



CRISIS  
OBSERVATORY

RESEARCH PAPER

No 19

Nov. 2015

# Young People's Perception of Economic Crisis in Contemporary Greece: A Social Psychological Pilot Study

by

**Charalambos Tsekeris**

Research Associate, Research Centre for Greek Society, Academy of Athens, Greece;  
Director, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, Greece

**Maria Pinguli**

Researcher, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, Greece

**Elpida Georga**

Researcher, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, Greece

**ΕΛΙΑΜΕΠ**  **ELIAMEP**

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΗΣ & ΕΞΩΤΕΡΙΚΗΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗΣ  
HELLENIC FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN & FOREIGN POLICY

Copyright © 2015  
Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)<sup>1</sup>  
49, Vas. Sofias Avenue, 106 76 Athens Greece  
Tel.: +30 210 7257 110 | Fax: +30 210 7257 114 | [www.eliamep.gr](http://www.eliamep.gr) | [eliamep@eliamep.gr](mailto:eliamep@eliamep.gr)  
CRISIS OBSERVATORY | [www.crisisobs.eu](http://www.crisisobs.eu) | [info@crisisobs.gr](mailto:info@crisisobs.gr)  
All Rights Reserved

## Research Paper No 19/2015

# Young People's Perception of Economic Crisis in Contemporary Greece: A Social Psychological Pilot Study

### Charalambos Tsekeris

Research Associate, Research Centre for Greek Society, Academy of Athens, Greece;  
Director, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, Greece<sup>2</sup>

### Maria Pinguli

Researcher, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, Greece<sup>3</sup>

### Elpida Georga

Researcher, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, Greece<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> ELIAMEP offers a forum for debate on international and European issues. Its non-partisan character supports the right to free and well-documented discourse. ELIAMEP publications aim to contribute to scholarly knowledge and to provide policy relevant analyses. As such, they solely represent the views of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Research Associate, Research Centre for Greek Society, Academy of Athens, 8 Milioni str., 10680 Athens, Greece. Email: [tsekeris@gmail.com](mailto:tsekeris@gmail.com) (Corresponding Author)

<sup>3</sup> Researcher, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, 17 Panepistimiou str., 10564 Athens, Greece. Email: [pingulie@hotmail.com](mailto:pingulie@hotmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Researcher, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, 17 Panepistimiou str., 10564 Athens, Greece. Email: [elpidageorga@gmail.com](mailto:elpidageorga@gmail.com)

# **Young People's Perception of Economic Crisis in Contemporary Greece: A Social Psychological Pilot Study**

**by**

**Charalambos Tsekeris**

Research Associate, Research Centre for Greek Society, Academy of Athens, Greece;  
Director, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, Greece

**Maria Pinguli**

Researcher, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, Greece

**Elpida Georga**

Researcher, Aegean Research Centre, Aegean College, Greece

**November 2015**

# **Young People's Perception of Economic Crisis in Contemporary Greece: A Social Psychological Pilot Study**

## **Abstract**

Contemporary Greece is currently in a turbulent process of crisis and recession. Arguably, one segment of the Greek society is experiencing more suffering than most: young people. It is thus of great importance to understand young generation's needs and attitudes in order to alleviate pain, to build up active inclusion strategies and to enhance civic participation. The present social psychological pilot study aims to show how Greek young adults perceive the current socioeconomic crisis, as well as how they respond to it. It also attempts to demonstrate the complex relationship between individual/collective suffering and the failure (or dismantling) of dominant social structures and institutions. The sample pertains to 253 students, 183 females and 70 males, aged between 18-30 years, nearly half of them unemployed. The duration of the survey was 43 days (December 2014 – January 2015). The tool for data collection was an online questionnaire composed of 19 sections and 131 items, distributed through social media, with participation being voluntary and anonymous. According to the research findings, the majority of the students lack the resources to survive the crisis and financially depend on their families. Yet, feeling committed to the country seems to avert one out of two students from emigration. Most of them feel disappointed but still believe that the Greeks can change the adverse situation through solidarity, cooperation, and volunteerism (albeit their actual engagement in collective social action is limited).

## **Keywords**

Greek Crisis; Youth; Uncertainty; Emigration; Solidarity

## About the Authors

### Charalambos Tsekeris

Dr. Charalambos Tsekeris is currently Research Associate at the Research Centre for Greek Society of the Academy of Athens and at the Anti-Corruption Centre for Education and Research of Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He has the title of Senior Researcher at the Laboratory of Virtual Reality, Internet Research & E-Learning (Panteion University) and of Research Professor at Aegean College, Athens, Greece. He is also directing the Aegean Research Centre (Aegean College) and lecturing at the University of Athens (Department of Communication and Media Studies) and at the Hellenic Naval Staff and Command College. He has published more than 100 articles in peer-reviewed journals/collected volumes and given numerous invited lectures and papers in academic meetings and conferences. His current research interests involve relational approaches in the social science, complexity and the self, social suffering and identity construction, economic crisis and civil society, human complex systems and psychosocial networks. He is the coeditor of *The Social Dynamics of Web 2.0* (Routledge 2014), editor of *Revisiting the Self* (Routledge 2015), editor-in-chief of the peer-reviewed *European Journal of Social Behaviour*, and editorial board member of *Contemporary Social Science: Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* (Routledge).

### Maria Pinguli

Maria Pinguli is currently a postgraduate student at Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. She holds a Bachelor in Nursing from the Higher Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Athens and a Bachelor (Hons) in Psychology from Coventry University, UK. She has been doing research on the psychosocial effects of the Greek Debt Crisis at the Aegean Research Centre (ARC), Aegean College, Athens, Greece.

### Elpida Georga

Elpida Georga has studied Psychology (BSc) at Aegean College and body-oriented Counseling at the Hellenic Institute of Vegetotherapy & Character Analysis. She has been doing research on the Greek Crisis at the Aegean Research Centre (Aegean College) and participated in a multitude of research projects presented at various academic meetings and conferences. During the course of her internship and volunteer work, she has also participated in several programs aimed at the cognitive and psychosocial empowerment of children, teenagers, pregnant women, and elders. She now works as a freelance counselor to assist in matters of intra-individual and organisational conflicts through personal empowerment and improvement of interpersonal relationships.

## Table of Contents

1.Introduction.....	7
2.Methods .....	10
2.1 Participants .....	10
2.2 Materials and Procedure .....	12
2.3 Data input .....	12
2.4 Limitations .....	12
3.Results and Discussion .....	13
3.1 The psychological impact of the crisis .....	13
3.2 Plans for the future.....	14
3.3 Family and interdependency .....	15
3.4 Emigration.....	16
3.5 Sense of responsibility .....	17
3.6 Social Action and Solidarity .....	19
Concluding Remarks .....	21
References.....	23

## 1.Introduction

This social psychological pilot study sets up to show how Greek young adults perceive and respond to the current socioeconomic crisis, including not only emotional reactions and experiences, but also complex issues of collective action and self-determination, social inclusion/exclusion, political participation, democratic representation and accountability, moral responsibility, attributions of blame, family relationships, future projections, and so on. In this context, we can better understand how young people re-construct and perform meaningful modes of resistance to the prolonged crisis, aspiring for alternative (bottom-up) forms of social inclusion and democratic control.

In contemporary Greece, a huge mass of large-scale draconian austerity measures, cuts and layoffs, has led to increasing social disintegration: “No other European state has undergone such pain in the last fifty years or more” (Featherstone 2014). Since 2010, Greece became “the new crisis epicenter of global capitalism, attracting headlines all over the world ... the country has been into the sausage grinder of the financial markets and international banks” (Golemis 2010, p. 129). Recently, Grzegorz W. Kolodko warned about the danger of “Africanization” of Greece: “The country has been placed in an extremely difficult situation, de facto without the possibility of getting out of the escalating crisis by itself” (Kolodko 2015).<sup>5</sup>

In specific, the bailout agreements proposed by the Troika, an external body consisting of the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have been closely correlated with widespread distress, destitution, and despair: “The pain has been much stronger than initially anticipated, the suffering has lasted longer, and the fairness of its distribution has left much to be desired. As income kept falling and more jobs were lost, fewer Greeks continued to believe (or hope) that the particular therapy could cure them. They tended to see themselves as guinea pigs in a nasty experiment” (Tsoukalis 2013, pp. 36-37). Therefore, personal suffering has been variously mixed with intense feelings of indignity and humiliation, as well as with painful processes of social and self-identification as a subject “at-risk”.

---

<sup>5</sup> The current situation is usually explained as the unpleasant outcome of three set of factors:

- (a) “the destabilizing role of financial institutions and rating agencies”,
- (b) “when the debt crisis appeared in the country, the institutional setting within the Eurozone proved to be unprepared or unwilling to provide the financial markets with a clear signal that a support plan for Greece was set”,
- (c) “it is undoubtedly true that the country also suffers from several ‘internal’ weaknesses and burdens, both in economic and sociopolitical terms that had a negative impact on its development and competitiveness over time” (Labrianidis & Vogiatzis 2013, pp. 525, 527).

Today's Greek society can be generally seen as comprised of individuals denied a dignified existence. In particular, young adults are arguably experiencing more pain than most.<sup>6</sup> Thousands of frustrated talented youth cannot escape from unemployment (or from exploitative work conditions) and are almost reduced to a "meaningless triviality" (Arendt 1968, pp. 7-8). This echoes Mouzelis's bleak description that young Greeks "find themselves in a desperate situation. A profession defines an individual to a large extent, and being unemployed is a stigma in our society ... The first thing we ask when we want to know who someone is, is 'What is your profession?' If someone has no job, there is total humiliation. That creates anxiety which is difficult to handle, and many resort to drugs or suicide" (Ghosh 2012).

According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2014), the unemployment of Greeks under 25 years old has reached the rate of 56.3%, while for ages between 25-34 the rate amounts to 36.1%. Worryingly, there is no evidence that the extremely high rates of youth unemployment are going away any time soon (Bell & Blanchflower 2015, p. 25).<sup>7</sup> In parallel, working conditions are getting worse and a growing part of employees gain the negative status of "working poor" (Marvakis et al. 2013, p. 5).<sup>8</sup> In a relevant social research (Samatas & Drakos 2014), conducted at the University of Crete, 68.8% of the unemployed students would accept an extremely low-paid job just to make a living.

For sure, Greece has an invaluable untapped resource in its youth: "Roughly a tenth of the population (1.1 million people) is under 25 and another 1.5 million are aged between 25 and 34. They tend to be well-educated, well-travelled and politically aware" (Malkoutzis 2011, p. 1). So, unlike common and recurring stereotypical stigmatization of Greek youth as lazy and volatile, "Greek youth exhibit high amounts of energy and passion, as all youth around the world ... Greek youth

---

<sup>6</sup> Especially during the last years, many scholars have identified youth as a distinct population group and prioritised it as a topic of academic study in its own right. Interestingly, the multiple impact of the current Greek crisis on youth has attracted much attention but little satisfactory scholarly exploration and analysis.

<sup>7</sup> See also Susanne Kraatz's (2015) recent analysis on the development of youth unemployment and of NEET youth (Neither in Employment, Education, Training) in Greece in a comparative perspective (Cyprus, Ireland, Portugal, Spain).

<sup>8</sup> For Guy Standing (2011), we must turn our analytic attention to the anger, needs, and aspirations of the emerging major class, the "precariat", which consists of "a multitude of insecure people, living bits-and-pieces lives, in and out of short-term jobs, without a narrative of occupational development, including millions of frustrated educated youth who do not like what they see before them, millions of women abused in oppressive labour, growing numbers of criminalised tagged for life, millions being categorised as 'disabled' and migrants in their hundreds of millions around the world. They are denizens; they have a more restricted range of social, cultural, political and economic rights than citizens around them" (Standing 2011).



are simply given the wrong opportunities to use their energy and passion” (Tsianos 2014).<sup>9</sup>

Gradually, large groups of the young population are breaking apart under the corrosive and de-moralising effects of the unanticipated collapse of stable frames of reference and of the social network as a whole. They strongly experience no hope of fulfilling their human potential so long as they become increasingly excluded from the labour market, health services, the wealth, or resources and opportunities of a privileged few. As Volonte (2012) perceptively observes, Europe is facing the risk of losing a whole generation.

Moreover, the feeling of exclusion from social mechanisms and structures due to the current EU financial crisis is widespread (Eurobarometer 2014). Interestingly, Greece, Cyprus, and Bulgaria are the EU countries with the highest rates of social exclusion among young people (Eurofound 2014b).

This arguably results in significant losses of life satisfaction, wellbeing, and hope, as well as in a spectre of growing uncertainty, precariousness, and suffering. Nevertheless, young Greeks seem to imaginatively combat austerity and the severe socioeconomic crisis “by setting up self-help initiatives to provide free medical care, repair street lighting and monitor public spending. A new, unprecedented communal spirit is emerging to tackle the hardship of cutbacks and reforms” (Heyer 2013; see also Sotiropoulos & Bourikos 2014).

Hence, we now proceed to discern and clarify these emerging phenomena, as well as to enhance an interdisciplinary and holistic understanding of youth’s perceptions about the current socioeconomic conditions in Greece, starting from a social psychological standpoint. Such understanding could potentially be the tool for empowering young people, as well as for helping them become change-makers in Greece and the EU. For this purpose, we have to focus on a number of dimensions which are visible when one broadens the analytical framework, as well as to demonstrate the way in which such dimensions are linked to each other and to the overall development and experience of the crisis (Mouzelis 2009).<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, the portion of Greek students enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) programs “is higher than the global average by approximately 4 percentage points, and higher than the European average by almost 8 percentage points. What can be derived from this interpretation of the numbers is that, in terms of human capital quality and quantity, the Greek youth present an extraordinary degree of competence to generate a highly-skilled labor force” (Tsianos 2014).

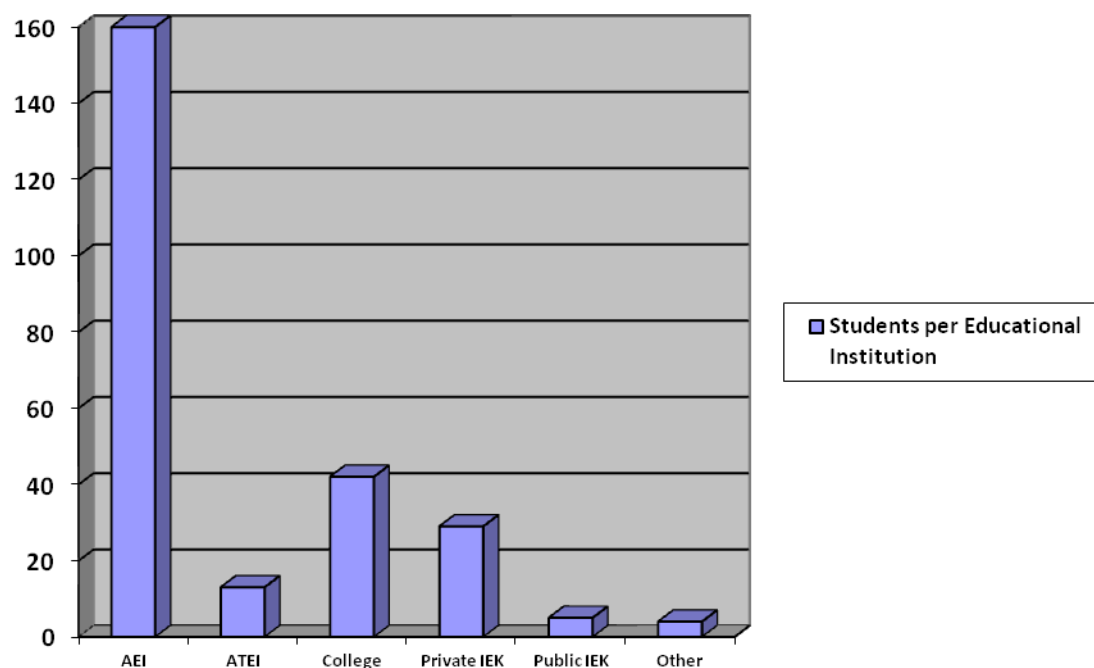
<sup>10</sup> Nicos Mouzelis (2009) mainly discerns between (a) the political and socioeconomic dimension, and (b) the educational/psychocultural dimension.

## 2.Methods

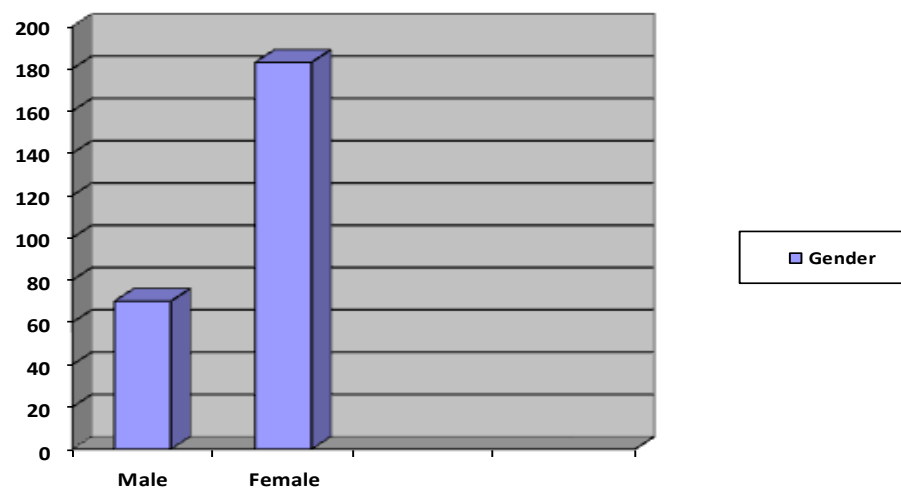
### 2.1 Participants

The total sample for the present research is 253 participants (N= 253). The sample is opportunistic, according to willingness to respond to an online questionnaire using the Google Drive. Initially 279 people responded but 26 were excluded as they did not meet the research requirements of participation. All participants are students; 63.2% study at AEI (public universities), 5.1% at ATEI (public higher technological institutes), 16.6% at Colleges (private educational institutes), 11.5% at private IEK (institutes of vocational training), 2% at public IEK, and 1.6% at other institutes (see graph 1). Participants were born between 1984 and 1996 ( $M = 24$  years old). One hundred eighty three students (72.3%) are females and 70 (27.7%) are males (see graph 2). One hundred thirty three participants are unemployed (52.6%), 78 (30.8%) work at part-time jobs and 42 (16.6%) have a full-time job (see graph 3).

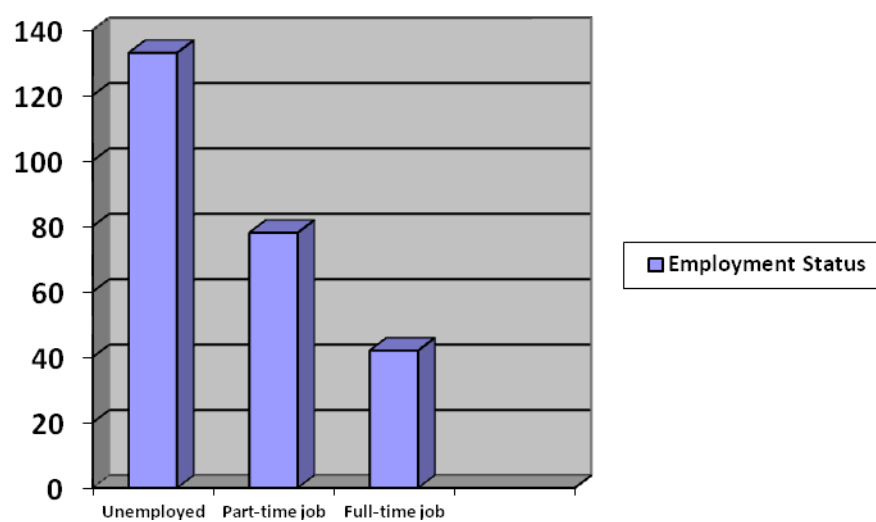
**Graph 1. Demographics concerning respondents' affiliation**



**Graph 2. Demographics concerning respondents' gender**



**Graph 3. Demographics concerning respondents' employment status**



## **2.2 Materials and Procedure**

The survey was conducted from the 13th of December 2014 until the 24th of January 2015 (i.e., one day before the Greek parliamentary elections). Data for students' perceptions of economic crisis were collected anonymously through an online questionnaire, using Google Forms. Potential participants were notified throughout blogs, student e-portals, and popular social media platforms, such as Facebook. The tool consists of 19 sections and 131 items rated in a 5-point Likert scale varying from "totally disagree" to "totally agree", from "never" to "very often", from "never" to "always", and so on.

In total, 48 items were selected and are presented in this pilot study. Every statement is analysed either separately or in correlation with other statements concerning collective action, solidarity, and participation in anti-austerity protests as possible solutions to the current crisis, as well as concerning young people's thoughts, goals, and visions for the future. Data analysis was done with Ms Excel 2007 program and IBM SPSS 20.0 programs.

## **2.3 Data input**

In order to investigate young people's perceptions of economic crisis and correlate them to specific behaviours or demographic characteristics, descriptive and crosstabs statistics, Spearman's correlations, Cramér's V analysis, and Pearson's Chi-Square Test were used. Relevant statistics' values can be seen in sections 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.6.

## **2.4 Limitations**

As relevant literature shows, the administration of an online questionnaire may involve problems in sampling frame, potentially leading the study to less reliable data (see e.g. Couper 2000); demographic variables may be questionable in online surveys, while sample bias and self selection bias may more frequently appear. What is mostly needed is a case-by-case deliberation regarding the appropriateness of conducting a study online (vs. offline). Of course, internet convenience samples are rather ill-suited "for producing mean-level estimates that are representative of the general population" (Denissen et al. 2010, p. 566).

In addition, when collecting demographic information, the researchers did not include any question about the nationality of the participants. Due to this fact, the research purposefully did not elaborate on national identity issues. However, the current pilot study could have offered safe grounds for conducting a more representative research on young adults' perceptions and behaviours during the crisis in Greece by constructing a larger sample, with even more accurate questions (exploring in detail the topic and adding more reliability and validity to the research).

### 3.Results and Discussion

#### *3.1 The psychological impact of the crisis*

Only 27 out of 253 students often felt peaceful and calm during the last months of 2014. One hundred ninety five participants (77.1%) state that they feel disappointed from “often” to “always”. Disappointment is strongly correlated to gender, with 83.6% of women and 60% of men experiencing disappointment often/always ( $\chi^2 = 24.826$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .313$ ) (see Graph 4).<sup>11</sup> These findings resonate with distress, negative emotions, and difficulties in everyday life, as well as with the severe conditions of deprivation experienced by the vast majority of the Greek population during the last years.

Employment was expected to reflect less feelings of disappointment. Results show that 83.3% of full-time employed students feel “often/always” disappointed, while 74.4% of part-time employed and 76.4% of unemployed feel similarly. Although disappointment is higher in full-time employed students, the difference is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 3.591$ ,  $p = .892$ ). Findings need further research to explore how working conditions, salary and studying demands influence emotional state.

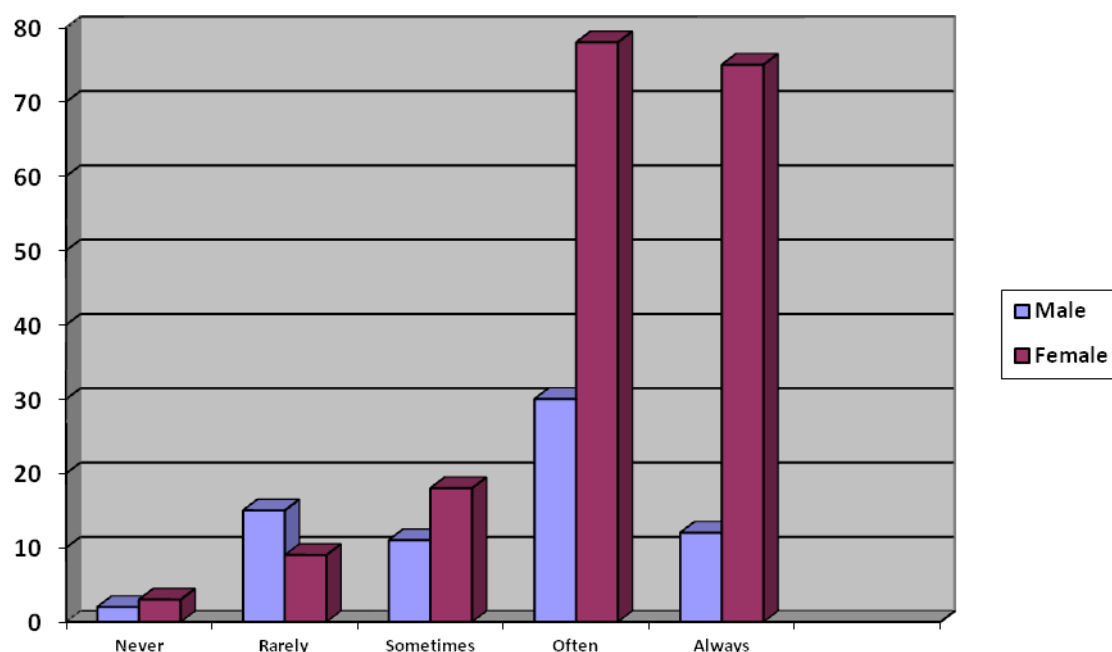
In contemporary Greece, modes of personal and social suffering are almost pervasive in ordinary experience: worsened socioeconomic conditions lead to greater morbidity, increased suicidality and major depression,<sup>12</sup> learned helplessness, less utilisation of health services, significant health inequalities, and a deteriorated mental health status in general (Economou et al. 2013; VANDOROS et al. 2013; ZAVRAS et al. 2013).

---

<sup>11</sup> Notably, female activity rates and employment to Greek population ratios are consistently lower, and unemployment rates higher, than those for males in the Greek labour market (Bell & Blanchflower 2015, p. 10).

<sup>12</sup> Recent research using official statistics demonstrates “a 35 percent jump in the suicide rate during the first two years of austerity programs, with researchers linking every percentage point in additional unemployment to an incremental increase in the suicide rate among working-age men. Reported depression rates also have increased from 3.3 to 8.2 percent between 2008 and 2011” (Zanolli 2015). Nevertheless, during the crisis, people have “multiple ways of reacting that go from radical and even violent practices towards individual solutions and depression. These reactions are differently predicted by people's position, feelings of vulnerability and sense of grievances and by different emotions” (Chrysoschoou et al. 2013, p. 48).

Graph 4. The relationship between gender and disappointment



### 3.2 Plans for the future

Only 8.7% of the students strongly agreed with the statement: “When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work”. In this context, the ability to plan and the capacity to accomplish personal goals and expectations become a highly controversial and discouraging issue for the youth (see Narotzky & Besnier 2014). According to Eurobarometer (2013), 68% of the Greeks have argued that the current situation does not allow them to dream and to make plans for the future. Young people experience extreme uncertainty on a daily basis. No one can offer them promises or guarantees about the future, so they arguably need to adjust to a constantly changing environment and reflexively embrace (or even exploit) risk, unpredictability, and ambivalence (Tsekeris 2010).

In addition, the constituent social imaginaries (or mythologies) of the post-war Greek society, namely the imaginaries of the boss, of economic growth, of occupational stability, and of representative civil democracy (Tsekeris et al. 2015), are being significantly weakened (or collapsed) during the crisis, thus creating a void that the new generation is called to fill up. Unavoidably, this condition provokes

painful biographical discontinuities,<sup>13</sup> ontological anxieties and existential dilemmas (of course, much more acute than those that previous generations had to face), which tend to disintegrate the individual and social selves (Tsekeris 2015).

### ***3.3 Family and interdependency***

The majority of the sample (73.5%) report they do not have enough financial resources to survive in such crisis situations. Family financial support shows a moderate correlation with employment ( $r_s = .385, p < .001$ ) and is highly significant for almost the half of the participants (52.6%), while only 9.1% of them states that such support has no or little importance. Moreover, 69.9% of the unemployed participants state that they feel “not at all/slightly” independent during the crisis. This is also stated by the students who are full-time employees (26.2%) and part-time employees (57.7%). Independence is weakly correlated to employment status ( $r_s = .291, p < .001$ ).

In Greece, the reliance of young adults upon their parents has always been relatively high in comparison to parental reliance in other European countries. Nowadays, however, the hope for independence (living autonomously), nourished by young people worldwide, is indefinitely postponed (Marvakis et al. 2013). According to Eurofound (2014a), young Greeks leave the parental home at 29, in comparison to southern and eastern European countries in which young people leave their home at earlier ages (e.g., 20 years old in Denmark). This trend, which mitigates the costs of unemployment, is undoubtedly rising, presumably in part due to rigidities in the housing market (Bell & Blanchflower 2015).

Of course, diffused uncertainty and destitution seriously affects individuals' ability to create their own families and households (Narotzky & Besnier 2014). But one should also take into account that young Greeks “are notoriously pampered by their family, due to a culture of strong family ties, underlined by centuries of social conservatism. Greek parents traditionally have a say in a young person's choices in profession, lifestyle, cuisine, even marital spouse!” (Ioannou 2014).

The vast majority of the participants (93.3%) agree/completely agree with the statement that parents and children need to stay attached to each other as much as possible. Yet, young students feel responsible for their parents, since 95.2% of the sample agree from “moderate” to “strongly” with the statement: “It is my duty to take care of my family, even if sacrifices are needed”. Young people seem to remain strongly tied with traditional values and with a linear way of thinking and behaving,

---

<sup>13</sup> See Michael Bury's (1982) notion of *biographical disruption*, which pertains to pain and suffering as factors that destroy the taken-for-granted assumptions about life and “bring individuals, their families and wider social networks face to face with the character of their relationships in stark form, disrupting normal rules of reciprocity and mutual support” (Bury 1982, p. 169).

without being able to modify the “traditional” or “hierarchical” dependency relationships between them and their parents (Marvakis et al. 2013).

### 3.4 Emigration

Khaleeli et al. (2013) observe that young people in Greece are forced to occupational emigration in order to flee from recession. The high emigration levels (or the “diaspora option”) can be concisely explained as “the result of the Greek economy’s inability to keep pace with their skills and knowledge, which further reduces the levels of competitiveness and the employment prospects for highly educated population in the country” (Labrianidis & Vogiatzis 2013, p. 544). This is reinforced by the continuing threat of a disorderly default, as well as by a number of persistent stagnating conditions, such as nepotism, corruption, fraud, cartelisation, patronage, familial and cliental links, lack of reforms, and political instability. Such negative conditions are perceived by young people as significant barriers to their social and professional upward mobility.<sup>14</sup>

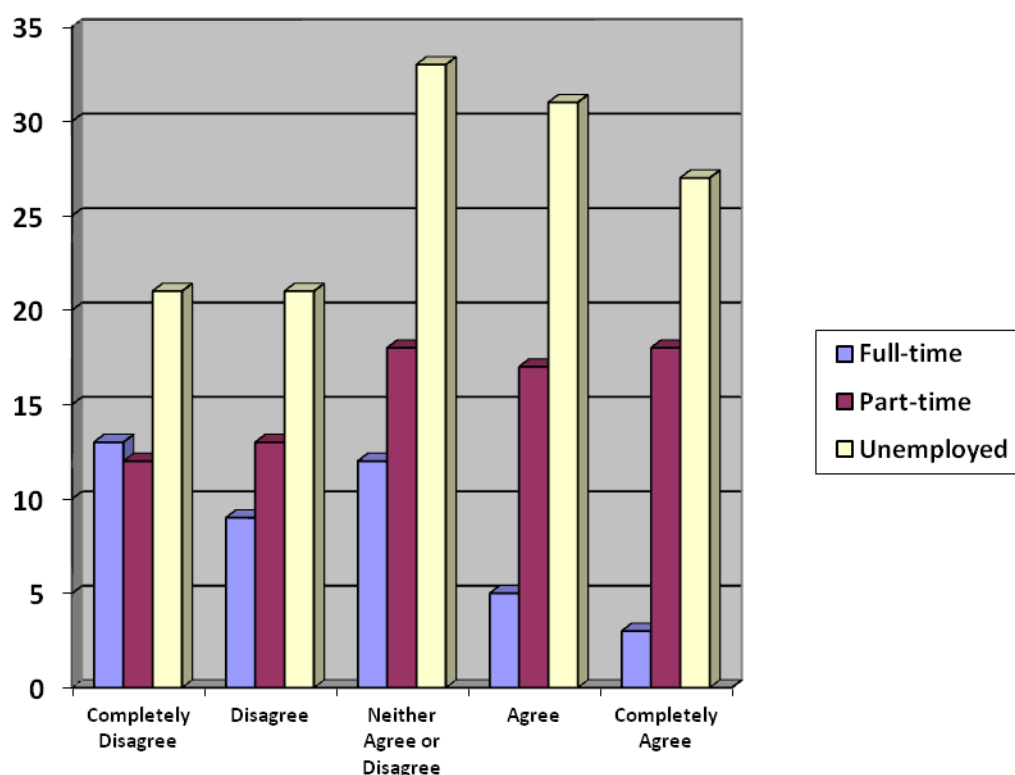
The current survey indicates that employment status and intention to emigrate show negligible correlation ( $r_s = .137$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Interestingly, 43.6% of the unemployed students intend to emigrate; the same intention is shared by 69.6% of the part-time employed students and by 19% of the full-time employed students (see Graph 5). Commitment to Greece and intention to emigrate are strongly correlated ( $\chi^2 = 41.876$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .203$ ). It is important to mention that 53.7% of the participants, who feel committed to Greece, do not intend to emigrate while 25.8 intend to do so. Also, 65% of the participants, who foresee that the living conditions will increasingly become more difficult in the next year, do not intend to emigrate as well. This highlights the fact that many young students, even if they feel “trapped” within contemporary Greek reality, do not intend to leave the country. It is thus demonstrated a kind of ambivalence emerging through the Greek crisis, or the ambivalent “poetics of discontent” (Theodossopoulos 2013, p. 209).

---

<sup>14</sup> Due to the phenomenon known as the *Greek Brain Drain*, “Greece is losing one of the key factors for economic growth and development, namely, its young, educated and skilled workforce just at the point when they are about to be most needed. It is impossible to imagine how an economic upturn can be introduced in the absence of a suitably young, educated and skilled workforce” (Sarantinos 2012, pp. 1, 4). Young people who decided to emigrate have the tendency to stay in the countries of destination and not to come back home in Greece to seek for a better job (see Barnato 2012).



Graph 5. The relationship between employment status and intention to emigrate



### 3.5 Sense of responsibility

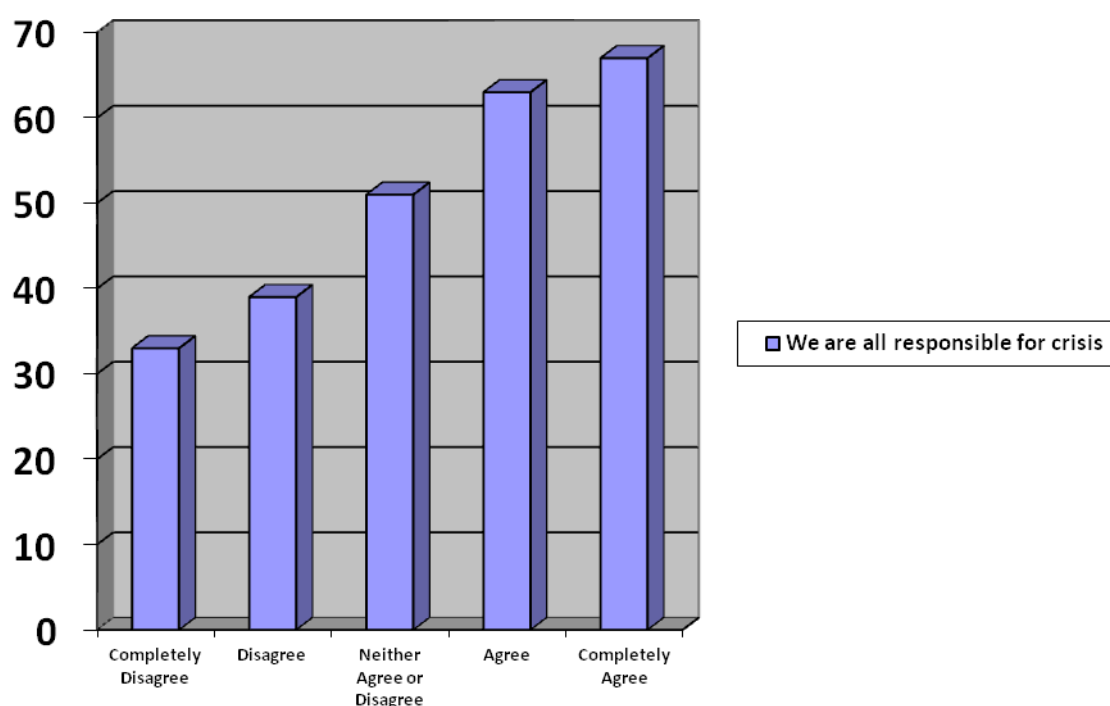
More than half of the sample (58.1%) believes that the Greek people are treated less fairly by the EU administration, in comparison to other European countries. According to Eurobarometer (2013), 86% of the Greeks disagree with the statement that their voice counts in Europe; instead, they seem to feel underprivileged in the EU.<sup>15</sup> Regarding the issue of blame attribution, however, 51.4% of the sample paradoxically agree and completely agree with the statement: “We are all responsible for the crisis” (see Graph 6). This perception arguably tends to become

<sup>15</sup> As Clements et al. (2014, p. 263) argue in their paper *‘We No Longer Love You, But We Don’t Want To Leave You’*: “The fact that public opinion in Greece has turned more Eurosceptic is hardly surprising. What is surprising though is that the decline in general EU support is accompanied by increase in support for the euro. [...] Instead of Greek citizens wanting less Europe, their critical attitudes represent a move away from the norm of consensus governance and depoliticisation of the content of EU policies to one of conflict and politicisation. The majority of Greek people seem to adopt a pragmatic approach where they are aware that being in the Euro and the EU is the realistic alternative despite the pain of austerity policies domestically. However, they are also signalling their discontent with the lack of effective solutions from Europe in terms of outputs”.

increased if compared to Samatas and Drakos's (2014) results, where the percentage of youngsters who feel responsible for the crisis amounts to 47.1%.

In the same line, Chalari (2014, p. 96) discerns young participants' recognition of their own part of responsibility "regarding the crisis by becoming critical towards established harmful mentalities and attitudes inherited by older generations".<sup>16</sup> These findings demonstrate that the crisis-ridden young individual can experience two conflicting feelings at the same time, such as feelings of victimisation and self-accountability/responsibility-taking. Such dynamic internal controversy renders sociopolitical and electoral behaviour increasingly unpredictable (Katerelos 2013).

**Graph 6. Students' sense of responsibility for the current crisis**



<sup>16</sup> This obviously contrasts to the "fear of responsibility" (*efthinofovia*), which Michael Herzfeld (1992, pp. 90, 143) identifies as a major and besetting problem within the Greek state. In general, young citizens have started to alter established mentalities and embodied behaviours, primarily on a personal and interpersonal level (Chalari 2014).

### 3.6 Social Action and Solidarity

According to Rüdig and Karyotis (2013), protests can be seen (a) as inextricably linked to the specific sociopolitical context and (b) as the output of experiencing material and symbolic deprivation. In our survey, almost all participants consider social transformation possible through solidarity, cooperation, and volunteerism. Participation in peaceful protest is moderately to strongly correlated with willingness to participate ( $r = .403$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and strongly correlated with the belief that a peaceful protest will help things to change ( $\chi^2 = 43.646$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .208$ ).

One out of three students (33.7%), from those who believe that a peaceful protest can help things to change, takes part in a protest “often” and “very often”. Yet, 31.3% of the sample, from those who state that they are willing to participate in a peaceful demonstration, does not take part in such kinds of actions (see Graph 7). Also, 41.5% of the students do not take part to any kind of protests (whether peaceful or violent). Interestingly, 80% of those who participate “very often” in violent protests also participate “very often” in peaceful demonstrations.

Furthermore, 37.6% of the students, from those who believe in the effectiveness of their participation to an effort to change the situation in Greece, take part in Voluntary Action Groups “often” and “very often”. Nevertheless, 55.7% of them, for the year 2014, did not participate in Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Moreover, 36.8% of the sample agrees that local youth councils could improve the current state of things.<sup>17</sup> As Bruhn (2011, p. 117) shows, a more cohesive and resilient community indeed “affords a greater chance that the individuals and families in it will rebound sooner”.

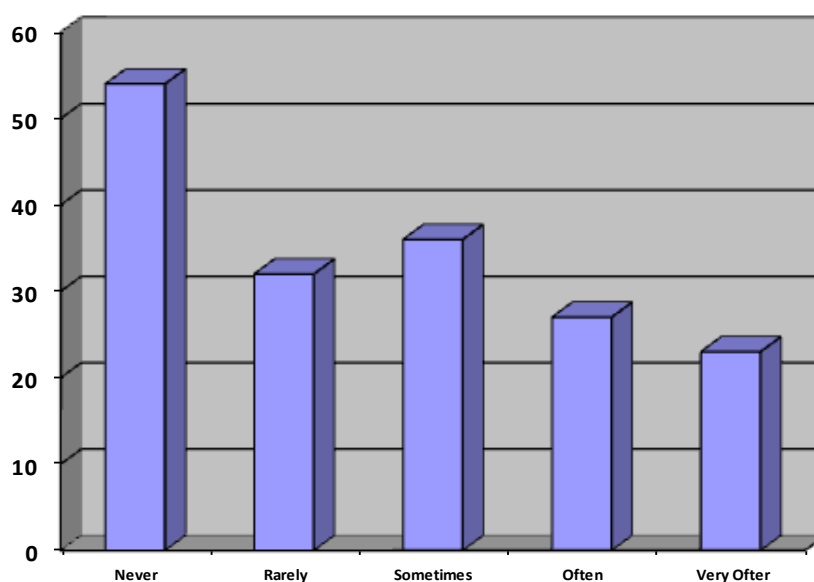
The critical dynamics of civic participation (social capital) is nowadays apparent, yet limited, particularly in the form of generating informal collectives, or formally structured solidarity networks and social economy groups (see e.g. Sotiropoulos & Bourikos 2014; Kantzara 2014; Rakopoulos 2014). Grass-root social movements promote radically new (bottom-up) governance structures, thus enabling diversified forms of social engagement and self-expression in an equitable and collaborative relationship between the state and the citizens, the government and the governed (Tsekeris et al. 2014).<sup>18</sup> According to Volonte (2012), solidarity contributes significantly to active citizenship and participation to democratic structures.

---

<sup>17</sup> Eurofound (2014b) notes that students are usually more engaged in voluntarism through their educational institution.

<sup>18</sup> In periods of severe crises, as Colin Crouch's (2004) theory of post-democracy suggests, the way is often surprisingly opened for new dynamic social formations, mobilisations, and identities, over against the apparent general tendency toward political passification and apathy. In particular, Davou and Demertzis (2013) argue that the most crucial variables that turn motivation into political action are hope and perceived political efficacy.

**Graph 7. Actual participation in peaceful demonstrations during 2014 from 172 students who state that are willing to participate**



## Concluding Remarks

In contemporary Greece, young people live in conditions of adversity, disharmony and difficulty. This calls for multilevel support and smart interventions that would empower them to attain control over their lives, to become drivers of qualitative sustainable change and to expand the democratic structures of crisis-inflicted Greek society. Such critical interventions should pertain to “better access to jobs and a respectable standard of living ... This includes better guidance for young jobseekers, training programmes that reflect market realities, incentives and support for new entrepreneurs, schemes to attract Greeks to return from abroad and are structuring of tertiary education to better prepare students for the demands of the Greek job market” (Malkoutzis 2011, p. 6).

The present study, conducted in Greece during a period of heavy socioeconomic crisis, demonstrates that students follow a rather pessimistic and linear mode of thinking. Hence, intense feelings of frustration, disappointment and guilty often emerge and prevail. Young people seem to reserve a strong interdependence with their families but not with the society at large. Their actual engagement in collective social action is therefore limited, in contrast to their alleged desire to get involved into it. As Mouzelis (2009, p. 44) rightly maintains, even if protests will continue, “they will lead neither to political nor to cultural changes. As long as the combination of a weak civil society and a strong partocracy prevails, there is very little room for hope”.

Also, even though students foresee deteriorated conditions, most of them still do not intend to emigrate (due to feelings of commitment to the country). The younger generation arguably needs to re-connect with the social and its support mechanisms, as well as to effectively search for new fruitful configurations regarding social, political and economic citizenship (given the general disaffection towards old or traditional forms of citizenship). For contemporary social science and research, in some sense, this is a heavy task of carrying “the weight of the world” (Bourdieu et al. 1999), which oppresses young people and causes them to suffer in numerous ways.<sup>19</sup> Further empirical research on this topic is required and is underway, promising

---

<sup>19</sup> To use Zygmunt Bauman’s words, social science should be strategically aimed at “disclosing the possibility of living together differently, with less misery or no misery: the possibility daily withheld, overlooked or unbelieved” (Bauman 2000, p. 215). Furthermore, a genuine critical approach, which *discovers the social in the individual* (Bourdieu et al. 1999), should teach how to effectively avoid locating the causes of poverty, exclusion and suffering in individual failings – that is, how not to revive the naïve, scientifically ungrounded and politically dangerous classification of the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor.

exciting intellectual developments, especially in the labour and youth policy domains.

## References

- Arendt, H. (1968). *Men in Dark Times*. Harmondsworth: Pelican.
- Barnato, K. (2012). Greece's Young and Bright Flee Crisis and Corruption. *CNBC*, 1 May 2012. [www.cnbc.com/id/47228987](http://www.cnbc.com/id/47228987)
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bell, D. N., & Blanchflower, D. G. (2015). Youth unemployment in Greece: measuring the challenge. *IZA Journal of European Labor Studies*, 4(1), 1-25.
- Bourdieu, P., Accardo, A., & Parkhurst-Ferguson, P. (1999). *The weight of the world: Social suffering in contemporary society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bruhn, J.G. (2011). *The sociology of community connections*. New York: Springer.
- Bury, M. (1982). Chronic illness as biographical disruption. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 4(2), 167-181.
- Chalari, A. (2014). The Subjective Experiences of Three Generations during the Greek Economic Crisis. *World Journal of Social Science Research*, 1(1), 89-109.
- Chrysoschoou, X., Papastamou, S., & Prodromitis, G. (2013). Facing the Economic Crisis in Greece: The Effects of Grievances, Real and Perceived Vulnerability, and Emotions Towards the Crisis on Reactions to Austerity Measures. *JSSE-Journal of Social Science Education*, 12(1), 41-49.
- Clements, B., Nanou, K., & Verney, S. (2014). 'We No Longer Love You, But We Don't Want To Leave You': The Eurozone Crisis and Popular Euroscepticism in Greece. *Journal of European Integration*, 36(3), 247-265.
- Couper, M.P. (2000). Review: Web Surveys: A review of issues and approaches. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 64(4), 464-494.
- Crouch, C. (2004). *Post-Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Davou, B., & Demertzis, N. (2013). Feeling the Greek financial crisis. In: N. Demertzis (ed.). *Emotions in Politics* (pp. 93-123). London: Palgrave-MacMillan.
- Denissen, J. J., Neumann, L., & van Zalk, M. (2010). How the internet is changing the implementation of traditional research methods, people's daily lives, and the way in which developmental scientists conduct research. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 34(6), 564-575.
- Economou, M., Madianos, M., Peppou, L.E., Patelakis, A., & Stefanis, C.N. (2013). Major depression in the era of economic crisis: a replication of a cross-sectional study across Greece. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 145(3), 308-314.
- Eurobarometer (2013). Eurobarometer 80: Public opinion in the European Union.
- Brussels: European Commission. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)
- Eurobarometer (2014). Flash Eurobarometer of the European Parliament: European Youth in 2014. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2014/youth/eb\\_395\\_synthesis\\_youth\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2014/youth/eb_395_synthesis_youth_en.pdf)
- Eurofound (2014a). Mapping youth transitions in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Eurofound (2014b). Social situation of young people in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Featherstone, K. (2014). The political challenges of institutional reform in Greece. *Policy Network*, 11 February 2014. [www.policy-network.net/pno\\_detail.aspx?ID=4578](http://www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=4578)
- Ghosh, P. (2012). Greece: Economic Crisis Sparks Surge In Suicides. *International Business Times*, 16 May 2012. [www.ibtimes.com/greece-economic-crisis-sparks-surge-suicides-698703](http://www.ibtimes.com/greece-economic-crisis-sparks-surge-suicides-698703)

- Golemis, H. (2010). Can PIIGS fly? Transform!.. *European Journal for alternative thinking and political dialogue*, 6(1), 129-136.
- Greek Statistical Authority (2014). Press Release April 2014. [http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/A0101/PressReleases/A0101\\_SJO02\\_DT\\_MM\\_04\\_2014\\_01\\_F\\_GR.pdf](http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/A0101/PressReleases/A0101_SJO02_DT_MM_04_2014_01_F_GR.pdf)
- Herzfeld, M. (1992). *The Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heyer, J.A. (2013). People Power: Young Greeks Team Up to Combat Crisis. *Spiegel Online*, 13 August 2013. [www.spiegel.de/international/europe/young-greeks-helping-each-other-to-combat-crisis-a-916123.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/young-greeks-helping-each-other-to-combat-crisis-a-916123.html)
- Ioannou, T. (2014). Most young Greeks still living with mom and dad. *Times of Change*, 27 January 2014. [www.thetoc.gr/eng/new-trends/article/most-young-greeks-still-living-with-mom-and-dad](http://www.thetoc.gr/eng/new-trends/article/most-young-greeks-still-living-with-mom-and-dad)
- Kantzara, V. (2014). Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Emergent Practices and Potential for Paradigmatic Change. Notes from Greece. *Studi di Sociologia*, 3(1), 261-280.
- Katerelos, I. (2013). *Chaos and Order in Social Systems. The HESIOD Model: Social Dynamics Simulations*. Athens: Papazisis Publications [in Greek]
- Khaleeli, H., Smith, H., & Smith, D. (2013). The great escape: European migrants fleeing the recession. *The Guardian*, 5 September 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/jan/30/great-escape-european-migrants-fleeing-recession>
- Kolodko, G. (2015). Africanization of Greece. *EconoMonitor*, 6 July 2015. [www.economonitor.com/blog/2015/07/africanization-of-greece/](http://www.economonitor.com/blog/2015/07/africanization-of-greece/)
- Kraatz, S. (2015). *Youth Unemployment in Greece: Situation before the Government Change*. Policy Department A, European Parliament Think Tank. [www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL\\_BRI\(2015\)542220](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_BRI(2015)542220)
- Labrianidis, L., & Vogiatzis, N. (2013). The mutually reinforcing relation between international migration of highly educated labour force and economic crisis: the case of Greece. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 13(4), 525-551.
- Malkoutzis, N. (2011). *Young Greeks and the crisis: The danger of losing a generation*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/08465.pdf>
- Marvakis, A., Anastasiadou, M., Petrissi, I., & Amagnostopoulou, T. (2013). "Youth shows the way" - but whither? Youth and extreme right in Greece. *FES-Athens*. 2 February 2014. <http://www.fes-athens.org/pages/ellinikos/draisis/enantia-stin-akrodexia.php>
- Mouzelis, N. (2009). On the December Events. In: S. Economides & V. Monastiriotis (Eds.). *The Return of Street Politics?: Essays on the December Riots in Greece* (pp. 41-44). London: The Hellenic Observatory LSE.
- Narotzky, S., & Besnier, N. (2014). Crisis, Value, and Hope: Rethinking the Economy. *Current Anthropology*, 55(S9), S4-S16.
- Rakopoulos, T. (2014). Resonance of Solidarity: Meanings of a Local Concept in Anti-austerity Greece. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 32(2), 313-337.
- Rüdiger, W., & Karyotis, G. (2014). Who protests in Greece? Mass opposition to austerity. *British Journal of Political Science*, 44(3), 487-513.
- Samatas, M., & Drakos, P. (2014). Economic Crisis: Attitudes and Perceptions of Students at the University of Crete. In: S. Zamparloukou & M. Kousis (Eds.). *Social Facets of the Crisis in Greece* (pp. 327-370). Athens: Pedio Publications [in Greek]
- Sarantinos, V. (2012). *Greece: The economic crisis and the brain drain*. Policy Paper for The Centre for Employment Studies Research (CESR), University of the West of England, Bristol, UK.
- Sotiropoulos, D., & Bourikos, D. (2014). Economic Crisis, Social Solidarity and the Voluntary Sector in Greece. *Journal of Power, Politics & Governance*, 2(2), 33-53.
- Standing, G. (2011). The Precariat – The new dangerous class. *Policy Network*, 24 May 2011. [www.policy-network.net/pno\\_detail.aspx?ID=4004](http://www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=4004)



- Theodossopoulos, D. (2013). Infuriated with the Infuriated?. *Current Anthropology*, 54(2), 200-221.
- Tsekeris, C. (2010). Chaos and Unpredictability in Social Thought: General Considerations and Perspectives. *Sociologija. Mintis ir veiksmas*, 27(2), 34-47.
- Tsekeris, C. (2015). Contextualising the self in contemporary social science. *Contemporary Social Science*, 10(1), 1-14.
- Tsekeris, C., Kaberis, N., & Pinguli, M. (2015). The Self in Crisis: The Experience of Personal and Social Suffering in Contemporary Greece. *GreeSE: LSE Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, Paper No 92, 1-33.
- Tsekeris, C., Tsekeris, T., & Theodoris, T. (2014). Economic Crisis, Social Capital and Civil Society: From Social Networks to Economic Growth. *GPSG Working Paper Series*, Paper No 15, 1-6.
- Tsianos, V. (2014). It's the Youth, Stupid! Greece's most undervalued asset. *Eurocrisis in the Press*, 07 July 2014. [www.blogs.lse.ac.uk/eurocrisispress/2014/07/07/its-the-youth-stupid-greeces-most-undervalued-asset/](http://www.blogs.lse.ac.uk/eurocrisispress/2014/07/07/its-the-youth-stupid-greeces-most-undervalued-asset/)
- Tsoukalis, L. (2013). International Bubbles, European Currency Union, and National failures: the Case of Greece and the Euro-crisis. In A. Triantafyllidou, R. Gropas & H. Kouki (Eds.). *The Greek Crisis and European Modernity* (pp. 25-43). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vandonos, S., Hessel, P., Leone, T., & Avendano, M. (2013). Have Health Trends Worsened in Greece as a Result of the Financial Crisis? A Quasi-Experimental Approach. *The European Journal of Public Health*, 23(5), 727-731.
- Volontè, L. (2012). The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis report. Doc 12951, Resolution 1885 and Recommendation 2002 (2012), Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. [www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=18918&lang=en](http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=18918&lang=en)
- Zanolli, L. (2015). Greek Crisis Has Seen a Rise in Suicides and Depression. *Newsweek*, 13 July 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/greek-crisis-has-seen-rise-suicides-and-depression-353056>
- Zavras, D., Tsiantou, V., Pavi, E., Mylona, K., & Kyriopoulos, J. (2013). Impact of Economic Crisis and other Demographic and Socio-Economic Factors on Self-Rated Health in Greece. *The European Journal of Public Health*, 23(2), 206-210.



**CRISIS  
OBSERVATORY**

**ΕΛΙΑΜΕΠ**  **ΕΛΙΑΜΕΡ**

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΗΣ & ΕΞΩΤΕΡΙΚΗΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗΣ  
HELLENIC FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN & FOREIGN POLICY

49, Vas.Sofias Ave. 10676 Athens Greece | Tel. +30 210 7257 110 | Fax +30 210 7257 114 | E-mail [info@crisisobs.gr](mailto:info@crisisobs.gr)