloniki and Patras, employment was available throughout the year, while in rural Greece Albanians were mainly employed in the agricultural sector during the summer months and the seasonal fruit harvest.

The 'known' in Edi's narrative alternate over the time. Specifically, his cousin was the 'known' who helped him to find agricultural work and 'seasonal' work in Crete. Later, the 'known' was his brother, who lived in Veroia and told him that there was seasonal work available. Finally, it was Edi's groom, who helped him find a job in the construction sector in Athens.

Contemporary studies on Albanian migration have adopted either a transnationalist approach or the social networks theory to analyse the relevance of ethnic networks. According to these studies, ethnic networks are important to determine the immigrants' places of residence and obtain valuable information about the living and working conditions in Greece and in other countries (Labrianidis and Lyberaki 2005: 206-209; Carletto et al. 2005; Iosifides et al. 2007: 1347-1352; Stampini et al. 2008: 80-81; Dahinden 2010: 132-134; Iosifides and Kizos 2012: 332-334; Gemi 2015: 28-30).

Significantly, the social networks of the Albanian immigrants in Corinth include not only the categories of 'known' pointed by Edi in his narrative; the 'known' could be consanguineal kin (cognates), affinal kin (affine) and 'friends' (neighbours). As Scott (2000: 26, 28) notes, the importance of kinship and friendship for the construction of people's social networks has been highlighted since the 1950s and 1960s by anthropologists of the Manchester School, such as John Barnes and Clyde Mitchell, and by sociologists like Elizabeth Bott. The case of Albanian immigrants reminds us of Mitchell's argument that interpersonal social networks are important both for 'the transfer of information between individuals' and for 'the transfer of material goods and services between people' (quoted in Scott 2000: 30). Mitchell suggests that the quality of people's relationships can be examined through 'reciprocity'; that is, the degree by which people reciprocate or do not reciprocate certain transactions (quoted in Scott 2000: 31). In his work on Naples, Pardo (1996) analyses how people mobilize kin, friends and acquaintances, including neighbours, in constructing personal networks and gaining access to material and non-material resources. Significantly, Pardo shows how these networks are crucial in a system of 'exchange of favours' that is based on trust (or, the 'knowing' mentioned by various immigrants) and expectations of reciprocal help; however, Pardo points out, such reciprocity is guided by moral and cultural values that do not necessarily demand an immediate return. Spyridakis (2010) raises similar issues of trust and values in his study of 'workers' social practices' in the Piraeus. There, Greek workers in the shipbuilding and repairing industry who have lost their job have looked for occasional employment to supplement their income both within and beyond the local market. A central role in finding employment is played by their social networks, which include friends, neighbours, family and relatives, as well as trade unionists linked to different political parties. These social links provide information about employment opportunities and are part of the historically defined framework of exchange of favours, services and mutual support (Spyridakis 2010, 2017). In the case of Albanian immigrants, the people who initially helped them to find work in Greece belonged to social relationships established in Albania, which were part of a system of exchange that

anthropologists have described as 'generalized reciprocity'.[5] Papageorgiou (2011:145-147) interprets Albanian kinship and social relations in Greece as a form of 'generalized reciprocity'. Prato explains that the Albanian traditional system could be 'described as a system of socially-based generalized reciprocity (*à la* Sahlins 1965)' (Prato 2010: 145). However, she suggests that, in post-communist Albania, the 'traditional system of reciprocity appears to be moving towards a system of 'exchange of favours' of the kind described by Pardo (1996) in his Naples ethnography' (Prato 2010: 145, 146-148).

My research findings in the municipality of Kurbin in northern Albania reveal a similar situation. I carried out research in Kurbin between December 2017 and July 2018 on work strategies among Albanians between the ages of 32 and 47. I found that people build networks of mutual 'help' with relatives or non-relatives, depending on the context, to gather information on immigration policies in Greece, Italy, Germany and France and on how to find jobs in these countries.

The 'help' that Albanians receive in order to migrate abroad is based on a wide range of ties of 'mutual help' with their relatives and 'friends'. This network of relationships is not limited to the employment sector but includes different forms of reciprocity on other aspects of life; for example, 'help' to obtain legal documents for a relative living in France, 'monetary help' in the form of 'lending money' to a 'friend' in Albania, and so on. All these forms of aid will be reciprocated at an unspecified future, and the 'reciprocated help' can take a different form from that originally received. Most of the time, however, this framework is applied to the job sector; in particular, the Albanians among whom I did my research have received 'help' from relatives and 'friends' in the form of information to find work in the foreign country where those relatives and friends were based.

As I mentioned earlier, anthropological analyses of social networks and reciprocity in post-socialist Albania bring out an important aspect which is central to understanding their contemporary dynamics. Significantly, as Prato (2010, 2017) points out, it would be analytically misleading to interpret these social networks as the 'reappearance' of old forms of social organization and reciprocity that existed in the pre-communist and communist periods.[6] Instead, they are a new system of 'exchange of favours', whereby personal networks extend beyond the immediate kin, 'friends' and neighbours, and are activated for new purposes (Prato

[5] The anthropological debate on reciprocity is rooted in Mauss's analysis of the gift. According to Mauss (1979: 117-123), gift exchange entails 'reciprocal' obligations between the parties; that is, the obligation to offer, to accept and to reciprocate the gift. Mauss suggested that this system of reciprocity forms the most basic institution of sociability and exchange in non-Western societies (Mauss 1979: 171-172). Sahlins (cited in Narotzky 2007: 78-79) introduced the expression 'generalized reciprocity' on the basis of Malinowski's observations of forms of exchange in the Trobriand Islands. According to Sahlins, help is motivated by the need of the recipient, who in turn bears social responsibility and the moral obligation to reciprocate at a future time.

[6] For the formation and operation of the 'traditional' system of networking and reciprocity of Albanians during the pre-communist period, see Lawson and Saltmarshe (2002: 489, 494-495), Bardhoshi (2007: 24), Prato (2017: 108, 117 and 2010: 137), and, during the communist period, Schwandner-Sievers (1996: 119), De Waal (2014: 138-139) and Musaraj (2016: 135-136).

2010: 143-148, 2012: 95-96, 2017: 118). Examples of such new purposes include overcoming legal and bureaucratic barriers (Musaraj 2009), gaining access to health services (Prato 2010: 144; Elsie 2010: 188; Danaj 2014: 125) or gaining access to work opportunities (Danaj 2014: 126) and real estate (Prato 2010: 145-146; Bardhoshi 2011).

Taking into account the heterogeneous formation of these networks, it could be argued that, depending on circumstances, in post-socialist Albania the appeal to reciprocal 'help' can be directed to different 'trustable' relations, from members of the nuclear family (Lawson et al. 2000: 1503; Voell 2012: 154, 156; Arsovska 2015: 122) to more distant matrilineal relatives (Prato 2010: 146; Bardhoshi 2011: 18), to non-relatives with whom Albanians have built new relationships of 'trust' (Saltmarshe 1999: 126-128; Lawson et al. 2000: 1511; Lawson and Saltmarshe 2002: 497; Prato 2010: 148 and 2012: 95-96).

The 'new' application of this cultural practice of kinship and friendship networking is also at the basis of the way in which Albanian immigrants in Corinth mobilize kin and 'friends' whom they regard as 'known' in order to build new networks of 'help' in Greece. To sum up, in the 1990s, these networks of mutual exchange of information were primarily aimed at finding employment in Greece; thus, Albanian immigrants were able to manage the economic and labour precarity of the 'subjectively-defined crisis' that they were experiencing in their own country.

The 'Crisis' in Greece

In the early 1990s, most Albanian immigrants described their work conditions in Greece as 'seasonal'. However, as I mentioned earlier, this word fails to account for the broad range of jobs they did across the country. Their work pattern was marked by periodic and temporary movements in different places in Greece, which guaranteed that they would find a job throughout the year. Nowadays, Albanians who work and live in the wider region of Corinth use the word 'seasonal' to describe the agricultural work available in the area. Their 'multiple mobilities' strategy has changed, too. The reputation they have built in the local job market has allowed them to expand their job opportunities beyond the Corinth region, especially in cities like Athens, which allows them to balance the reduced wages now available in Corinth following Greece's economic downturn.[7] Significantly, the main difference with previous strategies is that the new movements are no longer based on their networks of immediate 'known' — that is, their relatives and 'friends' — but rely on networks of 'acquaintances'. The 'acquaintances' are Greek employers with whom they have established good relationships during their long-term presence in the area of Corinth. Time is of course an important factor;

[7] Spyridakis (2020) has described in detail how Greeks are dealing with the economic downturn. In particular, his ethnographic research in Athens shows how they see and manage the Minimum Guaranteed Income, an economic measure that the Greek state established to help financially disadvantaged citizens. The allowance, however, does not cover their daily needs. Greek citizens conceptualize this allowance as an 'economic complement' (2020: 74), which they combine with other 'pre-crisis strategies' (2020: 76), such as the mobilization of informal social networks of relatives, friends and colleagues in order to ensure access to informal employment.

the fact that Albanian immigrants 'have lived in the area for years' plays a key role in their relationship with locals. As Fatmir, a 48-year-old man from Lushnjë, says,

> 'We've been living in the area for years. We didn't come recently, like others from Pakistan, from Bangladesh and employers don't know who they are.'

According to Albanian immigrants, local Greek employers acknowledge their long-term presence, and — especially — know that they are willing to undertake not only agricultural work but also any other job that may come up (like house painting, home repairs, gardening, and so on), even for free (for example, to help a Greek employer to transfer some baskets with seasonal fruits to his car). Over time, appreciative local employers have recommended them to other employers in neighbouring villages and in the wider Corinth region.

The activation of these local networks of 'acquaintances' has the potential to produce new relationships with other employers, which translates into lasting mobility, more job opportunities and even the ability to negotiate the economic aspect by placing the work relationship in the context of exchange of favours and 'mutual advantage'. However, this opportunity is not accessible to all Albanian immigrants but only to those who have managed to develop personal relations with the locals based both on 'trust' and on having been involved in events — such as the mutual recognition of the difficult economic situation — that have moved the job relation beyond the monetary sphere. As Pardo (1996: 159) points out, the concept of 'trust is always relevant' but also context-dependent. In his ethnography of the '*popolino*' (ordinary residents) of Naples, Pardo analyses their formal and informal entrepreneurial activities in the context of a complex system of favours that includes kin, friends and neighbours, as well as professionals, trade-unionists, bureaucrats and ordinary people, who help them to acquire or even expand their material and non-material resources (for example, work, reputation, contacts). Pardo also addresses people's 'dis-trust of the powerful who run the institutions though not necessarily of the institutions as such' (Pardo 1996: 159) and shows that Neapolitans' actions within the system of favours constitute alternative ways of gaining access to resources, and that such actions are subjectively interpreted through the lens of a spiritual and moral system that includes 'honesty', 'generosity', 'affection' and 'good-heartedness' (Pardo 1996: 45-46, 58-59).

Sokol, a 44-year-old man from Berat, describes how employees and employers interact in the local Corinthian context and how they primarily achieve their economic needs by integrating them into an intangible economy that proves beneficial for both sides. He says:

> 'Here the boss must know you, trust you. Costas, my landlord, for example, when we have difficulty in paying the rent […] says "come and do some extra work and pay off the rent". That's how we handle our relationships. He doesn't chase us for the money. They know us, they trust us. When they need something else, not just a job, we help them. That is how we stand here.'

From Sokol's and other Albanian immigrants' accounts, it is evident that close relations and particularly 'trust' are primarily built through long time interaction in the labour context, but also extend to other spheres of life. This happens because often Greek employers and

immigrants cannot meet their financial obligations, which are instead paid by doing extra work or through other forms of assistance. For example, when immigrants cannot pay their house rent, they often pay by doing extra work for the employer, as in Sokol's case. On the other hand, when employers have no money to pay the full salary of Albanian immigrants, they may either pay them in instalments over time, or give them only part of the salary and pay the rest in goods (for example, bottles of olive oil).

Artan's experience is representative of that of many other Albanian immigrants in Corinth and of their perception of 'crisis' in different contexts and times. Artan is 42-year-old man from Fier. I discussed his job situation one afternoon in February 2017 in the Albanian coffee shop in Corinth. Artan said that he worked 'seasonally' in the wider region and added:

> 'If you ask about me, everyone in Loutraki, Corinth and the villages around knows me. They know my name.[8] Everybody knows what kind of work I do [...] I've been living in the area for years. It's not that I came recently and the boss doesn't know who I am. The boss trusts me; because he knows that "I'll hire Artan and he will do a good work", so […] the boss will hire me. He won't hire someone else, because he doesn't know who the other person is; he doesn't know the quality of work he can deliver […] when an employer is happy, he'll tell it to another employer: "I have Artan at work; he's good at tiles or painting", for example. If you've built a good name, the acquaintance with the boss takes you to another boss. Here, you will hear many things [he points with his right hand to the interior space of coffee shop, where there are seven Albanian men], and they say there's a crisis in Greece. There's no payday, no work. I say now we're used to have the crisis […] I never owned a lot nor spent a lot of money, I say the crisis brought me in this situation, what will I do now? I don't know. *I know the crisis* [he says with emphasis], because we also had it in Albania with Hoxha. Then, all Albanians were working all day and we didn't have any bread to eat. That is, you wait in line with the coupon in your hand and go back home with nothing. Can you think of what I'm saying? The milk may be over, let's say, you can go back home without anything. Then the people had nothing, not 150 euros weekly wages like we have here. People had nothing, and when I hear other Albanians talk about the crisis here, I say "Have you ever had money?", "No", he says. So, what changes for me, for you? Nothing changes […] I say it in that way in order to make them understand that they know what the crisis feels like. We moved on with the crisis under Hoxha, we will move on now. Then, with Hoxha, we went through the crisis Greece is facing now. The people moved on without anything then; now, 150 euros is something and we'll move on here'.

Artan begins his long narrative, saying that Greek employers' 'trust' is the result of the Albanian immigrants' long-proven successful work in the Corinthian context, which gained them a 'name' (reputation) in the region. Artan emphasizes his reputation to define his

[8] The word 'name' means reputation in Greek, which is the original language of all narratives.

subjectively constituted work identity and how it affects finding employment in the region. Borrowing from Bourdieu (1986), the relationships of 'trust' between Albanian immigrants and Greek employers could also be described in terms of 'social capital'.[9] We have seen that Albanian immigrants' social capital is linked not only to economic capital — the material profit (Bourdieu 1986: 249) that they gain from the jobs offered by Greek employers — but also to symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986: 249-251), namely the reputation that they build through their work activity. Specifically, Artan responds to the labour expectations of his Greek employers; he is aware that if the employers are satisfied with the job done, they will introduce him to other employers. These recommendations reinforce the reputation of the Albanian workers and their symbolic capital, which translate into additional jobs and extra economic capital.

Artan's narrative is meaningful not only because he describes in great detail the way in which the 'name' of Albanian immigrants is constructed in the Corinthian context, but also because it brings to the forefront their 'subjectively structured' experiences of the 'crises'. When he states 'I say that we're used to crisis now', he is referring to discussions, among Albanian immigrants who socialize in the Albanian coffee shop in Corinth, about the 'crisis in Greece' and the consequent reduction in their daily wage.

The Greek 'crisis' is interpreted through the lens of the subjectively significant historical past — the 'crisis' of the communist era. During the 'communist crisis', Artan says, Albanian citizens worked all day. Their work, however, was not enough to secure 'bread' for their families; that is, their livelihood was precarious and at risk.[10] Artan explains this inability to secure 'bread' by referring to the queues of Albanians who, holding coupons in their hands, waited their turn to receive the state-provided basic goods. On many occasions, they were told by state employees that the provision of goods was over, so they had to return to their homes 'with nothing.' Several studies on the significant shortage of basic goods in communist Albania confirm Artan's account (Musaraj 2009: 158, 2011: 96, 2012: 178-181; Papageorgiou 2011: 315; Vullnetari and King 2014: 133, 141; King and Vullnetari 2016: 203).

These experiences of the 'crisis' in communist Albania, when 'the people had nothing', are comparatively transposed to Corinth to stress that the current weekly wage of 150 euros, earned by the Albanians in the Corinthian region, is clearly better than what was available in Albania's past 'crisis'. When he hears other Albanian immigrants discussing the 'crisis' in Greece, Artan asks them 'have you ever had money?'. In so doing, Artan does not merely highlight his subjective memory of the 'crisis' in Albania — through which he interprets the present 'crisis' in Greece — but also attempts to stimulate collective past memories among the Albanians who meet at the coffee shop, urging them to reflect that the 'crisis' is a familiar

[9] Bourdieu (1986: 248) defines social capital as 'The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition'.

[10] According to De Waal (2014: 189, 204), the typical pre-communist way of communication between Albanians included the question, 'Did you have bread?', which means 'have you had food?', because 'bread' was the most important part of any meal. Interestingly, Albanians in Corinth say that they migrated to Greece 'for a piece of bread'; that is, to construct a future free of the extreme hunger and poverty that they had known in the past and that continued to plague Albanian society.

experience for them. Artan's approach is inspirational and at the same time encouraging — like a slogan;[11] comparing the 'crisis' in Greece with that in Albania encourages other immigrants to realize that going from 'nothing' in Albania to a weekly salary of '150 euros' in Greece is 'something'.

Significantly, however, the 'crisis' and 'poverty' experienced by Albanians during communism is not always recalled for reasons of encouragement. In some cases, such experience is used to emphasize that the Greek 'crisis' primarily concerns Greek citizens, who are used to a life of 'plenty'. Bashkim, a 41-year-old man from Berat, illustrated this point saying, 'Things are hard right now with the crisis and you [the Greeks] have to run it, like we did it when we came to Greece in the 1990'. When I asked him what has changed for him. He replied:

> 'We've lived in a crisis before, with poverty, because we came from Albania from zero […] we've learned from Albania and we're living with few things and moving forward. The salary is low, now. There, we understood the crisis; but we are used to crises […] We, my family have never had much. Under Hoxha no one in Albania had much, not just us. We all lived with difficulty. There was a lot of poverty in Albania, then. I have learned to live with few things; that is, a little bread for the day. Here, they are accustomed to a lot of things; to be paid 100-150 or 200 euros per day […] the Greeks have learned to live with many things. To have money to go to Italy, holidays from here and there, to celebration. Okay, we have grown up differently, with work, home […] It's difficult now with the crisis and you've to work in Corinth or elsewhere, wherever you can find work through acquaintances in order to live. But I'm saying the Greeks have a crisis not the Albanians, we have learned to live with few things.'

Bashkim's narrative, as he speaks on behalf of his fellow Albanians, is mostly formulated in the first-person plural. He, too, argues that Albanians 'have lived in the crisis before', during communism, when 'poverty' was prevalent in Albania. Such past experience makes Albanians familiar with living with 'little' and, in particular, help them cope with the reduced wages they earn in Greece. The 'crisis' in communist Albania is not only presented as a personal predicament — learning to live with 'few thing' — but also as a collective experience, which appears to have 'initiated' Albanians into 'generalized poverty' and 'difficulty'.

According to Bashkim, Greeks are instead used to spend their money on vacations and entertainment,[12] unlike Albanians, who are used to work and stay home. Of course, the

[11] Knight (2015b: 231) examines Greek slogans on walls in western Thessaly, which are based on strong cultural perceptions, and link the current economic liquidity in Greece to historical moments of conflict, hunger and political oppression in the country. He argues that those slogans are not only about identifying political responsibility for the present conditions of uncertainty in Greece but also about reminding people that such conditions can be addressed and overcome.

[12] The views of Albanian migrants converge with those of Greek migrants living in the United Kingdom and the USA (Knight 2015b) and Panama (Theodossopoulos 2013), who believe that their compatriots in Greece are wasting their money on entertainment and other 'irrational' economic behaviour (Knight

Albanians in this narrative, as in the previous one, are aware that the Greek 'crisis' has affected their lives; in particular, the reduced wages in the Corinthian labour market has motivated them to mobilize 'acquaintances' in order to get additional work elsewhere. Generally, they tend to view their past experiences of the 'crisis' in Albania as an antidote that makes them more resilient in the current situation in Greece.

I was intrigued that in this context Albanian immigrants did not rely on their (ethnic) 'known' to find jobs in Greece as they did in the early 1990s. I found that, over time, the relevance of the ethnic network has declined, especially as immigrants have been joined by their spouses and children to settle permanently in Corinth. Their arrival created different needs, which gave priority to personal, family-related 'interest' over kin's and friends' help.[13] Competition over the available jobs is another important element in the current situation.

Fatos, a 45-year-old man from Fier, described his difficulty in finding work in Corinth in 2016. When I asked if he was thinking of returning to Albania, he said:

> 'But if you leave you can't come back [...] Acquaintances? They'll forget you immediately. If you leave, the other employees say, he's fighting for himself, he's gone. It may be better for me to get a job […] It is worst if the employee is from the same country, the same village, even your cousin, because it's difficult now. Everyone is alone with his family. Look at ten years back, twelve maybe, I didn't have a child. I had another mentality. Now the children grow up. I had a different life before. Now you look more at your own interest. Back then we didn't think the same way, and I said let's help my sister, my brother.'

Like Fatos, other Albanian immigrants who work and live in the Corinth region describe their migratory past as being governed by supportive attitudes among relatives, which contrasts with the present situation. They add that nowadays they will suffer a double blow if they choose to leave Greece. On the one hand, the ethnic 'known' are likely to seize the opportunity of their absence and take their jobs, forgetting the relations of reciprocity that played a key role in finding employment in Greece in the 1990s. On the other hand, should they leave, Greek employers — their 'known acquaintances' — would forget about them, breaking the working ties that were built through long-term presence and hard work and that contributed to the creation of their reputation ('name'), which allowed them to obtain multiple employment opportunities in various spatial contexts.

2015a: 238), suggesting that Greeks are not entitled to complain about the country's difficult economic situation (Knight 2015b: 238-239; Theodossopoulos 2013: 203-204).

[13] Several studies have also pointed out that Albanian migrants, especially those with families, may be influenced by stereotypes about 'dangerous Albanian migrants' (Papageorgiou 2011: 392), which had become widespread in the late 1990s (on Greece, see Psimmenos 2004: 221-223; Papageorgiou 2011: 392-394; on Italy, see Prato 2009). In an attempt to differentiate themselves from other migrants, Albanians emphasize their work identity, stressing that they are 'hard' workers, or referring to the jobs they used to have in Albania (for example, police officer) before migrating to Greece (Psimmenos 2004: 222-223).

Conclusion

The case study of Albanian immigrants who live and work in the Corinthian region shows that in order to understand how people 'subjectively' construct the meaning of 'crisis' it is necessary to contextualise it historically and spatially. In this article, I have endeavoured to show that Albanian immigrants conceptualize the 'crisis' in relation to two different temporal and historical moments.

The first 'crisis' dates back to the 1990s and is linked to the collapse of the communist regime in Albania. Albanian immigrants associate this moment of 'crisis' to their international migration to Greece to escape the labour and economic precarity that plagued Albania. Their ethnic networks, which they describe as their immediate 'known', helped them to find work 'seasonally' in various Greek regions. Over time, the cultural logic of mutual help and the relevance of the traditional 'known' network has declined, in particular following the arrival of the immigrants' families in Greece and the unstable economic conditions in the country. Now, those 'known' have become potential competitors.

The second 'crisis' experienced by Albanian immigrants takes place in Greece and is associated to the lower wages that they receive due to the economic recession. In such context, they cope with the crisis not through a new transnational mobility (going back to Albania) but through internal mobility in Greece. Transforming the familiar cultural logic of networking, they activate their long-term working relations with their Greek employers. In so doing, Albanian immigrants gain access to broader networks of 'acquaintances' (namely, those of their employers) and obtain extra job opportunities to offset the reduced wages from the jobs available in the Corinth region. In this context of generalized economic downturn, 'work performance' and 'reputation' seem to constitute the only economic guarantees. Paraphrasing Bourdieu (2006), it could be argued that Albanian immigrants are able to transform their symbolic capital — their reputation ('name') — into economic capital, and vice versa. The economic capital — the work performance, the jobs executed successfully — increases the symbolic capital, which opens up access to the 'networks of acquaintances'. Similarly, Albanian immigrants prove in a practical way that the symbolic capital, which they boast they possess, constitutes the credentials (Bourdieu 2006: 194) on which relations of 'trust' with the locals are build. To sum up, their ethnography seems to confirm Bourdieu's argument that 'capital goes to capital' (Bourdieu, 2006: 193-194).

Finally, we have seen that Albanian immigrants view the present conditions of 'crisis' in Greece through the lens of their collective memories of the past Albanian 'crisis'. Reference to the past helps them to reconstruct the present (Gefou-Madianou 2006: 60); specifically, the past is used to acknowledge the 'crisis' in Greece but also to distinguish the different meanings and impacts it has on the native Greeks and the Albanian immigrants. On the one hand, immigrants say, 'Greeks have a crisis not the Albanians, we have learned to live with few things'; on the other hand, reference to the past is used to encourage other Albanian immigrants to remain positive in the context of the Greek 'crisis', arguing that their weekly wages of '150 euros is something' compared to the 'nothing' they had during the Albanian 'crisis'.

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Learning Liminality: A Case of Continuing Education in Greece[1]

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This article addresses the issue of liminality in the making, as manifested by traineeships in the Greek tourism sector. Drawing from ethnographic data collected between 2016 and 2017, we examine the experiences of young trainees in tourism-related enterprises in a national context of mild economic recovery. Our primary focus is on the impact of the selected training scheme as regards both the trainees' self-image and their perceptions of work, occupation and careers in the tourism sector, the so-called heavy industry of the Greek economy. Our findings suggest that instead of concluding with a meaningful and inspiring career path, the actors learn to live in an in-between and transient state for long periods of time as they prepare themselves for navigating a deregulated labour market. Through the lens of liminality, we aim at a more complex understanding of the unsettling and disruptive condition that pertains to the threshold position of our informants, of the transient spatio-temporal characteristics of Continuing Education itself, but also aspects of the transformations and transitions that shook up Greek society and economy during the last decade.
Key words: Liminality, Continuing Education, tourism, Greek crisis, skills.

Introduction

At the time of this study (2016-2017) the Greek economy had started recovering from the far-reaching symptoms of the economic crisis, though the social implications of the unprecedented recession and the impact of the austerity-driven policy responses were still present. Unemployment rate was 23.5% (6 units below the 2013 pick, but still high) and considerably higher (47.28%) for those aged 18-29 (Statista 2020). A 34.8% of the total population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion (ELSTAT 2017), while one out of five Greek citizens was experiencing some type of material deprivation (a double share in comparison with the 2009 respective data). The news from the labour market were reflecting a slow recovery in terms of new jobs, but deregulation, precarious conditions and low wages were still the key features of the 'post-recession' era, even in dynamic economic sectors like tourism (Papadopoulos and Lyddon 2020). Although Greece was by far the most discussed case of the Eurocrisis, the public and academic debates on the latter have suggested that the core manifestations of the Greek crisis and its formative mechanisms were interwoven with the architecture of the EU itself and the new implications of the neoliberal globalization particularly after the global crisis of 2008 (Currie and Teague 2017).

Many commentators of the Greek crisis have used the metaphor of the 'limbo state' in order to describe the transient and deeply uncertain status of the Greek economy, politics and society in 2012-2015. The referendum of July 2015 echoed this description in a painful manner: for more than a week Greece was in-between Eurozone, the Left was in-between a glorious break with austerity and a humiliating compromise, and those most hit from the crisis (unemployed, precarious workers, youth) were in-between hope (for a prospect policy change) and despair (due to a further deterioration of the labour market condition). Two years later Greece was falling short

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of the condition of a 'limbo state', but this was hardly the case for large segments of the Greek society, such as the young unemployed or the precarious workers.

Liminality was not an unknown situation for the authors of the present article either. The first author was working for three years as a full-time counselling expert in the field of Adult Education, conducting research and writing academic articles on his personal time. In his mid-thirties he was considering himself lucky enough to have a full-time job in crisis-ridden Greece, despite the feeling of being overqualified for the specific job tasks, which was also shared with many other peers. He had not reached the status of an academic scholar yet (and the prospects were rather gloom after six years of austerity), but he was struggling very hard to combine administrative workload, service provision and scientific work in the fields of sociology, political science and political anthropology.

The co-author of this study was a Lecturer in a university of a remote area of the UK, but he could not enjoy the benefits of the tenure yet, so he was experiencing a transient period as well. Our experience of being in a bordering condition was the main drive to study how this could be felt by individuals (CVET learners)[2] with less privileged background than ours. As a coordinator (and career professional) of numerous counselling projects in Continuing education, the author had access to various groups of unemployed people participating in upskilling or reskilling activities. The question then was which group would fit better to our main research question on how liminality was experienced and/or learnt in contexts heavily impacted from economic crisis, deregulation and fragmentation. We concluded that any training program designed for young unemployed could potentially constitute a space where liminality is embedded and experienced. Nonetheless some professions or sectors exhibit more 'in-betweenness' compared to others. The case of tourism is exemplar in this respect: global characteristics of the product structure in this sector such as seasonality, mobility of labour, dependency on national and international environment, precarious working conditions, and a big share of family-owned businesses leave enough room for undeterminedness, flexibility, ambiguity and flux (Underthun 2015), in short with things closely associated with liminality.

A second major question that we should address before entering the research field is an ethical one: could we as researchers set aside emotional and material investments and ties with the environment that we were intended to study? Or else, how acknowledging personal interests, motives, values and emotional ties would contribute to a reflexive understanding of the informants' liminal experiences stemming from their interaction with organizations to whom we were formally or informally attached? In ethnography such questions are hardly new. Ethics is about balancing harms and benefits (Iphofen 2013). In our case we decided that the informants could only be benefited from sharing their story with us, while the stakeholder organizations could gain from our research outputs by adjusting future actions accordingly. This potential contribution to the organizations' improvement outweighs the chances of harm

[2] Often, Adult Education, Continuing Education (CVET) and VET, are used interchangeably, though there are differences between these terms. Our case study falls into the category of Continuing Education as part of an Active Labour Market Policy. For more details on the definitions of these terms, see Cedefop (2014).

regarding their reputation as service providers. Role conflicts have been avoided insofar as we had consulted with the 'gatekeepers' (managers of the two key institutions) beforehand. The Institute of the Greek Tourism Confederation (INSETE) and the Hellenic Management Association (EEDE) recognized our independence and we as researchers committed ourselves to the basic principles of beneficence and non-maleficence regarding the collection of material, analysis and dissemination of our research findings.

In line with other ethnographic studies that examine how people construct their choices under certain sets of restrictions (Pardo 2004) the design of the present case-study is linking our CVET material with the broader picture of a thriving economic sector within a context of mild economic recovery at the national and the EU level. Liminality is the thread connecting different scales and settings.

Liminal Spaces, Liminal Actors and Continuing Education

Liminality in anthropology (van Gennep [1960] 2006, Turner 1977, Thomassen 2009) is defined as a transitionary state in which individuals, social groups and even entire societies slip through specified social orders or positions. In addition, the social identity of those experiencing liminality remains highly unattainable (and even unimaginable), something that results in uncertainty and ambivalence in terms of where he/she belongs when his/her previous and classified status in the social space has disappeared or temporarily suspended but a new status has yet to be assigned (Johnsen and Sørensen 2015). The extension of the term into the social sciences through the work of influential global thinkers such as Z. Bauman and S.N. Eisenstadt signalled the application of the concept in larger scales compared to the initial narrow focus either on 'tribal' societies, or on certain spheres of the modern society such as art and leisure (Thomassen 2009) and the attribution of both positive and negative contents (Szakolczai 2014). The latter is crucial because most recent accounts in organization studies overemphasize the unsettling components of liminal situations and downplay or ignore their creative, even liberating potential.

The conceptualization of liminality has led to a variety of uses in multiple empirical scales (Rantatalo and Lindberg 2018) and disciplines (Ibarra and Obodaru 2016) ranging from anthropology, sociology, political science and psychology, to management studies and education. As regards organization studies (Beech 2011) it has been proposed as a way of understanding structural positions (Garsten 1999, Tempest and Starkey 2004), occupations and work processes (Czarniawska and Mazza 2003, Zadoroznyj 2009), sites, events and spaces (Sturdy et al. 2006). The extensive usage of liminality both as a noun describing a threshold position or moment and as an adjective (liminal subject, or liminar) describing the identity (or identities) of the actors who occupy such positions is not unusual, nor always unproblematic (Thomassen 2009, Johnsen and Sørensen 2015, Ibarra and Obodaru 2016). Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus in organization studies that the net effect of this broad use of the concept is positive (Söderlund and Borg 2018). We would also support that many uncharted territories of the post-industrial world of work offer interesting cases of 'betwixt and between' positions and pertinent identifications characterized by multiplicity and ambiguity. Garsten, for

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example, begins her study on temporary employees analysing their status within the organization but expands her scope so that it includes identity formation processes. As she suggests: 'temps may be viewed as strangers in the workplace, temporally passing through and being socially undetermined' (Garsten 1999: 607).

Reconstruction of identity (Beech 2011), identity work or identity growth (Ibarra and Obodaru 2016) constitute a promising field for examining how liminality works at different levels and layers of subjectivity and selfhood. Rantatalo and Lindberg's work (2018) on liminal experiences in professional education points to a linkage of social spaces and enacting subjects through practice. Though their viewpoint on identity draws on a discipline that overemphasizes the individual's volition to try out different versions of the self we find their approach on liminality particularly constructive inasmuch as it examines both the 'who', the 'where' and the 'what' of liminal practices. Ibarra and Obodaru (2016) have convincingly argued that it is the under-institutionalized liminal experiences (such as unemployment) that are subjectively more challenging (the objective and the subjective liminal moments are mutually co-constituted) and more open to the possibility of an identity growth (interplay of exploration and commitment that leads to identity synthesis if successful).

Work-related liminal aspects have also been researched with a focus on experiences from the workplace. In his ethnographic study Spyridakis (2013) uses liminality to denote an increasing trend whereby workers find themselves in unspecified employment territories in which normal or established identities do not make sense. Winkler and Mahmood's research (2015) on temporary agency work indicates how liminality is manifested in temporary workers (temps) who are neither employees of an agency nor full time employees of the host organization.

Whilst our study builds on both anthropological and organizational accounts of liminality, we acknowledge that there are key differences between them. For instance, the organizational usage seems lacking the rituals and complete phases of Turner's conceptualization (Beech 2011: 15) and some other things as well (Ibarra and Obodaru 2016). On the other hand, this lack of completion opens up the room for new research questions regarding the worrying possibility of a permanent state of liminality (Nissim and De Vries 2014). At a more abstract level Szakolczai argues (2014) that liminality does not have to be restricted to a temporary crisis, followed by a return to normality, but can be perpetuated endlessly. In fact, it is precisely the collapse of the taken for granted expectation of a new and stable order that renders liminality a distinct feature of late modernity. This inherent lack of certainty that what is liminal will be followed by something less transient, is more than a contradiction to the initial meaning attributed to the rites of passage; it is rather the price that is paid when societies adopt a more reflexive attitude both towards the world as it is (absurd and entrapped in permanent liminality), the genealogy of this entrapment and the possible way-outs. This is not to ameliorate the anxieties and the anguish of those (countries, social groups, or individuals) experiencing liminality as an everlasting condition. On the contrary, sociological, and anthropological research has the capacity to illuminate the implications of liminal situations, conferring tools for self-awareness. By exposing and analysing experiences of liminality social research could

contribute to a critical reconsideration of the ideology of 'happy flexibility' (Procoli 2004a), or what has McRobbie (2016) termed 'creative dispositif' in gig economies, which in turn could be a good starting point for the reflection of those experiencing liminality (trainees in our case), or facilitating liminality (career advisors, trainers, mentors, and youth workers particularly in reskilling programs).

Having said that, let us now turn to the liminal settings and subjects of this study. As it becomes apparent through the literature review in organizational scholarship and beyond, liminality can equally be traced in organizational settings, social spaces and/or experiences of individuals or groups of people. In this vein, Continuing Education and Training (CVET) could be seen as a transitory space insofar as its mission is to offer viable pathways from an undesired state (be it unemployment, or a less desired job) to a desired one (employment, or a more desired job). By definition CVET implies something permanent and perhaps recurring. Through practical and theoretical learning (both in classroom and the workplace) it caters for required skills that in future will probably be obsolete and substituted by other skills. It is also considered a cornerstone of the European Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) and a pillar of the Youth Employment Initiative.

Previous literature developments on traineeships in Europe, the US and elsewhere have shown that trainees are both employees and students and this ambiguity generates identities that fall outside of the status either of insecure employment or the precariat (Frenette 2013: 366). According to analyses that focus on the regulatory framework and the concomitant active labour market initiatives (Appay 2010, Greer 2016), specific aspects of what is described here as liminal, constitute active processes through which precarity is implemented and institutionalized. In Greece as well as in other crisis-ridden EU countries, the voucher system of vocational training has been adopted as a key policy instrument against youth unemployment through a better alignment of skills supply and demand.

Contrary to the positive connotations of the 'transformational' aspects of short learning cycles that are usually advertised by EU and national governmental bodies and stakeholders, we found that short-term learning of ill-defined and constantly transforming tasks in work environments characterized by fragmentation and deregulation leads to eroded 'identity awareness', a weakening of the sense of 'who I am and which is my call'. In addition, by learning being liminal the CVET trainees adjust their expectations for a meaningful career pathway accordingly. What matters is the 'here and now' in whichever job position this could appear. The following secondary data from three training programs implemented in Greece during 2012-2017 are indicative.

The Institute of Labour of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (INE GSEE) has conducted an evaluation study of three CVET Actions implemented under the auspices of the Youth Employment Initiative in Greece, within the period 2014-2017. One of those Actions concerned the training scheme examined here, while the other two Actions focused on other sectors of the economy. The three Actions shared more or less common characteristics in what regards: the structure of the learning processes, the target groups, and the financial and administrative aspects. Therefore, their outcomes are of great importance for understanding

how CVET actually worked at the time of our research. Table 1 summarizes the status of the 26.395 beneficiaries of the Actions one month after the completion of the programmes.

Status of beneficiaries after the program's end	N	Valid percent
Received a job offer	4110	15.6
Accepted a job offer	3385	12.8
Self-employed	793	3.0
Received a new training/ apprenticeship offer	3342	12.7
No offer received	14765	55.9
Total	**26,395**	**100**

Table 1: The status of the beneficiaries of the three YEI Actions. Source: INE GSEE (2016).

The great majority of the trainees (more than 7 out of 10) return directly to unemployment either having received or mostly without having received a job or training offer.[3] But even among those young trainees that accepted a job offer, only 1 out of 3 enjoyed full time employment with an indefinite job contract. The mean monthly salary for those accepted a job contract was only 444.8 Euros (in 2017 the national mean salary amounted to 1,148 Euros for full time employment and 383 Euros for part time employment). As it is made apparent from the abovementioned cases, the completion of a CVET program can hardly be considered as the beginning of a viable and promising career trajectory. On the contrary for most young unemployed the transitionary experience of CVET prepared their return to the previous status of unemployment without granting expectations for a prospect 'restart'. As it is reaffirmed from many of the informants of our study, training in these circumstances was primarily about how to cope with (and perhaps accept) liminality and its exigencies. The next section discusses the methodological premises of this study and the selection of tourism as a field (both as a learning site and an economic sector).

Methods

Our discussion draws on empirical material collected during and after the implementation of the training program titled 'Voucher scheme for a first work experience for labour market entry

[3] The data regarding the situation of the beneficiaries 6 months after the program's end are similar: a 76.5% were unemployed and 23.5% were in employment, education or training (INE GSEE 2016).

of those aged up to 29 in the tourism sector' (part of YEI actions, funded by ESF Actions Implementation Authority). The 8,000 participants, or the 'beneficiaries' to coin a CVET's term (young unemployed aged 18-29, mainly graduates of secondary and post-secondary education) experienced the following liminal condition: separated from a previous social position (unemployment and/or inactivity) they were subject to an ambiguous state of trial and uncertainty, which was supposed to precede a subsequent return to a new normality (that is, a fresh job seeking activity, a new training opportunity, or, more seldom, a new job). The participants were offered (1) 80 hours theoretical training; (2) a work experience placement in a company (loosely defined as tourism-related) of a total duration of up to 420 hours, (3) certification exam in any one of the offered thematic fields. Table 2 shows the socio-demographic composition of the target population.

Educational Level	**Gender composition**	**Ethnicity**	**Age**
Secondary/post-secondary education (83.7%)	Male (34.6%)	Greek (96.3%)	18-29 (100%)
Higher Education (17.3%)	Female (65.4%)	Other (3.7%)	

Table 2**.** Socio-demographic composition of the target population. Source: Own calculations based upon archival material of the implementing bodies (INSETE and EEDE).

Before collecting and analysing the participants' accounts, we processed administrative material, legal documents, in addition to evaluation surveys and other material from secondary sources. According to the program's documentation, its core objective was to help participants achieve a structured path towards labour market entry through their positioning in companies that offer on-the-job training in tourism-related activities (INSETE 2016). Interestingly the buzzword of 'structured path' appears in many YEI (Youth Employment Initiative) actions of the programming period 2014-2020, denoting an expected transition from an unstructured condition (unemployment, random job searching, deskilling) to a structured one. Even if the placement would not lead to a job offer, it would equip the 'beneficiary' with a better skillset, a more realistic roadmap to employment and thus a less vulnerable position. But was it actually the case?

To illuminate the program's objectives, we conducted an interview with the project manager (PM). Three more interviews with professionals who provided guidance services to trainees followed. The PM helped us entering the classrooms and asking for volunteers for a group interview. We selected to start our research from the metropolitan area of Piraeus in one of the most organized CVET providers in Attica. The PM's introduction in the classroom facilitated the recruitment of 7 informants. Because participants were members of the same seminar, they felt comfortable with one another and engaged in discussions that revealed different perspectives, expectations, and criteria of evaluation, shaped by gender and also educational (vis-à-vis socio-economic) backgrounds.

Reflecting on this first body of information we concluded with the interview instrument and the subsequent design; we conducted 23 semi-structured face-to-face interviews (ranging from 20 minutes to 1 hour) with trainees selected from three different thematic fields (convenient sampling). The interviews have been carried out at the end of the traineeship between June 2016 and March 2017, they were audio-recorded, pseudonymized and transcribed verbatim. As mentioned above the selection of the specific YEI training scheme took into account that tourism was the most dynamic sector of the Greek economy and was much less affected by the crisis in comparison with other sectors. Therefore, we could have a better grasp of how liminality works in a post-crisis situation that starts resembling normalcy. Tourism in Greece shares certain core elements that have been identified in the tourism industry across the globe. Mobility of labour, flexibility in work arrangements, high displacement rates are global trends in hospitality industry (Unterthun 2015). The Greek tourism sector shares many of these labour characteristics as well (Papadopoulos and Lyddon 2020).

To sum up, labour market structure in tourism differs from the rest of the economy. Low-skilled labourers, seasonal employment, low-paying and labour-intensive jobs prevail, and youth, women and migrants are the most vulnerable segments. However, the issue of *liminality in the making* for individuals who experience their first entry into this sector remains paramount for a better understanding of the scattered work trajectories perpetuated through short-term learning cycles. The next section reflects on the initial experiences of liminality at the very beginning of the selected CVET programme.

Learning to Be Liminal

According to many interviewees their difficulty in finding a job was the primary reason for their participation in the training program. Interestingly, the subject area was somehow outside the trainees' prioritization. NI (trainee) had a post-secondary diploma in the ICT field and was previously working in various low-skilled jobs. She made her point explicitly: 'I was trying to find a job without any success. At some point, I saw this program advertised, and I pursued it because I needed the money'. The link between the sense of 'getting locked-in' due to the lack of jobs and the 'choice' of these unemployed to participate in a training program is rather clear and salient.

Many participants expressed professional aspirations and plans, supporting the view that the traineeships were transitory stages to a new position, less uncertain and less vague. The fact that this was much less articulated in later stages of the program's life span was clearly linked to the experiences gained at the learning sites. Therefore, the short-termism and instrumentalism that trainees adopted should be explored under the prism of the dialectics between individual predispositions and the vocational culture emanating from the specific field.

For example, we observed that many trainees were reluctant to select a traineeship in large chain hotels, because of the long working hours and the poor working conditions that prevail in such places, and thus they preferred other options (such as, traineeships in small businesses loosely associated with tourism). This early expressed ambivalence was reinforced by the manipulative practices of many training providers that were channelling the beneficiaries

to the thematic fields that the provider preferred. In this vein, a counselling professional stated as follows:

> 'I saw people with very different backgrounds and interests. They took part because the training providers had told them to choose the specific specialty that the provider recommended.'

Nevertheless, the primary source of trainees' frustration was found to be on the employers' side. Employer practices that involved the usage of trainees in a short-sighted manner appeared to be the key reason why on-the-job training was either limited or incomprehensive and why multi-tasking performance and extremely low discretion was the norm.[4] For example, we asked KT (trainee) to discuss the contribution of the program to the formation of her career path in tourism and she replied**:**

> 'The conditions in my last placement were really exploitative. I had to do everything, including mopping the floor. If it were different, I would consider this career for sure but not now.'

In addition to this example, the substitution effect of those programs was also reported. The legal parameters of the program that were introduced to protect the existing workforce could be circumvented and they actually were, for instance in those cases where trainees were former (or periodic) employees of the host company:

> 'I asked my former employer if he could hire me and he said no. Then I found the program and asked him again and he finally employed me through the program but just for two months.' (Interview with NP)

These initial experiences left their own traits on the self-image of the actors. Liminality in general does not necessarily lead to disengagement, or cynicism, for in-betweenness can generate a variety of reactions ranging from strong motivation to attain a new identity to frustration for having totally lost the sense of belonging and the hope to retrieve it; from omnipotence (I can do whatever I chose) to powerlessness (I can do nothing). As in every intersubjective situation, agency (trainee's actions), structure (CVET, labour market) and whatever could be seen as mediating them (class, gender, or ethnic identities, values, beliefs, or ideologies) are also at play here. For instance, according to the counselling professionals most of the participants had not acquired yet a proper level of transversal skills and this should not be overlooked. The project manager also emphasized the fact that most of the trainees lacked those skills and attitudes that would maximize the benefit they could receive from the program. However accurate these assessments might be, the participants' side indicates a more complex situation.

[4] This is also in line with the INE GSEE's findings (INE GSEE 2016). To be fair, the study shows that the YEI schemes had strong points as well as weaknesses and that the participants' overall assessment was positive. But again, we should not lose sight of the fact that the expectations of the respondents were substantially low.

Reflecting on her own experience with instances of cynical behaviours from the 'beneficiaries' side, a counselling professional put it this way:

> 'From the beginning of the program, trainees face a very disorganized and uninspiring atmosphere without clear pathways at hand. That explains why they do not care that much and they are not that serious about it.'

Instrumentalism, constant adjustability and short-termism can be seen as conditions that both structure and are structured by the field. In such conditions, scepticism and even cynicism allow the liminal subjects to make sense of their uncertain, volatile, and transient environment.

The irrelevance of the practical training or/and the employers' indifference was stressed by most of the interviewees. We reported lots of placements in telecommunication companies, retirement homes, call centres and other business activities only loosely connected to tourism and this despite the efforts made by the program's facilitating body (INSETE) to attract big hotels as host companies. The limited involvement of enterprises that are active in core tourism activities was a major issue that had to do with two interrelated facts: First, the hesitation of the trainees to select workplaces such as hotels and restaurants, known for the harsh working conditions, particularly in high season. Second the reluctance of the biggest employers of the sector towards CVET traineeships (in contrast with Initial VET, a favourite pool of interns for hotel chains). The contradicting needs of the employers for specialized and at the same time multi-tasking, adaptive and easily re-skilled workers is also reflected here. Conversely the demand for and supply of traineeships in small enterprises of service economy was exceptionally higher as both the trainees and the employers committed themselves towards a flexible perception of job tasks and skills needed.

Even those trainees who were working in small hotels or tourist agencies, hardly considered their daily tasks as meaningful steps towards upskilling. PG had been trained as an electrician during his post-secondary education. He was placed as a receptionist in a small hotel near where he lives, but ultimately, he admitted that the five months spent there had not improved his skill set:

> Interviewer: Would you say that you had certain responsibilities there?
>
> Respondent: No, not at all.
>
> Interviewer: Did you learn something new?
>
> Respondent: No, I wouldn't say so. They didn't show me anything new, they didn't care much actually.

When PG was asked what would be the ideal job for him, he (unsurprisingly) echoed many of his peers: 'I don't have any preference. Whatever works'. The contingent character of both the selection of the thematic field (theoretical training) and the job matching practice was evident in other cases too.

GK obtained a qualification in nursing (post-secondary education). She explained that her desire for a placement in tourism had not been fulfilled because the intermediary intervened

and 'imposed' an irrelevant placement. When we asked GK about her overall experience within it, she expressed her disappointment for the training and her prospects in the labour market:

> 'This is not what I would like to do. On top of that, the training is inadequate and the work environment was very stressful and unpleasant. I see no future here (*she means in her placement*) particularly because many permanent employees have left since I came in.'

In line with previous research on liminality (Beech 2011) these quotes exemplify the emergence of a reflexive awareness of substitutability exhibited by most trainees in the final stages of the program.

TP was a graduate of secondary education. His frustrating experience with the program was expressed boldly as such:

> 'I learned nothing. In fact, I had to work my way through by myself since there was no direction. This company is using the program to employ a new trainee every six months and has no intention to hire anyone permanently.'

A similar experience was reported by NP when asked to reflect on his experience:

> 'I was not hired after finishing my traineeship […]. The companies are not looking for super-talented people that they can invest in and eventually hire. They seek only for people who will work for free [through the training scheme] so that they can get rid of them without ever offering any meaningful training.'

Commenting the incomprehensive on-the-job training and the uninspiring workplace environment, a counselling professional told us:

> 'Some companies broke the deal so to speak and did very different things with the participants than what they agreed to do in the beginning. That led many people to disappointment since they couldn't learn anything relevant.'

Nevertheless, the lack of direct links between theoretical training and traineeships should also be attributed to the structure of the needs in skills in the labour market. In the evaluation study conducted by INE GSEE, the interviewees (representatives of VET centres) justified the focus on horizontal skills at the expense of job-specific skills on the grounds of the increasing demand for a flexible workforce that is capable of performing multiple tasks (INE GSEE 2016: 115). The importance of developing multi-tasking employees who are prepared to perform the many different tasks that might arise within a sector with fluctuating sets of demands was also evident in our data, as the following quote by BK (trainee) indicates**:**

> 'I was employed in a hotel's playground because I like kids. I didn't expect to do other things, but I ended up actually doing everything. I even sewed some uniforms for the kids. I have no problem with that but that's not what I was supposed to do.'

TC was a graduate of secondary education who was trained in a chain hotel as a waitress. She narrated her own experience and unfulfilled career expectations as follows:

> 'I was working there like a normal employee doing many different things. At the end of the traineeship, I was not hired. But from what I saw in this hotel, I realized that businesses are exploiting the free labour that the program provides quite a bit. Most of my colleagues in the hotel were trainees either through the specific scheme or through other similar vocational programs.'

The participation in successive CVET programs blurs the participants' motives and renders them unable to envisage a structured and meaningful occupational trajectory or adopt a professional identity that could be attained through the acquired work experience:

> 'I feel very insecure. I was sort of promised to be employed by that company on a permanent basis, but that (promise) has happened again in the past during a previous traineeship, and in the end, I did not get any job. I also saw people leaving since I arrived at the company. I don't think they will keep me.' (Interview with SM)

The participant's self-concept as vulnerable and insecure was extended over time insofar as having completed successive traineeships the post-liminal condition was starting to fade away. As was indicated by many other informants, the trainees felt that a proper job would be the passport to an adult life in which critical steps such as moving out of the parents' house might be achieved.[5] The following quotes highlight the frustration generated from occupying this transient position between the 'family nest' and adulthood:

> 'I get very stressed when I think about the future, since the program will end in two months and then I might not find anything to do.' (Interview with GZ)

> 'I am 27 and I want to move on with my life, but I can't without a job. I feel like I am 15 years old since my family takes (financial) care of me and (because of that) I can't really see myself as an adult.' (Interview with SP)

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In Greece as well as in the rest of the EU, it has been widely acknowledged that economic crisis took much heavier toll on youth. In the light of what happened after the Eurocrisis few would deny that the effect of youth long-term unemployment is actually scarring as it is tightly associated with reduced life satisfaction, decreased optimism and increased possibility of being socially excluded (Eurofound 2017). The current Covid-19 crisis rekindles fears and anxieties about the position of youth in the labour market: according to the International Labor Organization's analysis on the impact of the pandemics, the second most vulnerable group (just after those with underlying health conditions and older people) consists of 'young persons, already facing higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, (who) are more vulnerable to falling labour demand, as witnessed during the global financial crisis' (ILO 2020).

The responses though to the threatening scenario of a rising youth unemployment are to some extent different than ten years ago. Active fiscal policy, employment retention measures,

[5] Other ethnographic studies on Greek unemployment have also shown the multiple implications of living with the parents as a kind of necessity (Kafe 2016).

expansion of social protection were simply out of the austerity-led agenda which prevailed both at the EU and the national level since 2008. This is not to suggest that the world of work in Europe or elsewhere has kept the danger of deregulation at bay. A combination of counter cyclical policies with accommodation of deregulatory arrangements in the labour market (such as suspension of collective agreements, or individualized work patterns with the use of ICT technologies) should be anticipated. In that respect active labour market policies and CVET will once again be promoted as a remedy against precarity. But what does the previous experience of CVET in crisis or post-crisis contexts taught us?

Other studies (Gialis et al. 2015, Grady 2017) have critically shown that in many cases active labour market policies that are introduced to combat unemployment through a better alignment between supply of, and demand for skills, contribute to – rather than work against – precarity. And yet, precarity in terms of employment status, job contract, position at the organization, or work conditions, is the most visible aspect of the experience of many new entries. There is also another landscape made of uncertainty, ambivalence and fluidity that concerns those young unemployed who initially perceived CVET as a transient condition in the pursuit of a permanent job and a meaning-making career. At the end of the day, for many of them what becomes permanent is their sense of being liminal. In the case of the training scheme analysed here, both the sense of being liminal and liminality as a structural position, are accentuated through the fostering of short-termism, lack of vision and instrumentalism: the 'beneficiary' seeks 'whatever works in general', the VET provider has pre-determined which skills and placements will be on offer, the host employer accommodates cheap labour giving nothing in return. Identifying such patterns in a field that involves an industry highly resilient to the economic crisis could be suggestive of the dynamics for the entire economy, even in a post-crisis context (or in the context of a new crisis).

As has been argued elsewhere, there is a strong element of deception that lurks in the policy rhetoric of deficit that frames the 'non-academic' young unemployed as low achievers with low expectations while it claims to offer them VET opportunities that lead to decent jobs through lifelong learning (Atkins 2010). The same rhetoric is observed in the Greek case of ALMPs of the period 2010-2020: it shifted the blame to those lacking the right skills; it promised them opportunities for lifelong improvement that would lead to better life chances; it delivered policy instruments that cater for lifelong, continuing and perhaps permanent drift at the lower end of wage distribution. Deliberately or not, most vocational training activities detached from the 'real world' of the workplace as they are, can hardly contribute to strong occupational identities, not to mention labour rights. This in turn could be associated with the absence of work ethic and commitment, namely with the absence of things that usually characterize strong work identities (Spyridakis 2012).

The claim voiced by many informants of this study that 'I would do anything' or 'I would search for any job' reflects lowered expectations at the entry level, but also demonstrates a specific vocational culture devoid of demands and aspirations for decent jobs, at least for the foreseeable future. This is the trap of liminality in the making, as discussed above. Without underestimating the significance of agency and other related factors, our ethnographic research

indicates that what happened from the moment that the trainees entered the field was mainly channelling them into a future of alternating low-paid, low-skill work and spells of unemployment, the so-called 'revolving door' cycle (Spyridakis 2012). Evaluation studies on CVET programs that have been implemented as part of YEI showed that the 'revolving door' was by far the most observed outcome almost one year after the program's end. We can now imagine how the official institutional narrative of deficit adopted by the Ministry of Labour along with the disparaging practices of the host employers, can lead a young unemployed with a working-class background (not to mention youth living in rural and remote areas) to affirm that he/she is not good enough for something better than the 'revolving door'.[6]

The experiences of the selected group of CVET trainees in tourism offered us a chance to examine liminality in the intersection of its different dimensions. At the individual and the group level we reconstructed the insecure and transient aspects of being in-between unemployment and labour market, between the promise of a meaningful, solid, and secure career path and the preparation for being constantly adjustable, mobile and flexible. For a period of five months the young unemployed found themselves in the threshold space of CVET: a space where the learners are encouraged to be separated from their previous condition (be it unemployment, or a less desired job) through the acquisition of skills that most probably will be obsolete after some years when the need for a new training will recur. Tourism industry has also been seen as an arena of individual and group liminality where migration/mobility of labour, high displacement rates, and flexibilisation of work are widely shared (Underthun 2015). In the case of the specific training scheme examined here, the individual and group acts of transition took place in a broader context of changing institutional and political arrangements as a result of the deep-seated Greek crisis.

Societal changes should also be considered here as an additional dimension of liminality, particularly as regards its transformational connotations. For instance, the fact that tourism proved to be resilient in terms of job growth made the terrain of the discourses on deindustrialization more contested than ever: those adhered to the old slogan 'we won't be the Europe's waiters' read the country's tourist development as another lost opportunity for directing national efforts towards reindustrialization and a knowledge-driven economy, while others see tourism as the vehicle to prosperity (Papachelas 2020). Both views assume that Greek economy and society are in a new transitory state, which subsumes the previous one.

To conclude, liminality reflects a more complex sense of ambivalence than that implied by other neighbouring semantic fields, such as precarity, or precariousness. Most importantly it enables a better understanding of those emplaced subjectivities that face a potential entrapment in permanent or at least chronic liminal conditions. And although liminality can encourage creativity and innovation (inasmuch as anxiety and powerlessness), the vision of a permanent state of uncertainty and 'in-betweeness' leaves room mainly for unsettling feelings and frustration (Bamber et al. 2017). In this respect learning to be liminal through CVET could be translated into coping strategies for bearing and digesting the feeling of being *neither-X-nor-*

[6] According to another evaluation study on similar training schemes in Greece, the 'beneficiaries' considered themselves 'invisible employees', which is also telling (Karantinos et al. 2014).

Y or of being *both-X-and-Y*, which also manifests radical dislocation. The disrupted sense of self and place displayed by trainees when narrating their uncertainties is rather indicative of the unsettling identity changes reported in other studies of professional training as well (Procoli 2004b).

Our analysis highlighted the significant gap between the optimism expressed in the beginning of the program and the disappointment found in later stages which in turn showcases how the informants' experiences from the field shaped and re-shaped their expectations. By making liminality a new normality these programs prepare young people to be constantly adjustable in precarious and ever-changing contexts. Therefore, the formative experience of such training programs gives birth to new rules and structures which extend liminality over time and challenge the temporary nature assumed by previous accounts.

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Economy, Morality and Customary Legitimacy in the Greek Countryside: An Informal View of the Greek Crisis[1]

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In the rural area of Agrinio, in Western Greece, monuments and infrastructures, along with the narratives of ordinary people, reveal the deep connection of the area with the cultivation of tobacco. Although the European Union's agricultural policy, as implemented by the Greek governments, resulted in the termination of local tobacco production in 2006, the uncertainty that was generated by the economic crisis led people to turn, once again, to tobacco farming. The economic crisis incapacitated the Greek economy and many tobacco farmers, even today, prefer to sell their product without any intermediation and involvement from the state – notably the taxes it imposes. Skipping the need for middlemen between the growers and tobacco-industries, households today produce tobacco and create family-based networks to market their product and secure their income. Research conducted from 2015 to 2017 indicates that such transactions require a large socio-culturally informed consensus regarding the practices of informality. Conflicts can emerge between what is officially considered 'legal' and what ordinary people would customarily consider legitimate. Informality may be addressed as a potentially normative agency, through which ordinary people moderate economic uncertainty and implement their conceptualizations on morality and legitimacy.
Keywords: Tobacco, legitimacy, economic crisis, morality, Western Greece.

Introduction

Since 2010, the people of Agrinio and its surrounding areas, as was also the case everywhere in the country of Greece, have been facing unexpected changes in their daily lives. Back then, the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched a 110-billion-Euro bailout loan to rescue Greece from sovereign default, conditional upon the implementation of austerity measures, structural reforms and privatization of State assets. In the next years, two more bailout programs would follow (Krugman 2015). As a result, a neo-liberal economic agenda of austerity was implemented by the Greek government, acting on the mandates of the European Union (EU). Amongst other things, such impositions reduced both agricultural subsidies and the welfare State. Therefore, the term 'Greek Crisis' also refers to the rising unemployment, the diminution of income and the decomposition of the welfare State. In this unstable socio-political context, the struggle of ordinary people to avoid unemployment, impoverishment and secure their means for self-preservation, brought the emergence of informality (Hart 1973, Ledeneva 2018) within a set of unreported economic practices. As a result of the ensuing unemployment and/or diminution of income, unlicensed tobacco growing on a household level became a common part-time occupation for the population of the region. The concomitant heavy taxation imposed on cigarettes by the Greek State led, in turn, to the high demand for raw tobacco and its trafficking from the fields to Athens and other big cities.

The rural way of life is defined by an unobtrusive and unseen existence. This intensifies during crises, as it underlines many customarily established practices, justifications and

[1] I wish thank James Rosbrook-Thompson, Italo Pardo, and the Board of *Urbanities* for their comments on a previous draft of this article.

discourses affecting the social activity of rural populations. Such practices rarely leave a structural imprint, but denying their significance would mean to restore the relations of power they oppose (Scott 1990). What follows aims to examine how informal and formal market moralities intertwine in an environment of crisis and how legitimacy is defined by official law as much as by informal, yet socially valid, norms and institutions. This discussion commences with a presentation of the context in which the tobacco growers practice informality.

Growing to Succeed

The main informally produced local commodity is *Tsembeli*, a tobacco crop cultivated in the area for over 150 years. Its cultivation was directly associated with important aspects of social life, notably class consciousness[2] and the integration of some 2,500 refugees from Asia Minor, following the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922.[3] Considered both a resource and a local identity-defining symbol, tobacco has influenced the region's culture so significantly that Agrinio is often called 'tobacco-town'. Besides, in the past, the product was integral to the national economy. After the Second World War, and particularly between 1960 and 1980, the significance of tobacco exports as a revenue source for the Greek State resulted in the formulation of a protective framework for tobacco farmers. Until the beginning of the 21st century, tobacco farming was an occupation that carried a linear understanding of life, an understanding dominated by aspirations of seamless improvement of both family and communal life.[4] Women and children played a crucial role in every stage of production.

This condition started to change in the 1990s. Following the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Greek governments changed the production model of tobacco once and for all. As a consequence, the whole rural economy — including tobacco cultivation — moved from the family farm system to contract farming, wherein farmers were treated as agents, embedded in the free market and 'free' of state intervention.[5] Therefore, they had to negotiate the quantity,

[2] Tobacco-workers created the first trade-unions, attempting to improve their living standards. Clashes between them and police forces, or even the army, were frequent and violent. In August 1926, a pregnant tobacco-worker, a refugee herself, was killed and became the symbol of the workers' struggles in the region.

[3] '1.5 million refugees who left Turkey and settled in Greece as a result of the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922 and the subsequent Greco-Turkish exchange of populations of 1923 — known in Greece as "the Asia Minor Disaster" — brought about not only a major demographic change but also a social transformation in Greece, especially because the influx represented a quarter of Greece's indigenous population' (Kitroeff 2012: 229).

[4] Although farmers have rarely realized it, tobacco-growing has been overlong their link to the surrounding, national — and global — economic and political activity. In a different social and economic environment, tobacco-producers in Kentucky are facing similar problems due to the reduction of the production and the deregulation of the tobacco-market. Ann Kingsolver (2011) describes them as disappointed and unwilling to adapt to the new reality which is marked by the absence of tobacco.

[5] Contract farming is an alternative model which provides that, by contracting out production to smallholders, agribusinesses avoid having to acquire land, avoid the problems of displacement, and allegedly create 'win-win' outcomes for local communities and private investors. Nevertheless, in this

quality and price of tobacco as 'independent' businessmen. However, they had to deal with powerful tobacco-trading companies, notably Philip Morris, and with (similarly unregulated) brokers, who imposed their terms aiming to profit.

Subsidy cuts, coupled with the expropriation of tobacco-growing licenses originally provided by the state, resulted in the production of tobacco diminishing, as the Common Agricultural Policy stipulated. Data from the year 2004 compiled by the Hellenic Statistical Authority revealed that some 14,572 families in the region abandoned the cultivation of *tsembeli*. From 1997 to 2004, in more mountainous areas, the decline affected 96.2% of the people. Until then, approximately 2,500 families had been engaged with the processing and trade of tobacco (Kamberis 2016). By 2006, people were already talking about 'the end of tobacco' in the area of Agrinio. Life had to go on, but the attempts of cultivating different crops required investment of valuable resources which, in many instances, failed due to insufficient preparation and know-how. Consequently, the farmers were left with no viable solution against the crisis and were facing social marginalization.

For obvious reasons, people in deprived rural areas resorted to the practices of the informal economy (Matsaganis and Flevotomou 2010). The unemployment and poverty that came to the fore collided with past expectations, formed in conditions of prosperity and economic growth. Hence, the experience that followed varied, depending on the person, the family and — to some extent — the neighbourhood. Ethnographic data demonstrates how tobacco-growers revised their perceptions of the economy as the expectation of perpetual economic growth proved to be delusionary. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that, in the current economic circumstances, many of these people, traditionally identified as tobacco-growers, turned to what 'they have always been doing', as an interlocutor said. Making use of connections that they had established during the times of household farming, they resorted, once again, to the cultivation of tobacco. However, in order to do so, they had to do business within an 'informal/grey' economy, within which they took the risk of undeclared cultivation and trading of tobacco. In such socio-economic context, as Pardo put it (1996: 20), ordinary people are prompted to operate in the 'grey area' between 'legality' and 'illegality', without becoming or viewing themselves as 'real criminals'. Social acceptance and participation in informal markets indicate the configurations of a large local (even national) consensus.

Operating on the margins of the law has become a familiar scenario to these people. In Greece, the informal economy represents approximately one-third of the overall economic activity (Schneider et al. 2010). This phenomenon, best termed 'unreported farming', constitutes 53% of the total agricultural production (Vlachos et al. 2016). Agrinio locals have engaged in this form of production, selling their tobacco in periods of crises since the beginning of the 20th century. This culture of informality is embedded in the collective memory; it is constantly revalidated in narratives and emerges in response to the popular demand for social justice and dignity. Opting for this informal practice is rationalized as a subsistence technique,

model, smallholders carry a disproportionate share of production and market risks (Adams et al. 2018, Hall et al. 2017).

yet it presents several moral and cultural particularities which influence the economic, social and political context. With the farmers drawing from the experience of previous regarding (informal) modalities of dealing with crises, all cultivable plots in the region are viewed as tobacco fields — *kapnochórafa*. This representation plays a pivotal role in dictating particular strategies which collectively aim to mitigate adversities. Collective memory demarcates the use of space, consolidates spatial interrelations and challenges the heterogeneity of the present. Consequently, the act of tobacco-growing is treated as a cultural and symbolic creation, a constant re-validation, through various agents' interaction.

Informal Encounters

Informal economy, also known as 'underground economy', 'shadow economy', 'parallel economy', 'grey economy' or 'unofficial economy', is usually considered marginal to the modern, capitalist and formal economy (Hart 1973). However, the idea that the two spheres of economic activity, formal and informal, are totally separated has been criticized as a rather narrow one (Pardo 1996). Instead, scholars have stressed the need to examine the dialectic between the two poles, scrutinizing the construction and contestation of norms, legalities and values in empirical cases, seeking 'credible answers', which 'can only be inspired by the in-depth knowledge of the reality on the ground' (Pardo and Prato 2018: 3; see also Pardo 2004, Pardo and Prato 2017). In recent years, studies on informality have broadened their geographical scope, to the extent that informality is considered to be present, although in different forms, in both the Global North and Global South (Ledeneva 2018, Williams et al. 2017) and has been recognized as a powerful analytical tool for the studying of societies in transition (Spyridakis 2013, Rakopoulos 2014, Knight 2015, Polese et al. 2015). Informal activities, equated in some cases with illegality, are deeply rooted in locally informed, customary norms adopted by communities. Nevertheless, research on the rural informal economy has not yet been given the full attention it merits (Conroy 2013, Weng 2015).

In our case, the term 'informality' describes off-the-books tobacco farming and selling. This particular type of tax evasion is socially accepted and morally legitimized. Hence, a moral economy emerges as the result of collective representations coupled with the affected social groups' demand for social justice and dignity.[6] The notion of moral economy (Thompson 1971, Scott 1976) is usually employed to explain social responses to unfair policies, such as implementing austerity measures during and in the aftermath of a sovereign debt crisis (Kofti 2016). Emphasis on the 'moral' (Fassin 2009, 2012) and 'economy' (Hann and Hart 2009, Langegger 2016) has been successfully utilized to anatomize informal practices which emerge as economic breaches in times of social rupture. Some have suggested that the invocation of morality arises from the demand for 'everyone's survival' and originates from the communal ideal where all community members must be secured against unexpected, externally imposed turbulences and threatening situations (Nitsiakos 2016).

[6] Narotzky (2016) notes that moral economy has become a powerful analytical tool that can be applied in different contexts. For a comprehensive overview of the term 'moral economy', see Götz 2015.

In anthropological inquiry, crises are often considered as 'breaches' in the state of being (Bear 2015, Bryant 2016; Knight 2015). However, as Powers and Rakopoulos (2019) stress, 'austerity's history needs to be narrated, seeing crisis as longue durée' (see also Blyth 2013). Hence, following Benjamin's (1999: 248) insight, that 'the state of emergency is not the exception but the rule', seems more appropriate than considering crisis as an exceptional situation (Agamben 2008). Departing from an understanding of crisis as a momentary and particularized phenomenon helps us better understand and interpret how people cope not *through* crisis but *in* crisis (Vigh 2008).

The tobacco farmers of our study experience a crisis marked by the implementation of austerity (Rakopoulos 2018), coupled with CAP's free-market policies. This ends in uncertainty, which in turn compels diversification and the adoption of short-term, opportunistic solutions.[7] Simultaneously, the state and its apparatus have proven to be incompetent –or unwilling– to impose rules regulating the situation in a balanced and fair way. In this view, as Pardo put it, legitimacy is a highly contested concept as, 'actions that are ordinarily undertaken at grassroots level and that are not always strictly legal may enjoy legitimacy in the eye of the actors and their significant others because they are morally consistent with their value system' (Pardo 2018: 57; see also Pardo 2000; Pardo and Prato 2018) and new forms of it have been produced, as actors attempt to define notions of justice, righteousness or illicitness.[8]

This raises a series of issues concerning people's relations with the State in moments of crisis. It requires taking into account the rupture of the existing social contract, as tobacco farmers consciously and actively turn their backs on tax-paying and reinvent more familiar ways of economic organization and social solidarity. At the same time, as large parts of the Greek people see informality as the only way out from deprivation and exclusion, official bureaucrats promote their own interpretations of belonging, enforcing an image of a well-organized –but increasingly authoritarian– State. Yet, at the end of the day, informality seems to be useful as an equilibrium point to both –common people and State officials alike– in order to avoid vulnerability and social unrest. The cultural affluence and broad social consent that such behaviours invoke is representative of a stance with a clear political message.

Unlike other instances (for instance, the production and circulation of drugs in Latin America or elsewhere), tobacco growing in Greece is not illegal as long as there is a contract with a tobacco company. During the 20th century, its production was rigorously (and entirely) regulated by the Greek state. At times, the revenue from tobacco exports represented half of the state's GDP. Contrary to other forms of tax evasion, tobacco must be cultivated in open fields, transported and sold and, of course, smoked. The cultural background of tobacco cultivation in the region makes it easy to justify its informal production. In addition, the economic crisis renders this informal economy socially acceptable and morally meaningful.

[7] Knight studies the 'irrational' and opportunistic investment of valuable resources in renewable energy programs, especially photovoltaics, in Thessaly, Central Greece, during the crisis (Knight 2015).
[8] On the relationship between legal, illegal and semi-legal, and on legality and legitimacy, see Pardo 2000.

The following analysis is based on research findings from 2015 to 2017. Given the informal core of the economic activity in question, participant observation in the villages was necessary to develop trust relationships – a key value to the research process. Familiarity with community events, such as weddings or annual fiestas, was essential. Snowball sampling gave access to family circles and economic networks in and around Agrinio. In sum, such occasions and resources enabled the researcher to understand the cultural, economic and political specificities of the social setting conditioning the practice of informality. Research reveals that the informal production of tobacco in the region has broader ramifications with diverse impact on political behaviours, economic practices and cultural repertoires.

Official Law vs Customary Legitimacy?

An informant said:

> 'They have driven us here. That's why we do such things. If 'they' were right, we wouldn't be starving. 'They' are more illegal than we are and that's why we're acting like this!'

According to Greek law,[9] tobacco cultivation must be reported to the state. Producers have to sign a contract with a tobacco-trading company (notably, Philip Morris) and report the precise location of their plantation to the State. Tobacco's importance as a source of revenue for the Greek state (85% of the price of a pack of cigarettes is tax), along with the interests of powerful economic agents, creates tensions. Selling raw tobacco may be punished by fines, seizures, even imprisonment, depending on the intercepted amounts. That said, no penalty has ever been imposed in Agrinio for unreported tobacco growing. The locally symbolic meaning of tobacco seems to form a space where rules become flexible. Archival research in the newspapers and court records as well as oral history reveal that producing and selling undeclared tobacco has been an effective strategy in similar circumstances and periods of crises since the beginning of the 20th century. Restoring the practice of family production seems to be the 'easiest way' to cope with the challenges of labour deregulation and social marginalization, as it does not imply a retreat from the market to a subsistence economy but represents a way to continue participating in it.

'We've always grown tobacco! And we keep on growing it now, with the crisis!' In this sense, producers choose to turn to a past that was not easy, but offered enough security for managing hardships.

Contrary to previous theorizations of rural space, recent studies have begun to treat it as a field of continuous change and dynamic diversification. According to such reflections, resilience and persistence characterize the countryside and its people, along with their ability to cope by diversifying their livelihood.[10] However, what has rarely been studied is their influence

[9] Ministerial Decision No 593/49825/14-04-2014.

[10] For an account of production-diversifying strategies deployed in rural Greece and their outcomes over the last years, see Kasimis and Papadopoulos 2013.

in the discourse on the legality-illegality continuum,[11] as they struggle to insure themselves against dire economic conjunctures. It should not come as a surprise to mention that there are several activities which, although considered as formally illicit, are nonetheless popular throughout — (at least) in the Greek countryside. Such activities involve the informal employment (mostly of immigrants) in the plantations, poaching or illicit logging. In June 2015, during a discussion with a group of tobacco-growers in a village near Agrinio, one of them stated:

> 'We are told not to grow tobacco yet we risk having trouble with the police. But if my children are starving and I can't feed them, I'll grow it anyway. This is above the law!'

The rest of them nod in agreement and clink their raised glasses in a toast. These words offer a comprehensive outline of how the locals consciously decided, in 2011, to move the boundaries between formal and informal. As Pardo and Prato put it, 'Across society people do not necessarily equate what is moral to what is legal (…) they often clearly separate the legal from the legitimate' (2018: 7). Thus, legality is not merely a mesh of rules and obligations, it is something that emerges through practices and ideologies, as a composition of interacting political, economic and cultural values, producing what people consider as legitimate. There is not a 'natural' line separating law from unlawfulness. The border is imaginary. As conceptions change, so do borders (Nordstrom 2007: 85). What is interesting is to examine how people think about and exploit the law, often according to its spirit, but sometimes against it. Informal tobacco-growers emphasize the acceptability of growing and selling tobacco, claiming that this practice allows them to survive in an unjust and corrupted socio-economic environment. In such a way, it seems that tobacco-growers are operating 'on the margins' from the point of view of the State, but 'acting within the norm', according to the local customs and values (Roitman 2005: 21).

Among the growers and traders, any definition of the law is constantly disputed and reshaped. It is pointed that understanding the importance of notions such as 'right', 'morality' or 'value' in everyday life reveals the way power relations are forged (Pardo 1996, 2000; Parry 1989). While the State and the tobacco industry attempt to enforce their conceptualizations, farmers try to mitigate inequality by redefining the same words with competing meanings. The result is liquidity; any definition is contextual. Thus, the same farmers who, during a conversation, insist that, 'We're not doing anything illegal', might as well later end up saying: 'They brought us to a point where we have to become outlaws to survive'.

[11] Alternative conceptualizations of law, especially in rural areas, are generally understudied in Greece. However, some important studies and in-depth analyses have made the development of an essential theoretical framework possible. See in particular Herzfeld 1985.

Tobacco's Free (?) Market

An informant said:

> 'I would have loved to be protected by the State. I hear, from a cousin I have in Sweden, that there's an unemployment benefit there of 1,000 Euros per month. And much more… But such things don't exist here. So, I'll just grow some tobacco to sell. This way I feel free. I don't have the State, nor any company as my partner. I'm my own boss!'

The notion of the market is crucial to the examination of the aforementioned practices. Informal tobacco-growers often refer to their practice as '*free-selling*' or just '*selling*', juxtaposing this trade with '*giving*' the tobacco to a cigarette company. By the use of the term 'free', they do not identify with the 'free market' persistently promoted over the last decade by international organizations and Greek governments. However, the argument in both perceptions is (ironically) the same. Being aware of the State's gradual retreat from any regulatory role, farmers create a 'grey' market, non-existent in official statistics and regulated by custom, as well as by the laws of supply and demand. The collapse of the social welfare system during the present economic crisis amplified the 'legitimacy' of this change. Thus, the growers might seem as accepting neoliberal imperatives but interpreting them in a discretionary manner. This requires considering, as Ong has noted, the notion of neoliberalism, 'not as a fixed set of attributes with predetermined outcomes, but as a logic of governing that migrates and is selectively taken up in diverse political contexts' (Ong 2006: 3).

Informal economies are often perfect manifestations of the supply/demand principle and in the context of market fundamentalism there has been a gradual erasure of the limits between the informal and the illegal, regulation and irregularity, order and organized lawlessness (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006: 5). Of course, 'great profit is to be made in the interstices between legitimate and illegitimate commerce, between the formal and underground vectors' (Mbebe 2001: 73). It is thus interesting to examine the rivalry among informal tobacco-growers. Such rivalry can be explained as an adaptation to free-market principles.

Nevertheless, it may be more interesting to focus on what might cause the deprecation of such practices within the milieu of tobacco-growers and how is it justified on a moral basis. Customarily, the identity of the tobacco-grower comes with a feeling of self-worth in the community (Spyridakis 2010). The word for this situation is *nikokyris*; that is, a person dedicated to his family's well-being. Simultaneously, buying informally produced tobacco is also socially acceptable, because fellow farmers are supported. But when the objectives change and profit replaces decency, farmers instinctively realize the critical disruption of the moral base of their activity. This deviation is instinctively considered dangerous as it can dissolve the moral superiority of informal trade and therefore cannot be tolerated. When one grows and sells tobacco simply aiming to maximize profit, the moral character of the activity is lost and all that remains is greed. Of course, there are also more practical reasons: in a limited market, as provincial towns usually are, buyers are also limited. When a producer claims a disproportionate 'piece of the pie', his behaviour is stigmatized as immoral and corrupt. Also,

there is a well-founded practical fear that, if the situation spiralled out of proportion, state mechanisms would tighten their surveillance, jeopardizing this crucial source of income.

Tobacco farmers sell their product for a price that ranges between 15-40 Euros per kilo. The official price offered by tobacco companies is no higher than 3.5 Euros per kilo. The price depends on the distance between the site of production and the site of selling. Generally, it is lower if the tobacco is bought near Agrinio and goes up far away from the city. A four-member family can, in a good year, produce up to a ton of dry tobacco. The hardest part is building a network of potential sellers and buyers. Only if this precondition is fulfilled can a tobacco-grower feel safe. For such a network to be created, a farmer must take advantage of any family and/or friendly relations with people who live and work outside the community borders. Big cities and remote places are their main goals.[12] As a tobacco farmer said:

> 'The hardest part is finding buyers. You need a 'chain' of supply. How could someone in Crete know that you're selling? So, you need help. I have a cousin who lives in Athens and helps me find buyers. So it is… Family first!'

The informal production and circulation of tobacco, although embedded in the game of supply and demand, is mostly based on the non-productive relations within the family or the local community. Therefore, it utilizes various 'helpers' — from taxi or bus drivers, to university students, people who visit regularly and maintain social bonds (usually familial) but live or work away from the villages. Usually, a farmer sells a few kilos of tobacco which these transporters aim to re-sell for a small profit of their own. The household is the production reference unit. If the household's network includes members in diverse line of professions, with a concomitant number of connections, even better. As Spyridakis, studying a different, but similar context observes, 'family networks play a crucial part in ensuring the terms of social reproduction, locally' (2010: 250).

In this connection, the family, as the basic unit of production in rural Greece, has been characterized by its ability to modify production, consumption and work. In essence it always attempted to achieve subsistence within the market economy without being completely embedded in it. Historically, the Greek family tended to adopt differentiated livelihood strategies (Kasimis and Papadopoulos 2013). A core feature of the Greek rural society is its historical openness and interconnection with urban centres.[13] In the present case, the provincial town of Agrinio serves as the main market where raw tobacco, among other goods, is informally merchandised. In fact, the notion of a supposedly static 'traditional' rurality is simply inappropriate here. The countryside is not to be considered as isolated or 'backward' regarding

[12] An in-depth analysis of the term 'network' and its significance to anthropological thought is not in the scope of this article. However, as Narotzky proposes: 'The two fundamental properties of networks are multiple interconnections and chain reactions. Moreover, it is interesting to note two ideas that accompany the network concept: strategies and transactional social relations' (1997: 75).

[13] For further analysis on the historical interconnection between rural and urban areas in Greece, see Damianakos et al. 1997 [in Greek].

social transformations but as a part and parcel of an interwoven network within which the city is actively included.[14]

People participating in the informal market seem to be fully aware of the moral concepts thriving in this kind of environment, such as rivalry, risk, even greed (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006, Ledeneva 2018). However, informality allows them to attempt the regulation of such – morally questionable– aspects of the economic activity, which threaten to dissolve social order. From their point of view, such a strategy highlights, on the one hand, the State's inability to provide a safe socio-economic environment, and, on the other, their independence and their ability to cope without committing to State policies (Theodossopoulos 2013). In this sense, informality is a normative agency, aiming to regulate the economic activity, to protect from economic marginalization and to secure a livelihood.

Crisis and a Moral Economy

An informant declared:

> 'It's all right, what they are doing. Anybody can see they're poor. And, at the bottom line, they're just helping other poor people who, otherwise, couldn't even afford their cigarettes. What if it's illegal? Is this actually unlawful? How about those people 'above'? Are they lawful?'

In a situation of imperfect competition, people draw, often successfully, from socially shared moral values, achieving self-improvement and a rational use of resources (Hart 2000; Graeber 2011). The particular environment of chronic crisis and severe austerity in which rural informality thrives, calls for a connection with the broader crisis-dominated economic activity. The main factor which allows, if not imposes, the shift in what is considered legitimate is the economic crisis – a result of both the Greek State's counter-productive character and the wider restructurings of global capitalism. Both these factors enable the exploitation of sovereign debt as leverage for the implementation of neo-liberal policies (Blyth 2013, Graeber 2011). The word 'crisis' describes not just a time of great significance, but also a prolonged period of economic dislocation, with severe and unpredicted consequences (Roitman 2014). Over the last decade, severe cuts in public spending were imposed in Greece; schools were suspended, roads poorly maintained, while pensions and benefits were curtailed. The public health system inevitably deteriorated and provoked wry comments of dismay such as: 'Sure, there is a hospital, but there are no doctors in it!' As Spyridakis notes, 'Vulnerable people are not just found in the middle of the complex relation between the local and the global but they also experience its devastating effects on structural adjustment programs entailing increased poverty and restrictions on public spending' (2018: 4).

People feel this degradation goes together with the sense that the State has abandoned the rural sector. The State cannot assure the rural population of any kind of future economic perspectives. In the previous forty years, mostly after the accession of Greece into the European

[14] Raymond Williams' sharp analysis (1973), and his arguments on the need to consider the country as inextricably related to the city, remain topical.

Union, the Greek State adopted a paternalistic role towards the countryside, through the distribution of EU funds. In medium-size cities like Agrinio, the welfare State — similar to what Ginsborg observed for Southern Italy — took the form of direct cash transfers to families rather than public services (2001: 4). A significant part of such beneficences — usually in the form of subsidies, allowances, or benefits — were, however, given under false pretences: invalidity pensions were awarded to people whose health was excellent; subsidies were given to 'farmers' who performed no actual agricultural activity. The politicians, in search of legitimacy (and votes), deliberately built relationships based on clientelism between the country's centre and its periphery, trading state subsidies for electoral loyalty. As a result, household spending margins and the local markets were relatively buoyant. Public services operated but never to their full potential. Such attitudes and State practices justified tax evasion in the eyes of many, as they harboured the belief that any taxes collected would not be really allocated to the welfare of the deserving, but to the pockets of the undeserving.

In this moral context, tobacco has been a commodity that all Greek governments saw as a great source of revenue. Considered a 'luxury product', it has also been the subject of consecutive taxation during the crisis, with its price skyrocketing between 2009 and 2015 with a 58% of tax increase. Therefore, it comes as no surprise to discover a broad consensus among the locals regarding its illegal trade. Informal tobacco-growing and trading is not only tolerated but it is widely accepted and even actively supported. As E.P. Thompson (1971) has argued, such a consensus is grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor.

The primary concern for tobacco growers appears to be the justification of their involvement in this informal activity. As might be expected, the reality of poverty is a fundamental argument used to justify such practices; poverty, in fact, makes the informal activity in question a respectable response. They emphasize on their low income from tobacco and their –generally insecure– livelihood, which underpin their claim that, in the absence of this resource, subsistence would be impossible.

Social scientists studying rural populations have suggested that the constant invocation of the demand for 'everyone's survival' originates from the communal ideal wherein all community members must be safe-guarded against unexpected, externally imposed turbulences and threatening situations.[15] Tobacco's symbolic power in Agrinio drives that dominant and perpetuating perception that farmers produce a harmless and therefore legitimate commodity. They fully understand the negotiating stance they obtain, due to the broad acceptance of such arguments. They strategically choose to attach moral weight to their practice, aiming to make it locally recognized as legitimate.

[15] Nitsiakos (2016) proposes the study of 'traditional' forms of reciprocity and stresses their potential functionality in revealing the long-term cultural and economic reality of rural societies.

Conclusions

Tobacco-growers have realized that the applicable law serves the production and perpetuation of injustice. From their perspective, the law has never accomplished its proclaimed function: to ensure justice and equality. Farmers suspect the systematic use of law by ruling elites (which are represented, in their accounts by the word 'they'), as a weapon to elicit their consent and ultimately marginalize them. Instead of limiting the interests of strong actors (political or economic) and allowing weaker ones to seek the help of the law to assert their rights, as in its traditional and highly positive justification, the rule of law becomes an agency of oppressive social processes, abandoning its function, as a shield for the weak and is transformed into a sword in the hands of the strong (Mattei and Nader 2008: 55).

Reacting to this situation, the former instinctively move towards an alternative interpretation of the dominant narrative and turn to the informal 'grey' economy. This choice offers a foundation upon which a broad consensus is built. The latter is soon equated with a legitimizing tolerance, which is both openly expressed and morally justified. This view reveals an interesting picture where farmers do not appear as passive puppets in the hands of superior, fate-controlling powers, but as active agents, who shape socially and culturally valid structures to define (more than) their livelihood.

Appropriation of fundamental neoliberal imperatives, like the trust in free-market and rivalry, means that informal tobacco-growers understand the terms of the ongoing (before and during the economic crisis) social and economic shift. However, their choice to defy State law informs their detachment and desire to avoid economic marginalization. They remain in a threshold where, under the pressure of vital necessities, they act, not as ideologists but as farmers. They settle somewhere in the middle, by accepting an opportunistic strategy even if it is not entirely pleasant to their respective moralities. The pragmatism that informs such choices may be the cause of their disinterest towards collective, organized action. In this manner, control over a familiar resource allows them to situate themselves in a space where subsistence income is ensured, relatively free of any regulatory surveillance.

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Inequalities, Vulnerability and Precarity among Youth in Greece: The Case of NEETs[1]

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Undoubtedly, the prolonged, economic recession in the European Union had a major impact on both the labour market and the social fabric of the EU. The sharp increase in unemployment rates of all age groups, mainly in young people and other vulnerable social groups, such as NEETs, namely young people (aged 15-24) Not in Education, Employment or Training, had a clear effect on the deterioration of their life course and the rise of their degree of precarity, increasing the risk of poverty or social exclusion, especially, in the European South, as in Greece. The paper deals with the state of play regarding young people, and especially NEETs in both the EU and Greece. It initially focuses on the definitional issues and the theoretical insights concerning the socially vulnerable group of NEETs and the potential parameters of ending up a NEET. Further, the paper aims at bringing to the fore the regional dimension of the issue and focusing on the relation between youth unemployment and NEET rates. Additionally, based on a recent EEA-funded large-scale Project entitled 'NEETs2' (EEA Grants/GR07-3757), it proceeds to the analysis of some of the key quantitative and qualitative findings regarding the impact of the multi-parametric economic recession on NEETs' and, in general, Youth's employability and life course in Greece, including evidence-based insights on their survival strategies and public trust.
Keywords: NEETs, youth, inequalities, vulnerability, Greece.

Inequalities, Social Vulnerability and NEETs: Definitional Issues and Theoretical Insights

NEETs, both as a term and as a socially vulnerable group, is neither a newly introduced social phenomenon nor a newly introduced concept in the public sphere. The NEETs issue has been already high in the political and theoretical agenda for about two decades influenced by the continuous and abrupt changes in the socio-economic context at international, European and national level.

Specifically, at the European level, in most countries, the term 'NEET' is defined, as 'young people, aged 15-24, who are not in employment, education or training' (Eurofound 2012: 20); that is, they are absent from both the labour market and the key social institutions

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(Papadakis et al. 2017a). It is worth mentioning that 'while the youth unemployment rate refers just to the economically active members of the population who were not able to find a job' (Eurofound 2012: 23), the NEET indicator corresponds to 'young people aged 15 to 24 who meet the following two conditions: (a) they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the International Labour Organisation definition) and (b) they have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. Data are expressed as a percentage of the total population in the same age group and sex, excluding the respondents who have not answered the question 'participation to education and training'' (Eurostat 2021a). Additionally, in the OECD database, the age group of NEETs is extended to young people aged 29 years (aged 15-29 years) (OECD 2013), while in Asia, specifically in Japan, the term NEETs refers to youth aged 15-34 years (OECD 2008 as cited in Eurofound 2012).

However, regardless the age groups in which NEETs population has been categorized by the various International and European institutions, this social category is characterized by social vulnerability, insecurity and a high risk of poverty and social exclusion (Papadakis et al. 2017b). In particular, 'the term NEET was formally introduced at the political level in the UK in the late 1990s (more specifically, in 1999), in response to the need for the development/formation of an indicator to capture people aged 16-18 who were not in education, employment or training' (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999 as cited in Eurofound: 20; Drakaki et al. 2014: 242), since a high percentage of young people from 16 to 18 years old were not allowed to have access to unemployment benefits, due to the change in the status of unemployed benefits in the United Kingdom at that time (Furlong 2006 as cited in Inui 2009, Furlong 2007 as cited in Eurofound 2012). Especially, the interest for young people not in employment, education or training turned to policy discourse officially, when the term NEET was first introduced in a policy document, namely the government report 'Bridging the Gap' in the UK. The aim of this report was the study of NEETs in terms of the intensity and extent of phenomenon and the parameters that lead to these young people's social vulnerability, as well as to investigate the heterogeneity among their sub-groups in order to address NEETs phenomenon by proposing policy actions (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). It is worth mentioning that in Europe the term was firstly associated with early school leavers, aiming at reducing the high percentages of people who leave early education and training systems, as well as linking with the target setting by the Lisbon Strategy via the 'Education and Training 2010' Work Programme (Commission of the European Communities 2005, European Commission 2018). However, it seems that there is still a heterogeneity among NEETs population (Papadakis at al. 2015), as according to Eurofound report (2012), NEETs in Europe may be classified in five main sub-categories:

- 'the conventionally unemployed, the largest subgroup, which can be further subdivided into long-term and short-term unemployed;
- the unavailable, which includes young careers, young people with family responsibilities and young people who are sick or disabled;
- the disengaged: those young people who are not seeking jobs or education and are not constrained from doing so by other obligations or incapacities, and takes in discouraged workers as well as other young people who are pursuing dangerous and asocial lifestyles;

- the opportunity-seekers: young people who are actively seeking work or training, but are holding out for opportunities that they see as befitting their skills and status;
- the voluntary NEETs: those young people who are travelling and those constructively engaged in other activities such as art, music and self-directed learning' (Eurofound 2012: 24).

Based on the abovementioned, specific groups have increased probabilities of becoming NEETs, including those 'with low levels of education, an immigration background, some level of disability or problems of mental health as well as young people with a problematic family background' (Eurofound 2012: 55-56). In addition, it seems that social and cultural capital and subsequently socio-economic inequalities affect young people's life chances, and especially those of NEETs (Papadakis at al. 2020). For instance, family income (one of the main 'indicators' of the social capital) is substantially related to actual resources, especially when it comes to a young man/woman's life chances. Moreover, the individual educational capital is of vital importance (Green and Janmaat 2012), since it is one of the three key determinants of the cultural capital, for the educational qualifications represent substantial part of the institutionalized state of the cultural capital (Nash 1990). Additionally, the potential correlation of the family socio-economic capital and the individuated educational capital to the employment status has become even more crucial in the aftermath of the Crisis, since the employment status especially for the youth defines, at a large extent, their life chances as well as the degree of their vulnerability and precarity (Papadakis et al. 2020, Papadakis et al. 2021).

It is worth noting that the heterogeneity which is found among NEETs is related not only to the socio-demographic characteristics and family background but also to the heterogeneity and the characteristics of the countries. As Eurofound (2016: 1) points out 'since its inception, the NEET concept has proved a powerful tool in enhancing understanding of young people's vulnerabilities in terms of labour market participation and social inclusion. As arguably the best proxy to measure the extent of young people's disadvantage, the NEET indicator can integrate subgroups such as young mothers and young people with disabilities — groups particularly at risk of being marginalized under the traditional 'inactive' label — into the policy debate'. It should be mentioned that even though the characteristics of the NEETs' rate differ to the ones of youth unemployment rate, there is a strong association among them, as the NEETs' rate 'highlights the problem of 'inactive youth', together with the young unemployed, but it draws attention away from those who are employed but trapped in inferior types of jobs' (ETF 2015: 7).

The Current State of Play Regarding Youth Unemployment and Neets in the EU

NEETs, being a socially vulnerable group, face the risk of social exclusion as they do not participate in key social structures (see in detail Papadakis at al. 2015: 44-75; Papadakis and Kyridis 2016: 93-112). The risk of vulnerability and social exclusion for them has worsened during the global multidimensional Recession, which had started at the beginning of 2008 and was continuing, affecting the European economy and the social fabric for a whole decade, worsening the conditions and the opportunities of young people's, especially NEETs',

integration into the labour market and society (Papadakis 2013: 15; Drakaki at al. 2014: 240). Furthermore, the impact of the Recession was more 'visible' in the countries of the 'European South', namely in Greece, Spain and Portugal, as the vast changes and deregulations in the labour market and the sectors of economy were greater and acute, compared to the other countries of the European Union, amplifying, consequently, phenomena of social vulnerability and socio-economic inequalities (Eurofound 2012, Pardo and Prato 2021).

Within this context, in 2013 the percentage of NEETs (aged 15-24) reached 13% in the EU-28, namely it increased by 2.1% since 2008 (EU-28 average: 10.9%) (Eurostat 2021a). Additionally, there were significant variations among EU Member States regarding the share of the NEETs population. For instance, in 2013 the share of NEETs rate exceeded 20% in Italy, Greece and Bulgaria (22.2%, 20.4%, 21.6% respectively), while in Slovenia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and other EU Member States the NEETs rates remained below 10% (9.2%, 9,3%, 6.3%, 5.6% respectively) (Eurostat 2021a). Even though the rate of NEETs in the EU Member States has decreased since 2013, both the percentages and the variations of the NEETs population among Member States have remained higher and significant compared to those before the onset of the Crisis (European Commission 2015: 17; Eurostat 2021a). It is worth mentioning that NEETs' rate variations resemble the ones of the youth unemployment rates (aged 15-24), since in the wake of the multidimensional economic crisis, youth unemployment rate rose sharply peaking at 24.8% in 2013 (EU-27 average)[2] (Eurostat 2021b) and it was '[…]the highest level ever recorded in the history of the EU. During the crisis, 18 Member States recorded their highest-ever levels of youth employment' (Eurofound 2014: 2).

During the following years (from 2014 to 2019), there was a considerable reduction in the rate of youth unemployment as it fell to 15.3% (EU-27) in 2019 (Eurostat 2021b). In 2020, due to the impact of COVID-19 crisis on the labour market, the EU youth unemployment rate increased again, reaching 17.1%, confirming that the COVID-19 impact on youth (aged 15-24 years) was stronger than the one on other age categories of the population. It is worth mentioning that, in 2020, the youth unemployment rate was about 3.5 times higher than the rate of unemployed population aged 50-74 years (4.9%) in the EU (Eurostat 2021b; Eurostat 2021c: 22; European Commission/DG EMPL 2021: 50).

In September 2021, the EU-27 youth unemployment rate decreased, reaching 15.9%, while the youth unemployment rate for women was higher (16.1%) than the respective rate for men (Eurostat 2021d). It is worth noting that in the majority of EU Member States, the increase in the rates of NEETs was more a consequence of the dramatically increase in youth unemployment rates, rather than youth inactivity (European Commission 2015: 48). Furthermore, according to Eurofound (2012: 33) a fairly high percentage of inactive NEETs are 'discouraged workers'; that is, they believe that there is no available job for them. 'This fact implies that there are structural barriers in relation to the young population's transition and inclusion in the labour market or in education' (Eurofound, 2016: 20; Papadakis et al. 2020: 4).

[2] EU-27 countries (from 2020). According to Eurostat database, statistics data of youth unemployment rates for EU-28 countries are not available (see Eurostat 2021b).

It is noteworthy that countries, such as Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Italy, Croatia and Romania, where NEETs rates have risen sharply during the Crisis, culminating in 2013 (21.6%, 20.4%, 18.7%, 18.6%, 22.2%, 19.6%, 17% respectively). Although these percentages are declining, these countries still have the highest NEETs rates across the EU Member States in 2020 — 14.4%, 13,2%, 14.4%, 13.9%, 19%, 12.2%, 14.8% respectively (Eurostat 2021a). Also, in 2020, the NEET rate in EU-27 reached 11.1%, increased by 1% from 2019 and decreased by 1.9% from 2013 (Eurostat 2021a; Eurostat 2021c: 19), while it should be highlighted that the NEET rate in Italy (19%) was more than four times higher as in the Netherlands (4.5%) (Eurostat 2021c: 19).

Regarding the relation of the degree of urbanization with the extent of NEETs phenomenon in the EU, according to Eurostat (2021e: 80), in 2020 some of the highest NEET rates in the EU were recorded in southern regions of Italy, in outermost regions of France, as well as in specific regions of Greece, Romania and Bulgaria. Specifically in 2020, there were seven regions in Italy, Bulgaria, Greece and France where more than 1 in 4 young people aged 15-24 years were included in the socially vulnerable group of NEETs (Eurostat 2021e: 80). 'Four of these were located in Italy — Molise (25.5%), Calabria (26.5%), Campania (28.0%) and Sicilia (29.3%); they were joined by Severozapaden in Bulgaria (27.0%), Voreio Aigaio in Greece (27.1%) and Guyane in France (33.6%), which had the highest rate' (Eurostat 2021e: 80). On the other hand, the lowest NEETs rates were recorded in the Nordic Member States, Austria and the Netherlands, such as in Noord-Brabant (3.9%) and Utrecht (3.7%) in the Netherlands and Praha — the capital region of Czech Republic — (3.4%) (Eurostat 2021e: 80). It seems that the degree of urbanization may be related to the intensity and extent of the phenomenon of NEETs in some European countries.

The above mentioned should be taken into account in the public debate and the public policy agenda in the EU, even after the end of the prolonged multi-parameter economic Recession and the formal completion of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy, aiming at initiatives and targeted actions to tackle the NEETs phenomenon across EU Member States.

NEETs, Vulnerability and Precarity in Greece: The Current State of Play

With regard to the case of NEETs in Greece, one of the countries in Southern Europe, heavily affected by the Economic Crisis and the subsequent Recession, the NEETs rate increased sharply from 11.4% in 2008 to 20.4% in 2013 (Eurostat 2021a). In addition, the impact of the Crisis and the Recession in employment and labour market was unbelievably huge and persistent and has resulted in weakening Greek society and greatly degrading the living standards of citizens, especially the youth ones, by intensifying their vulnerability and precarity (Papadakis et al. 2017b).

Concerning unemployment rates in Greece, during the first years from the onset of the Crisis, the total unemployment (aged 15-74) rose sharply from 7.8% in 2008 to 27.5% in 2013. Although the total unemployment rate decreased gradually during the next years, it still remained high compared to the EU total unemployment rate (Eurostat 2021f), while it was affected by the impact of the pandemic to the economy and the labour market. Specifically, in

2020 the total unemployment rate reached 16.3% — the highest unemployment rate among the EU Member States, and more than twice as high as the corresponding EU unemployment rate (7.1%) (Eurostat 2021g). In September 2021, the total unemployment rate in Greece was decreased by 3% (13.3%); however, it remained the second highest after Spain (14.6%) in the EU-27 (Eurostat 2021h). The total unemployment rate for men stood at 10.2% and 17.3% for women respectively. While for the same period (September 2021), the EU total unemployment rates reached 6.5% for men and 7% for women (Eurostat 2021h).

It is worth mentioning that in 2011, in the first years of the Crisis, Matsaganis had pointed out that 'the rise in unemployment is likely to be transformed into higher poverty, while in the past the correlation between the two has been rather weak' (2011: 510). Indeed, during the following years a remarkable share of population, especially the rural one, in Greece was living under the poverty limit, as well as a 35.7% of the total population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion (HSA 2016: 1-2; Eurostat 2017: 255). Especially, young people are the social group that were affected more than other age groups, as the impact of the multi-parametric Recession was particularly strong in this age group, as shown by the huge increase in youth unemployment rate in Greece, which is directly related to poverty-risk or social exclusion (Papadakis et al. 2017b: 11). Specifically, the youth unemployment rate in Greece rose sharply peaking at 58.3% in 2013 (respective EU-27 rate in 2013: 24.8%) from 25.7% in 2009 (corresponding EU-27 rate in 2009: 20.9%) (Eurostat 2021b). In 2013 the youth unemployment rate for men reached 53.8% and 63.8% for women respectively in Greece. Even though, during the following years, the youth unemployment rate gradually decreased in Greece, still remained high and ranked second below Spain in 2020 — youth unemployment in Greece is 35%. in Spain is 38.3% (Eurostat 2021b).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated measures disproportionately impacted on young people in Greece, inevitably increasing the unemployment rates and their vulnerability. In April 2021, the youth unemployment rate reached 48.2%. Then there was a gradual decrease, resulting in 24.5%, in September 2021 (Eurostat 2021d). At regional level, from 2019 to 2020, in eight Greek regions more than 40 % of young people (aged 15-24) were unemployed in 2020, while Sterea Ellada was affected more as the youth unemployment rate reached more than 50% (increase by at least 10 percentage points in one year) (Eurostat 2021e: 78).

The impact of the ten-year economic crisis and the current impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Greek youth remain alarming and create precarious and vulnerable conditions in young people's life course, increasing their risk of poverty and/or social exclusion.

The case of NEETs, especially the case of Greek NEETs, confirms the abovementioned argument. To be more specific, Greece, before the onset of the Crisis, had almost a similar NEETs rate as the rest of the EU. However, the rate of Greek NEETs recorded a peak of 20.4% in 2013, from 8,8% in 2008, and was almost double compared to the EU average (13%) (Eurostat 2021a). In 2013, the NEETs rate for Greek young men (aged 15-24 years) stood at 20.9% (increased by 12.1% in 5 years). While the corresponding NEETs rate for women in Greece was 20% in 2013 from 14.1% in 2008 (Eurostat 2021a). During the period from 2014

to 2019, the NEETs rate in Greece fell slowly, however, it increased again due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, rising at 13.2% in 2020, while the NEETs rates for men and women stood at 13.1% and 13.3% respectively in 2020, in contrast to the gender gap evident in the early years of the Crisis (Eurostat 2021a).

Regarding the regional dimension of NEETs, in 2013, when both youth unemployment and NEETs rate in Greece reached their highest peak, according to Eurostat (2021i) three Greek regions, namely Sterea Ellada, Peloponnese and Eastern Macedonia and Thrace had the highest NEETs rates among the Greek regions: 30.9%, 28.5% and 28.3% respectively (Eurostat, 2021i). Furthermore, from 2008 to 2013, the highest increase in NEETs rates took place in the following regions: Peloponnese (13.2%), Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (13%), North Aegean (12.5%), and Sterea Ellada (11.6%) (Eurostat 2021i). In the following years, from 2014 to 2019, there was a gradually decrease in NEETs rates across Greece, mainly in the regions of Peloponnese (decrease by 15.6%), Epirus (decrease by 9.2%) and Central Macedonia (decrease by 7.7%). In the North Aegean region there was an increase of 6%, from 19.7% in 2014 to 25.7% in 2019. In 2020, due to COVID-19 pandemic, the NEETs rates increased again in almost all the Greek regions. The regions of North Aegean, South Aegean and Sterea Ellada recorded the highest NEETs rates, 27.1%, 22% and 24.5% respectively (Eurostat 2021i), while the regions of South Aegean, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace as well as Sterea Ellada had the highest change regarding the increase in NEETs rates among the Greek Regions during 2019-2010, namely an increase by 5.9%, 3.2% and 2.4% respectively (Eurostat 2021i).

Based on the above mentioned, it seems that there is a slight relation between the degree of urbanization and NEETs rates among the regions in Greece. In addition, it is obvious that there is a direct correlation between both the impact of the crisis and the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis and NEETs rate in Greece, which was one of the main consequences of the huge increase in Greek youth unemployment.

The above mentioned in conjunction with the inadequacy of the welfare state in Greece, which has failed to protect as well as to re-integrate NEETs and, in general, young people in the labour market (Papadakis et al. 2021), constitute a key parameter for young people's gradual disengagement from labour market and the key social institutions (see in detail Papadakis et al. 2015; Drakaki et al. 2014; Kotroyannos et al. 2015: 275-276).

Research Findings of the Project 'NEETs2' (EEA Grants/GR07-3757)

The research project 'NEETs2' (EEA Grants/GR07-3757) included the conduction of a large scale nationwide primary qualitative and quantitative research (in 2016), aiming at the identification of the key characteristics of both Youth and NEETs in Greece. Among the objectives of the project was the deployment of the psychological profile of this category of young people along with the identification of any impact of the financial crisis on the latter as well as on their life course. Another crucial objective of the research was the mapping of NEET's skills profile along with their needs-in-skills.

The outcomes of the qualitative and quantitative research led to an evidence-based targeted and competency-oriented training-reskilling program, which included two counselling

and vocational handbooks as well as a proposal of set of psychological supportive activities aiming at fostering NEETs' social inclusion prospects. The emphasis of the project was mainly given on key determinants of NEETs' life course and values (as well as of young people generally in Greece) such as civic values, political behaviour, public trust and survival strategies. Stratification and quota-based sampling was conducted (with 2769 respondents in the total of the 13 Administrative Regions), which led to the following main outcomes: a) in May 2016 the NEET rate in Greece was 16.4% among the Greek young population aged 15-24 (KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 7), b) NEETs, compared to the control group of young people aged 15-24, are older, have less age-adjusted years of education, are more likely to live with their parents, have more work experience and lower family income (see in detail Papadakis et al. 2017a: 18-19), c) age is a determining factor, affecting a young person's chances to become a NEET.

Quantitative Research Findings

The descriptive analysis indicates that after the age of 22 the percentage of NEETs grows dramatically until the age of 24, in which the NEETs' percentage reaches 34.9% of the young people of this age (KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 7). These outcomes confirm the literature which points out the crucial role of family in the Southern European welfare states (Ferrera 2010, Rhodes 1996,) as long as it seems that the Greek family operates as a non-formal policy substitute which prevents the marginalization of younger people (and younger NEETs) and prevents the total disruption of NEETs' life course.

At the same time, recent surveys indicate that negative NEETs effects vary according to the educational attainment as well as gender (Ralston et al. 2016). In the Greek case and according to the findings of our research project, 1 out of 4 young people in Greece is highly skilled and 24.4% of the Greek NEETs have graduated from higher institutions. This is a finding which differentiates the Greek NEETs from the majority of NEETs in other EU countries, as long as they are usually low or medium skilled, while (on the contrary) in the Greek case 1 out of 4 is highly skilled.

The majority of NEETs, indicate that their family income is low or very low, namely NEETs come from lower income families, than their peers. Given the family importance in offering non-formal protection, it turns out that family income is a significant factor which determines a young person's chances to fall into NEET category, since the lower family income seem to lead in increased risk of social exclusion (Papadakis et al. 2016: 36-37). While previous research findings indicate the strong relation between NEET status and income as well as long-term unemployment with lower income (Gregg and Tominey 2005), the Greek case of NEETs indicate the frequent occurrence of this situation among lower socio-economic groups and alarmingly underlines the limited social mobility capacity even for university graduates (Ioakimidis and Papakonstantinou 2017, Maloutas and Malouta 2021) as well as the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Papatheodorou and Papanastasiou 2010; Papadakis et al. 2015: 56). This trend has been confirmed by the outcomes of the research which indicate

that approximately 40% of Greek young people live in households with total income less than 1000 €.

One of the most important indicators is the self-definition of young people about their individual condition. It is not surprising that 30.8% of young people and 45.8% of NEETs in Greece define their situation as hard and unbearable (KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 26). Unquestionably, a large number of young people and half of the NEET population face difficulties in their daily life, indicating that NEETs psychology is negatively affected by social marginalization and exclusion from employment, education or training.

Employability is a crucial factor which could increase the prospects of integration into the labour market and broadly in society. Both NEETs and young people in general seem to have prior working experience (KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 13), with those coming from lower socio-economic groups being forced to work earlier than the rest. Although 73.6% has working experience, the economic crisis has been determining in forcing them to unemployment. This is clear, as 84.3% of NEETs and 79% of young people in general became unemployed during the last 2 years. While young people and NEETs have working experience in services, the latter were previously employed in seasonal vacancies (catering, leisure and tourism). Even though we may presume that those NEETs, who have become recently unemployed, may be due to seasonal employment, a significant percentage both of young people in general (32.7%) and of NEETs (39.7%) are unemployed more than 6 months, so they are not connected with temporality of employment. Among young people aged 15-24, men aged 20-24 are the majority with work experience. Additionally, 44% of young people (26.4% of NEETs and 47.8% of young people in general) indicate that they have not working experience and from those who have, 26.3% of NEETs and 26.1% of young people in general, are currently long-term unemployed (KEPET and KEADIK 2016a).

Low employability levels seem to lead to increased unemployment levels, while on the contrary, its increase implies more opportunities for career development (Panagiotakopoulos 2012, Yorke 2006), psychological uplift and prosperity (Gowan 2012), as well as long-term stability prospects (Brockman et al. 2008). It should be noted, however, that the negative effects of the delayed entry or early exclusion from the labour market are not limited to the early stages of working life but are extended to the future, as they shape reduced prospects for integration, career development, a satisfactory salary (Gartell 2009, Mroz and Savage 2006, Oreopoulos et al. 2008, Schmelzer 2011) and ultimately undermine life-chances, thus continuing the vicious circle of youth – and general – unemployment and vulnerability. The research findings confirm that the economic crisis has reduced the chances for young people and NEETs integration into the labour market, formulating two categories; those who have not working experience and those who have limited working experience due to personnel cutbacks, enterprise closure, seasonal employment or even voluntary leave.

The implementation of actual active employment policies could be a solution, in order to increase the prospects for re-integration, of the excluded, into the labour market. Training is categorized as one of the basic active employment policies (Papadakis 2005) but the findings show that it has limited impact, since only 15.9% of young people (17.7% of NEETs and 15.6%

of young people) have ever participated in a training program. Even more discouraging is the fact that those who have participated in such a training program consider it ineffective, unattractive and untrustworthy.

The abovementioned data confirm that the economic crisis has created emotions of insecurity (48%), anger (27%) and anxiety (17.1%) among youth. Only 3.6% of the respondents is optimistic, with no statistically significant differences between NEETs and the rest young people (KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 35).

However, regarding the personal perception of social exclusion, a paradox occurs as long as only 9.8% of NEETs and 6.4% of the rest young people feel socially excluded (KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 26). While in the literature, NEETs is a social group which is categorized as socially vulnerable (even excluded), they do not admit that they are actually in such a condition. This finding also confirms the first primary nationwide research on NEETs in Greece ('Absents Barometer'/ 2011-2013), which revealed that the family was a crucial parameter in what NEETs feel about their social exclusion condition, since it is a vital supportive mechanism, an actual safety net (Kotroyannos et al. 2015, Papadakis, et al. 2015). At the same time, due to the fact that the phenomenon of NEETs is extended, several of their friends and peers are in a similar condition, thus diminishing their feeling of exclusion. On the other hand, this does not diminish the fact that their social vulnerability has been increased in alarming levels. Unquestionably, this situation affects NEETs life-course design and differentiates the priorities among them and the rest of the young people of their age. In fact, NEETs seem mainly to prioritize the choice of finding a job (60.6%) while the majority of the rest of young people primarily choose the learning process (51.6%) (KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 30).

It should be pointed out that the top-5 responses are identical for both NEETs and the rest young people (KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 28), uncovering the multi-dimensional impact of the crisis which has substantially affected the life and the future chances of young people, in total.

Qualitative Research Findings

The qualitative research included 71 semi-structured interviews, 96 (51% women) check lists and 2 focus groups of 5 people each (6 men and 4 women). The analysis of the qualitative research findings of the project 'Neets2' reveal that young people in Greece consider that social skills and competencies related to citizenship, skills related to learning methodology and meta-cognitive skills, entrepreneurial and initiative development skills, cultural expression and recognition skills, are of top priority (KEPET and KEADIK 2016b: 15; KANEP/GSEE 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Certainly, the development of these skills requires the possibility of gaining work experience, participation in internships and in training programs that can contribute decisively to the use of learning opportunities and the development of professional-business initiative, as well as team-work skills (KEPET and KEADIK 2016b: 15).

The lack of work experience and the related skills acquired, is a matter largely emphasized by young people, as they realize that they are lagging behind in this area, given the situation of the labour market. Respondents seem to demand a change of the knowledge-based nature of the

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education system, while in terms of skills related to science and math, they seem to be relatively adequate. They consider it crucial to focus on those skills that can follow the developments and demands of the labour market, such as skills obtained from internships and apprenticeships (KEPET and KEADIK 2016b: 15; KEPET and KEADIK 2016c).

Regarding the socially vulnerable group of NEETs (16.4% of the youth population in 2016) KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 7), the classification of the necessary skills and abilities is shown in Table 1.

Primary level of necessity	Stress management and work stress Time management-meeting deadlines Organizational competences Good communication with third parties
Secondary level of necessity	Initiative Crisis and conflict management in the workplace Ability to work in a team Methodology Synthetic thinking Problem solving Ability to trade
Tertiary level of necessity	Administrative Capacity Ability to adapt to new fields and working conditions and to changing work context Analytical thinking Writing texts with grammatical and syntactic clarity and completeness

Table 1. NEETs' skills prioritizations for further development Source: KEPET and KEADIK, 2016b: 18.

According to NEETs, the main reason for not acquiring the required knowledge, skills and abilities seems to be the content of the courses (knowledge-based) and consequently the way of learning, the general structure of the Greek educational system and the 'traditional' teacher-centred teaching model. Simply, all these three factors refer to the structure of teaching-learning process, attributing to it the incomplete or even distorted form of the knowledge and skills they receive, which ultimately does not allow them to integrate smoothly into the labour market (KEPET and KEADIK 2016b: 16; KEPET and KEADIK 2016c). At the second level, NEETs stressed that the leadership of education, the country's political leadership and textbooks are responsible for the lack of the required competences and of the limited development of critical skills. Therefore, they consider that all relevant institutional actors related to education are responsible for the lack of the proper learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and abilities). On the contrary, NEETs believe that parents, students themselves and (surprisingly) the economic recession that has reduced the required resources, are less responsible factors for their lack of skills, knowledge and competences (KEPET and KEADIK 2016b: 16; KANEP/GSEE 2016a). All the above-mentioned document the dysfunction of the educational system, which

seems to be perceived as a persistent pathogen, undermining the harmonization to the labour market and resulting in reproducing inequalities.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

A main conclusion drawn from the findings of the research project 'NEETs2' is that young people show very low levels of trust in public institutions, as they consider the administration of educational institutions, the staff of the education sector as well as the political system, as key factors for their lack of qualifications and skills and consequently for the problems and difficulties they face in their daily lives (see in detail Papadakis et al. 2017a: 29-33). The situation they are experiencing may not be accepted by them as a situation of social exclusion, but the available data confirm the extensive difficulties of integration in the labour market, as well as in their daily life, while 39.4% of all young people (42.9% of NEETs and 38 % of their peers) feel isolated and are not close to any political ideology (see Papadakis et al. 2017a: 31-33; KEPET and KEADIK 2016a: 43), a clear indication of the gradual and alarming collapse of public trust among Youth.

A key actor that aims to reduce social vulnerability and enhance the inclusion of those at risk of social exclusion, is the welfare state. However, both NEETs and the rest of the young people in this age group do not trust the welfare state (91.4% of young people). This is particularly worrying and highlights the inefficiency of welfare state services, as well as the negative impact of austerity policies, which have further reduced the ability of the welfare state to tackle social problems effectively. As Chiang points out, 'Social welfare is now redefined as a privilege rather than a basic right for citizens' (2018: 119).

One of the solutions to this problem is the establishment of a new active welfare state. The active welfare state should implement a fiscally prudent social policy, which includes both precautionary functions and a degree of selective solidarity in correcting imbalances, targeted in specific social groups which data show that need assistance. Such a case is the group of NEETs. The preventive function of the state must focus on the objective of employment integration. This can be achieved by focusing on the knowledge-based society and investing in (competence-based) education, training, innovation and new technologies. The aim of the labour market integration, as well as innovation should be taken into account in the educational process from infancy to the phases of vocational training and university education in order to provide necessary skills based on needs assessment, such as those that our qualitative research has revealed. In this context, cooperation between employment services and employers, as well as social economy actors, is also necessary to promote opportunities and incentives, initially for the inclusion of the most vulnerable and for those categorized as long-term unemployed and the youth (Duell et al. 2016). It is worth-mentioning at this point, that recent surveys in Mainland China document that another key factor related to the tackling of the phenomenon of NEET and broadly the social exclusion of young people could potentially be the development of advanced technologies that, when combined to the reduction of digital inequalities, contribute on the expansion of the labour market, in the digital era, i.e. in the Chinese model, the central government has played a proactive role in developing advanced technologies

through the establishment of multiple forms of institutes (see Chiang 2014 and 2020: 41-57; Chiang and Papadakis 2022).

At the same time, a holistic inclusion strategy must include measures for maintaining an adequate level of funding, with a focus on investing in human capital of young people, by providing incentives but also by enhancing the knowledge and skills, linked to the labour market and the new technological requirements. Thus, no young person in this case should be allowed to 'cross the desert' alone and no one should be left behind. Such a welfare state will be able to deal more effectively with the problems of the economic crisis that are particularly visible even today for young people (Green 2017), as austerity policies still define their lives, making social vulnerability and poverty, transferable conditions from one generation to another. Tackling this problem should be one of the priorities of a comprehensive welfare state strategy and subsequently of an actually re-distributive social policy, which aims at addressing effectively the social integration problems of the youth as well as at strengthening social cohesion, in the light of the new digitalization era, of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

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