Representations of Democracy for Young Adults in Greece before and during the Crisis: cultural dualism revisited through an over-time qualitative study

Thalia Magioglou

GreeSE Paper No.110
Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe

JUNE 2017
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A Theoretical Presentation of Results</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Methodology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 The Sociopolitical Context</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 The Sampling</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 The profile of the young participants</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Data Analysis</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Results</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 An overarching pattern, two ways of thinking a gradual and a dualistic/oppositional thinking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Gradual way of thinking of the minority</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Dualistic/oppositional thinking (majority of the participants)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conclusion</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Representations of Democracy for Young Adults in Greece before and during the Crisis: cultural dualism revisited through an over-time qualitative study

Thalia Magioglou

ABSTRACT

This paper is a synthesis of my over-time research on the social representations of Democracy among young adults in Greece, between 18 and 30 years old, before and during the crisis. The research follows a grounded theory, qualitative and political psychology approach. The presentations, based on the results of the discourse analysis, reveal an overarching pattern and revisit the construct of cultural dualism in Greece, introduced by Diamandouros, (1994; 2013), assuming an underdog majority is opposed to a reformist and modernist minority. My research results, reinforce the argument of a cultural dualism but they point to a different direction as to the character and the content of this opposition. When it comes to young adults, I observe the presence of two discursive styles, related to different definitions of democracy: a majority, with a ‘dualistic’, or oppositional way of thinking, is compared to a moderate minority with a ‘gradual’, moderate, way of thinking. Nevertheless, the two ways of thinking are presented as cultural and symbolic resources (Valsiner, 2007; Zittoun, 2006), available to different populations, depending on the socioeconomic context and not as permanent characteristics of individuals or groups. These ways of thinking represent the subjective positioning of the participants in a perceived network of power relations. Before the crisis, the different ways of thinking, relate partly, to intergenerational inequality, and partly to experienced economic and social inequalities. The participants were brought up to become financially dependent to the generation of their parents, with a feeling of personal and political inefficacy. During the crisis, the practical conditions become more difficult for their survival but young adults become more empowered vis-a-vis to their families and present in the public sphere. In this case, ways of thinking correlate with socioeconomic inequalities and the new divide between those who justify and those who oppose the memoranda.

*Thalia Magioglou, Visiting Fellow at the Hellenic Observatory/European Institute, L.S.E., and researcher affiliated to the Centre Edgar Morin/IIAC, E.H.E.S.S, Paris, France. Email: e.magioglou@lse.ac.uk
Representations of Democracy for Young Adults in Greece before and during the Crisis: cultural dualism revisited through an over-time qualitative study

1. Introduction

This paper is a synthesis of my over-time research on the social representations of Democracy for young adults in Greece, focusing on the results of the discourse analysis. It proposes a model for the way common sense, or non-expert thinking, create conflicting identities and representations on democracy, associated to different cognitive and discursive styles. The methodology adopted is that of grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

More precisely, the research is based on four studies, conducted at different periods of time in Athens, Greece. The first study takes place at the end of the 90s, the second in 2009, just after the revolt of December 2008. The last two studies take place during the crisis: in 2011 when the effects of the economic crisis are felt by the population and the last one in 2015 and 2016, after the formation of the Syriza-Anel government and the referendum in July 2015. The participants are young adults between 18 and 30 years old, from different social backgrounds. They have been interviewed in Athens, Greece. I have asked them: “if I tell you the word Democracy, what comes to your mind”?
The objective is to study the social representations of democracy among the Greek youth over time: before and during the economic crisis. More specifically, the research questions addressed are: Is democracy constructed as a desired form of ‘polity’, and how do young adults position themselves in relation to it? Has the crisis affected the way democracy is represented?

2. A Theoretical Presentation of Results

The quantity of the data, as well as the theoretical and conceptual character of Grounded Theory, offers the possibility of a theoretical presentation of the results, different from the linear logic adopted in quantitative studies (Flick, 2014; Sandelowski, 1998). In other words, the grounded theoretical construction serves as an organizing principle for the structure of the paper, despite the fact that it constitutes the last step of the research process, for clarity purposes.

The discourse of the Greek youth gathered through the interviews, is characterized, in this study, as a form of ‘common sense’ or ‘lay’ thinking, conceptualised in social psychology by Moscovici (1969) as a form of social thinking different from scientific thinking. Lay thinking on democracy, is mainly differentiated in this research both from ideological and from expert thinking, in terms of a. the way each form of thinking establishes its reading as ‘hegemonic’ b. the absence/presence of an institutionalized social control on what can be legitimated or not, c.
their dialogical or monological style (Markova, 2003; Hermans, 2012; Magioglou, 2014).

The approach developed both through research and teaching (Magioglou, Obadia forthcoming) argues that certain notions such as ‘democracy’ and ‘economy’ present particularities: they are characterized as historical, social and cultural constructs with an important axiological component: they relate to the question of ‘common good’ for lay thinking.

This research assumes that representing a polyvalent notion such as ‘democracy’, brings people to talk about their desires, both collective and personal; or of the lack of their desired state of affairs. It also shows how they construct opposing social identities (the people, the youth, the educated minority, the Greeks) which challenge, reinterpret or share mainstream, media and expert understandings.

‘Democracy’ is embedded in ambiguity, invented in Greece but re-appropriated through the institutions of the representative system following the model of Western republics (Tziovas, 2001). It is considered as part of Greece’s cultural heritage and is present in the public discourse and the different media. The education system is also insisting on the importance of ancient Greece and democracy, in a discriminatory way compared to other more recent historical periods (Frangoudaki and Dragona, 1997). This choice reflects a political choice in the construction of a national social identity (Herzfeld, 2016). At the same time, young adults have already some knowledge, but also some practices (school, university elections, mobilisations), building up to their understanding of democracy.
3. Methodology

3.1 The Sociopolitical Context

This over-time research on the social representations of democracy among the Greek youth is based on non-directive interviews with a population of young adults from 18 to 30 years old, who have already the right to vote. It is composed of four different studies that have been conducted in Athens at four critical moments, before and during the economic crisis: a. at the end of the 90’s, just a few years before the Olympic Games when the pro-European socialist Simitis was prime minister (30 interviews); b. More interviews were conducted in 2009 (16 interviews), which reflect the impact of the December 2008 revolt in Athens and all the big cities, during the conservative government of Karamanlis; c. In 2011 (16 interviews), the temporality was chosen in order to reflect the effect of the economic crisis, while Papandreou of PASOK is prime minister. The interviews take place a few months before the launch of the ‘aganaktismeni’ or ‘indignados’ movement, against austerity policies; d. Another series of interviews was conducted from November 2015 to February 2016 (31 interviews), one year after the first election of the left anti-austerity party, Syriza, with the Independent Greeks to government office. The referendum of July 2015 and the refugee crisis intensify the existing dynamics. This period will be argued to be another turning point in contemporary Greek political history.

All the participants have been born during the 3rd Greek republic, after the end of the dictatorship in 1974. They have all grown up during the ‘good times’ of a relative social and political peace and economic growth (with the exception of those who are 18 in 2016 and have been
adolescents when the effects of the crisis are experienced in everyday life). However, this period is also marked by intergenerational inequalities and relevant stagnation of the upward social mobility, a phenomenon present in most other European —and not only— societies (i.e. Chauvel, 2010; Stiglitz, 2016).

3.2 Sampling

In a qualitative study with a grounded theory perspective (i.e. Bauer and Gaskell, 2000), I am looking for participants with profiles varying as much as possible, considering that they contribute to different ways of constructing their representation of democracy. The participants of the different studies are interviewed in Athens, but a number of them have arrived from different regions, looking for a job, or to study. Athens, the capital of Greece and birthplace of the ancient democracy, concentrates half of Greece’s population with Piraeus and the suburbs. Even those who do not live there, are visiting for different reasons. The city is composed of neighborhoods with different economic, social and political cultures. The already existing forms of social segregation and inequality, have been intensified with the effect of migration in the recent years (i.e. Maloutas, 2010). The participants are young adults between 18 and 30 years old, Greek citizens (there are two exceptions in the second study, of 17-year-olds). Their social profile and their political orientation are as diverse as possible: different occupation, with or without studies, employed, unemployed, with parents educated or not, well off or struggling to make ends meet. Their profiles cover a broad spectrum of possible political positions as well as apolitical. In each study, the
participants are different individuals but the criteria for their choice as part of the sample remain similar. They are approached either through their contacts, or with a snowball technique, and finally directly at their work (i.e. hairdresser, student,) or their social space (i.e. work, study, café).

Non-directive research interviews have been conducted, where there is only one question: “if I tell you the word Democracy, what comes to your mind”? The length of the interviews is on average 1 hour and a half with many exceptions of 3 hours and a few 35 minutes. They have been recorded and transcribed verbatim (Magioglou, 2008).

3.3 The profile of the young participants

The information the interviewees have shared about their everyday life offers a context where their discourse on democracy can be situated. The majority of the participants of all the studies, depend financially on their family, in different ways, independently of their educational and social background. In many cases, they still live with their parents and share the expenses, in others, their family is paying or contributing financially to their accommodation, their studies, their car, house or decorator, for those who are most fortunate. Among those who work, especially after the crisis, many work in the family business. There are those who are still at school, although over 18, in order to get a certificate as plumbers or electricians for example, those who study in different fields, or who are unemployed after or without any studies. Many students have part-time jobs to finance part of their expenses,

---

1 I have written extensively on the conceptualisation and practice of non-directive interview for research from a psychological, social and political perspective in these articles, in French.)
others work for their family business, which could be a cafe, a company for the technical control of elevators, and there are others who are interns for the civil service (through family connections). Even those who dispose of an income allowing them to live, they are not certain of the duration of their job—usually under a short-term contract. The majority lives in Athens, (with few exceptions coming to Athens for a short visit), but many are born in different parts of the country and have arrived to Athens in order to study or to work.

3.4 Data Analysis

Concerning data analysis, there is a triangulation of different methods: a thematic content analysis (Bardin, 2013), a homogeneity analysis on the themes, a narrative analysis (Magioglou 2005; 2013) and a discourse analysis based on the use of connectors (Magioglou forthcoming), were conducted. The results presented are based on the discourse analysis which draws upon linguistic theories in pragmatics (Anscombre and Ducrot, 1983) and is the result of my collaboration with the French linguists Carel and Ducrot. The Greek linguist Kalokerinos, a student of Ducrot, has also been consulted as to the relevance of using linguistic theories on connectors developed for the French language, in order to analyse the discourse of the Greek youth (Kalokerinos and Katratzola, 1999).

The research adopts a constructivist perspective of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000), where the objective is to arrive gradually to a conceptualization based on the field work. In this constructivist version, it is important to allow the perspectives of the participants to emerge,
this is the reason why non directive interviews have been chosen as a research tool. Nevertheless, the research question and the conceptual framework constructed, are produced by the researcher who highlights certain aspects of the social realities. This epistemological stance positions my research in an interpretative logic (Charmaz, opcit).

4. Results

4.1 An overarching pattern, two ways of thinking a gradual and a dualistic/oppositional thinking

In this paper, I focus only on the results of the discourse analysis, revealing the way the participants express themselves and the way the different themes mentioned and linked together. A discourse analysis, as an interdisciplinary practice, “entails here the interplay of language, practice and context. The question is to account for the practical uses that are made of language by certain people at a given time and place” (Angermuller, 2015). My analysis is based on the use of linguistic material, such as linguistic connectors, serving as indicators, in order to follow the participants who construct the meaning of democracy, they identify with or oppose social identities in a complex network of power. The analysis has yielded two ‘ways of thinking’, which function as organising principles of the participants’ discourse. They differentiate two groups of people, and what they have in common is their discursive style, as well as a gradual and moderate or dualistic/oppositional way to represent democracy and life (and project themselves—or not—to the future).
The indicators of this analysis, which differentiate the two ways of thinking, have been decided in collaboration with two French linguists in pragmatics, Oswald Ducrot, and Marion Carel. The results show two discursive styles present in the interviews, that I associate to two ‘ways of thinking’: either a gradual and consensual or a dualistic way of thinking (Magioglou 2005).

I rely on the theory of integrative pragmatics developed by Anscombre and Ducrot (i.e. 1983) on the one hand: polyphony of the discourse, argumentation, role of the opposition and negations. On the other hand, I am oriented towards the perspective of a group of linguists based in Geneva on the role of the reformulation connectors, i.e. ‘in other words’ where different proposals of a phrase are differentiated without cancelling each other (Roulet, 1987; Rossari, 1997).

The ‘ways of thinking’ are expressed through the use of specific linguistic connectors: in the case of ‘gradual thinking’, those who use them form an ‘optimistic’ group as to their own position and express a feeling of empowerment. They are mostly using reformulation connectors (Roulet, ibid; Rossari, ibid), whereas for the ‘pessimistic’ group there is a preference for opposition connectors such as ‘but’, and negations (Piaget, 1974). Other indicators were related to consensual or gradual thinking such as the use or not of conditional discourse, irony and the use of specific nouns.

These ways of thinking also correlate with different aspects of the representation of democracy and form two groups. The first group is numerically smaller, but it is dominant in terms of its current but mostly its aspiring social position. It represents about one-third of the
participants in the two largest studies, and it is also present in the two others.

What the members of each group have in common is mainly their feeling of personal empowerment or the lack of it; both perceived and aspired, in other words, their optimism or pessimism as to the way they represent their personal future and the possibility to become financially and socially integrated in the future (Magioglou, 2005; 2008).

The following extract, from my first study, at the end of the ‘90s, describes the two ways of thinking. Marina, is a 19-year-old, a rebel in her upper class family. Her parents are both well educated, successful professionally and cosmopolitan. She has failed her school degree so she takes again the last class. She is an aspiring artist, politically active and has already confronted the police while taking part in demonstrations. During the interview she adopts a ‘dualistic’ and absolute thinking, while she attributes the ‘consensual’ or ‘gradual thinking’ to her father, a 55 year old and corporate director of a big company:

“... *democracy doesn’t exist, nowhere, nowhere, nowhere*, I am telling you, *nowhere*, for me. *Ok, maybe* what I say is pessimistic, it is, **but** I think that those who pretend democracy exist, just lie. If you asked my father if democracy exists, he will tell you *it exists in general, nevertheless, in certain cases it doesn’t*. This is **not right**. *What does it mean in this case it exists and in the other it doesn’t*? *Either democracy exists everywhere and always, or it doesn’t exist at all*. *Democracy doesn’t exist*”.


It is interesting to note that she is sympathetic to the anarchist movement, whereas her two year elder brother is close to the center-right party of Nea Democratia. A lot of interviewees have different political positions from the other members of their family, and it could also coincide with a different way of thinking or of expressing their views. The dynamic of their ‘microcosmos’, their social relations, becomes very important (Hall and Lamont, 2013).

4.2 **Gradual way of thinking of the minority**

Gradual (consensual) thinking indicators:

- Reformulation connectors (i.e. in other words); (Roulet, 1987; Rossari, 1997)
- Use of specific nouns (my mother)
- Use of conditional and hypothetical phrases (if we were still living in the middle ages, we wouldn’t need electricity...)
- Use of rhetorical Questions

In this way of thinking, ideas are not presented as either true or false. Interviewees take distances and endorse partly what they describe. Rossari (1990) specifies that reformulation connectors like ‘anyway’, ‘finally’, and phrases like ‘I don’t know’, introduce a proposition with a new interpretation. This interpretation is added to the interpretation of the first proposition of the phrase. So if there are two propositions linked with this type of connector “p in other words q” there is no opposition between p and q neither a choice, in the way that argumentative connectors suggest. By using questions, the truth of the phrase pronounced is ‘suspended’ (Martin. 1987).
4.2.1 First Study, before the crisis: Feeling politically minors at 26, looking after their career and wellbeing

If they feel empowered and hopeful for their personal future, the interviewees adopt a consensual or ‘gradual’ way of thinking. In this case, democracy is represented as a step by step process and there is a possibility for them, to act in a way that they see effective. At least in what they call their “microcosm”. In the first study, before the crisis, one-third of the participants are part of this category. They are concentrating on this microcosm, the space between the private and public sphere where they feel effective. In other words, they concentrate on their ‘private interest’ (Hirschman, 2002), they focus on a future financial integration or their personal career. They consider the public sphere and the ‘common good’ as something to deal with ‘later’ in life. They are citizens ‘in waiting’, and feel minors when it comes to the public sphere and their actual financial independence, even if they are 23 or 26 year’s old. For example:

“What interests me more than anything is to feel good, to do what I have to do for my career and that’s all... politics is not something that interests me, ... I don’t know why, ... actually, I have never thought for what reason, ... you see I do what I have to do, I don’t harm anyone, neither my country nor other people, all right, because I know my limits, apart from that, ... honestly, I think that it is irresponsible what I do, if everybody said the same thing there wouldn’t exist anything, there would be... chaos ? How could I express that? ...There would be ...nothing, anyone could take the power...”
This extract belongs to a 23-year-old young woman who has studied English literature and is about to start working by giving private lessons. She is living with her parents and the money she earns is for clothing and entertainment. Interviewees who share this position not only do they feel politically and financially dependent, but they feel ‘minors’ before the crisis: they consider that their participation in the social and political affairs of the county simply does not count. It is their parents who deal with that. Political and financial integration seem to arrive at about the age of 50 (it is approximatively the age of their parents).

“... I think that the young people even if they have an opinion, they are really influenced by their parents because of their financial dependency and the kind of socialization they have received... actually, what I mean is that they lack maturity and they make political choices on the basis of emotions”.

It is also common to use a third person in order to criticize a group they belong to, like the “Young People” as if they were at the age of their parents.

“I am not sufficiently informed on political questions; I cast a white ballot most of the times. What I do is not very responsible, however, in this way, I don’t influence the choice of those who will be in the government. It is probably because I don’t have serious problems, I live with my family who protects me. If I were at the place of my father I would be interested in politics; he works, the laws influence him directly, they don’t influence me for the moment. I have only just started working”.
For those who can rely financially on their family, priority is given to their education and to finding a job fit to their expectations and that of their families. The political sphere is a kind of luxury for people who work: their parents. Those young people who are involved in politics, ‘the others’ are judged as immature in any case. This category of young people is, in a way, more ‘privileged’ in the sense that its members are more optimistic about the chances of their personal ‘success’. However, they do not all come from well-educated or financially well-off families. They think they are following the ‘Zeitgeist’, which is pointing towards a ‘neoliberal’ model of society, where financial activities, the private sector, technical know-how and the hard sciences are privileged compared to activities in the social, cultural, or artistic sphere.

4.2.2 Second Study, 2009- Reversal with the riots in Athens and the big cities: the powerless of the previous study feel empowered

In the interviews conducted in 2009, a month and a half after the start of the revolt of 2008, triggered by the death of an adolescent caused by a policeman (Economides and Monastiriotis (eds), 2009), the tendency is reversed. Although the number of interviews I have from this period is smaller, the results indicate that those who have revolted or identify with the demonstrations are the ones with gradual thinking: they use questions and reformulations, whereas those who are against them find themselves in a dominated position among the youth; they adopt the oppositional style using mainly ‘but’ and opposing a ‘good’ democracy to the reality of anarchy which they disapprove. And this reality corresponds to the riots.
Bursting into the public sphere in a violent way gave a feeling of ‘power’ to the profiles who were feeling powerless in the first study, and this fact changes their argumentation style. They use a more assertive and dialogical style (use of verbs such as ‘should’ and questions-answers). The extracts that follow come from interviewees who either participated themselves actively in the revolt or endorse and justify it.

In the 2009 study, I have included two 17-year-olds, still at school, because adolescents have also participated very actively in the riots and the revolt that followed November 2008.

The first two extracts underline the need for ‘better’ quality of political leaders so that ‘the people’, a group with which they identify, is taken into consideration. The first extract is from the interview of an adolescent whose father has a small business (butcher) and they are burdened by loans from banks.

“Democracy is the power of the people that is what the word means, what we learn at school, do you feel for example that we live in a democratic state? No. Why not? What is the problem, and the people do not exercise power? We don’t have the right leaders to guide us, and they are not in power for the sake of people, they are there for their own interest, they are indifferent to young people, to education, the same thing, they don’t care for the elderly...”

The following extract comes from the interview with a young woman working at a video game store. She has studied for a year in the UK and
then came back to Greece. She both identifies and distances herself from the social identity of the ‘Greeks’. When she is critical she uses the pronoun ‘they’, and in other moments she refers to the Greeks as ‘we’. This is very usual in the interviews, and it concerns other social identities such as the ‘young people’ and the ‘people’. She considers that the situation is the result both of the absence of a representation of ‘common good’ for the Greeks, both for the voters and for their political leaders. Although generic nouns are used (Kleiber, 1990), and there is a ‘historical’ overview, there are prescriptions for action and not negations or oppositional discourse. Her discursive style is closer to a gradual form of thinking where different ideas can be presented without cancelling each other.

“I think that power is given to the wrong people, it is the mentality of the Greeks who, once they have some power they use it in the wrong way. Greece has a long history, people were starving, wars… they had to look after themselves and their family and that was all. We the Greeks don’t have a good relationship with power, and the leaders who were good, were very few. We go from bad to worse and we have arrived in some kind of … extreme poverty (exathlïosi)... we need to get rid of these leaders and to find some new ones”.

The following extract belongs to the discourse of a 16-year-old who has participated in the riots as he has mentioned in another part of the interview. Democracy is related to justice, but a ‘good’ form of anarchy represents the ideal society. A video game, the ‘World of Warcraft’ is used as a metaphor for his ideal polity.
“Democracy in Greece? Democracy is the fascism of the multitude... I don’t think that anarchy is good either... what is more just? What is closer to justice? Democracy... eh... well, the best thing is the right form of anarchy... most anarchists are ideologists... there are good and bad anarchists... the good ones are the best, better than democracy... we wouldn’t have anyone with power over our head... without the leader... like the world of Warcraft... it represents life and society in a video game...”

4.2.3. Last Study: 2015-2016. The Syriza-ANEL government and austerity policies become the cleavage between those who identify with the ‘elite’ and those who identify with ‘the people’

A social ‘elite’ using gradual and consensual way of thinking

In 2016 the most ‘privileged’ group from a social point of view is in a way less optimistic about their financial integration than those with a similar profile before the crisis. They are also more politicized and informed than the socially equivalent group of the first study. With 50% youth unemployment in 2016 (OECD, 2016), both the public and private sector have been affected. They use a ‘gradual’ form of thinking and position themselves against the politics of the 2015 elected government. They blame the situation on the ‘uneducated’ multitude which is going against what they see as the necessary changes, that is, structural reform of the economy and austerity measures. How do they cope at a personal level? With their family’s material help, pretty much as everybody else. Either they try a conventional strategy of getting
close to a political party and hope for a future job in the administration when in power, or focus on the private sector, searching for a job at a private company. Other strategies considered or adopted after 2015: migration to another country, usually in Northern Europe, the United States or Australia.

They are interested, informed and participate in the public sphere and politics, in opposition to those expressing themselves in a gradual way of thinking before the crisis, who seemed relatively apolitical. They still adopt a gradual and consensual logic, trying to keep a distance, and use a form of irony, even if they are themselves involved with different political parties.

The following extract belongs to the interview of a young adult who has spent two years studying in the US and is using some English words to mark this fact. He comes from a well-off family, with his own house (offered by his parents). He would prefer an aristocracy to democracy and he is clearly not identifying with ‘the people’, feeling part of the elite who has the necessary education to decide. The use of irony and laughter, rhetorical questions and “I don’t know” to moderate his statement, are characteristic of this form of thinking:

“Democracy what could I say, ha ha, … I think in general that democracy could only be practiced in societies where people would have a very high education level, access (in English) to qualitative information yes, I don’t know, … finally I think that it is more an illusion (in English) that everyone is equal in a democracy, and not a reality, yes, ha ha, what else to say? … on the other hand they say that it is more just as a system, because
who could say who has a bigger say (in English) and who has a smaller, ... eh... for example, whose opinion has more importance and whose has less, ... personally, I wouldn’t mind if I didn’t have the right to vote for example ha ha, of course, it doesn’t sound that nice, ha ha... but I think that if you give the right to participate to everyone and they don’t respect their right I don’t think that this produces what is best for a society...yes... despite this maybe... a form of aristocracy would be better”.

The extract which follows comes from the interview with another young man whose parents have a high education level and who has also spent time studying economics in Germany. He also adopts a detached style, but he is clearly favorable to the structural reforms proposed by the parties opposing the Syriza-Anel government on the right. Here again, the majority of the people is seen as influenced by the government’s populist discourse. In his discourse there is a question of efficiency of the state as a service-provider to the citizens-clients who contribute with their taxes:

“Democracy, eh, voting, I don’t know, people, ‘demos’, Parliament, Greek, to be honest, ha ha, political party, disagreement, eh... unfortunately to be honest I also thought of demonstration and violent incidents, ... I follow the news a lot now, ... forms of government, communism, dictatorship, ... I don’t know, that’s all... eh, elections for sure, ha ha... how do you call these, projects of law, ... they call them something of legal content... they are adopted every day... I don’t know... those
who speak of too much state are the liberals, like part of the
defining terms party of ‘Nea Dimokratia’, those close to Mitsotakis, “Drasi”, “To
Potami”, the financially liberal parties... **there is a big intervention**
of the state **not only on the economy but also in the way**
someone is influenced by the state, **for example, who benefits**
from the public service? **Does it function** in order to be of service
to those who contribute financially through their taxes? **Or what**
**kind of support should you have** in order to start a business... **the**
customers, I mean the **citizens** who have interactions with the public
sphere ... it is obvious from the data...”.

4.3 Dualistic/oppositional thinking (majority of the participants)

Dualistic thinking indicators:

- Use of argumentative connectors “but” and oppositions;
  Anscombe and Ducrot, 1983
- Use of *negative* phrases (i.e. democracy doesn’t exist in reality);
  Piaget, 1974; Ducrot, 1980
- Use of generic nouns (the people, the Greeks, the youth); (Kleiber, 1990)

The dualistic way of thinking is characterized by an ‘all or nothing’ logic
and the use of the argumentative connector ‘but’ or its equivalents. If
two proposals, P, and R are linked with this connector, there are two
possible outcomes opposing one another. ‘P but Q’ means ‘P as a result
R’ and ‘Q as a result –R’. The two options are incompatible according to
the interviewees adopting this form.
The use of negative phrases also implies the presence of an alternative that is opposed by the second phrase which corresponds, according to those who use it, to the ‘reality’ they disapprove of.

If the interviewees consider that they do not have any prospects for the future (because of the field they are on, or their object of study, or the lack of opportunities....) they adopt a dualistic, an ‘all or nothing’ logic. Democracy does not exist and there are different approaches: before the crisis, they compromise with situations they don’t agree with, because they consider that there is no hope of improvement. Some of those who have revolted in 2009 tell me they need to express their anger even if they don’t believe in the possibility of a favorable change. In the last study, (2015-2016) many participants feel more empowered and there are cases where they declare themselves ready to fight for democracy, which is threatened in their eyes, as a 24 year old woman volunteering with the refugees in Lesvos Island said.

4.3.1. First study before the crisis: “I don’t work, I don’t vote, I only exist to be dominated”

This extract is from the interview of a 23-year-old man who is working part time at the store of his father, selling women’s underwear. The rest of the time he tries to decide what direction to take in life. He declares that he ‘exists only to be dominated’, but he seems to be resigned to this situation. He adopts a dualistic way of thinking. Democracy and everything good does not exist, and there is no possibility to exist outside of the sphere the imagination:
“What democracy dreams is beautiful, but, it cannot be realized because the human beings meddle with it and ruin everything”.

“democracy is something ideal, eh... that everyone, for example, independently from their job or other things, can be equal for the law, but, I don’t think that this happens in reality”.

“the police ought to protect ... the citizens, the judges are there in order to apply the law, ...but, everything is corrupted”.

4.3.2. Second Study, 2009: After the revolt

Those who are against the riots, the more integrated socially, find themselves, in a minority position

In 2009 those who are already working or consider they have prospects, start criticizing the revolt and the ‘irresponsible youth’ who find a chance to destroy things in demonstrations without any particular reason. This ‘multitude’ finds itself in a powerful position. The death of the adolescent by the police is, according to those who are critical, just an excuse. So democracy does not exist because of the ‘others’. The extract that follows comes from the interview of a politically conservative young man, a student of theology whose father is a priest. He already has an income singing for the service in Church, and he seems able to support himself, however, he lives with his parents. He is against the riots so he feeling himself in a minority position at that context.

“Democracy is the free will of the citizen... everyone should be
able to express their opinion, but when each person goes out and destroys this is not democracy... but no this is anarchy it is not a democracy. I believe that we are in a democracy but simply, there is no democracy. Things are difficult, not only in Greece but in Greece it is worse. The death of this kid was the excuse to get out and start breaking things... because people have a hard time... there is no respect for the citizen...”

4.3.3. Third study 2011- a few months before the ‘Aganaktismeni’ or ‘Indignados’ movement.

Expressions of anger – Mention of the Golden Dawn and the Anarchists

During 2011, the majority of the interviewees is angry and adopts a dualistic form of thinking. They mention the question of violence and some participants even find its use legitimate in a different way than in 2009. In 2009 there is an outburst of the younger generations not finding any space political, social or financial. Destroying things is not considered as the best form of action but it is justified as the expression of accumulated anger. The amplitude of the revolt was giving a feeling of contentment to those who were favorable to these events, and indignation to others.

In 2011 on the contrary, the anger has not yet found ways of expression. The third study takes place a few months before the ‘Aganaktismeni’ movement (Simiti, 2014). The participants express a need to act. All of them have an acquaintance who identifies to the ‘Golden Dawn’, the fascist-friendly party, or to the anarchist movement. Some participants identify personally with these
movements.

**Favorable to the ‘Golden Dawn’**

The following extract is from an interview of a young construction worker with secondary education, coming from the North of Greece. He is part of a religious group with ‘messianic’ characteristics and he is favorable to the use of violence since ‘the people’s interest’ cannot be defended through democratic ways of expression:

“There is no democracy, it is just a fairy tale, a tv show in order to make people believe that they have the power. The objective is to control the people; it is the financial interests which control everything... I think that the only way to have a revolution is with guns, not with ideas or demonstrations, what you see the workers do now... it has absolutely no use, it is always against the interest of the people...”.

**Favorable to the anarchist movement**

The following extract is from a 19-year-old man with secondary education working at his father’s cafeteria, with friends in the anarchist movement. I was oriented to him through someone who identified as an anarchist.

“Democracy is a lie, for me, I don’t know enough about who invented it... I know it functioned during the ancient times in Athens for the first time... I don’t know, nowadays it doesn’t exist, only in the heads of stupid people, or those who don’t have
any education, those who have a narrow spirit, ... for example, those who govern never listen to us, the prime minister acts according to interests which are not even his own, every prime minister who pretends that democracy exists in Greece is a liar he does this in order to receive some extra money, he has absolutely no idea about what he has to do to govern...”

Absence of democracy at work

The following extract is from the interview of a 23-year-old woman with a secondary education. She grew up on a Greek island and has arrived in Athens two years ago in order to find a job. She works as salesperson in a toy store and she feels both exploited financially and morally harassed by her hierarchical superiors. Democracy according to her is something which should be present in the work environment, and it doesn’t.

“I believe that democracy doesn’t exist in Greece... I work 8 hours a week and I earn pignuts, now I will tell you everything that hurts me...”

4.3.4 Last study, 2015-2016: to live or to survive?

In the last study most particularly, the difference between ‘living’ and ‘surviving’ is crucial. Democracy is part of the participants’ everyday discussions, and they mention that as the interview starts. Democracy is associated with ‘living’, developing a moral personality, becoming a social and political actor. ‘Surviving’ is spending all day in alienating and exhausting jobs in order to pay the bills while staying with one’s parents
or flatmates. Strategies adopted apart from migration are: giving up on work and reducing their needs to the minimum (working only to have enough for hanging out with friends) or taking several temporary jobs. Joining the armed forces is considered as another solution because of the stability for those without a lot of means (with the exception with those who choose this job as a vocation).

A form of humor, or sarcasm, or irony, is present in the participants who adopt a gradual way of thinking and identify themselves with an elite who ‘knows better’. On the contrary, the participants who express themselves in a dualistic way of thinking in the 2015-2016 study, tend to be more serious, to identify more with the ‘people’ and in many cases, to have supported Syriza at the elections, either by voting directly or by legitimating the election even if they voted for another party.

The following extract is coming from the interview of a 29-year-old man with a high education level, a masters in anthropology, and a broad culture. He is active both in the media and in the art world as a choreographer. His father owns property in the island of Crete and he is financially comfortable for this reason but he is still dependent to his father. Despite the fact that he enjoys a form of material security, Jason, as a homosexual, feels part of a socially discriminated group. He mostly adopts a dualistic and oppositional way of thinking, which seems to correlate with this social identity.

“Well, ok, democracy, because I had a recent discussion I will give you the same answer I gave on that day, UTOPIA, in one word. Would you like me to explain it? Why Utopia? Eh,... because I consider it is an excuse to do the opposite, ... as a political
system, I consider that there are no longer democratic societies, in the Western world, ... I am not talking about the eastern which, you wouldn’t think of qualifying as democratic...”

“...I consider that a lot of things happen in the name of democracy, which is used as a legitimation, clearly, and if we observe a little bit how, ... these societies are constructed, no, how there are different social groups, social classes, ... of course, this has nothing to do with democracy as we have it in our minds...”

As we have it in our minds?

“Starting for example from the French Revolution, equality, fraternity, what is the third? Liberty, eh... I don’t remember, eh... but you know, if we start only from equality, we understand that it doesn’t exist, and equality is for me one of the most important elements in a society... but it doesn’t have to be economic equality, ... people should be equally respected for their life choices, their sexual orientation...”

In the last extract, a 28-year-old woman who has studied French literature at the University of Athens has found a job as a waitress. Her mother, who has given up working to become a mother and housewife, objects to this choice, wishing a form of upward social mobility for her daughter. She considers that being a waitress is degrading for someone with a university degree. However, this idea belongs to the pro-crisis aspirations and the mother refuses to accept that. Democracy for Christina, as for most of the participants using a dualistic form of thinking doesn’t limit to the political system and the public sphere. It is
a way of being, so the relationship to her mother is a sign of the existence or of the lack of democracy.

This participant is living, as most of the interviewees, with her parents in a ‘popular’ neighborhood of the city. When it comes to politics she identifies with ‘the people’ and she criticizes the political elite. There is another category, ‘the poor’ who find themselves at the worst situation. Having supported Syriza at the elections she uses a dualistic form of thinking, but there is also a form of empowerment, especially when she prescribes what ‘should’ be done.

“The first thing that comes to my mind is the democracy which is related to the political system, the expression of the citizen and the people through its representatives and it is not one person who decides and commands, and … imposes his will on everyone else…

In principle, I consider that parliamentary MPs are our representatives, but in reality, they don’t express the people’s needs… they are simply decorative, they are there only to show up, they don’t defend the essence of their role, ... I think that the Parliament is a little world in itself that has no idea of what is happening to the rest of the Greeks, ... they speak theoretically, one turns against the other, without producing anything concrete and useful, ... I think that they deviate completely from their role... Their role should have been to defend the rights of those who are less fortunate, to protect the interests of the simple, poor people who… gather what is left over from the street market, ...
there are a lot of people who lack the essential, ... and this starts to be the norm ... in a country where we used to have a sort of abundance, ... so democracy, yes, it is freedom, but there are limits ... for those who abuse their power, in order to prevent dangerous situations... democracy could also mean foresight... a way to prevent our actual dead-end...”

5. Conclusion

Different ways of thinking are conceptualized in this paper as cultural resources, organising young adults’ representations of democracy. These resources participate in the construction of social identities and set the stage for oppositions between what the participants represent as dominant and underdog positions. The majority of the participants in the different studies adopt a ‘dualistic’ way of thinking with oppositions between good principles to the deceiving reality. This way of thinking correlates with a feeling of being in a dominated position compared to what they perceive as dominant. Those who adopt a ‘gradual’ or consensual form of thinking, before the crisis, postpone adulthood and public action with a promise of achieving their personal financial and social objectives in the future. So the majority of the participants before the crisis either feel ‘dominated’ or still ‘too young’ at 23 or 26. This is a manifestation of intergenerational inequalities with an important negative effect on the country’s development. The intergenerational divide is still present in the rest of the studies but in a different way (Magioglou, 2017).
During the crisis, those adopting a gradual ‘way of thinking’ identify either with the generation of their parents judging them the ‘youth’ as immature, or with ‘those who are educated’ and who consider ‘efficiency’ as more important than ‘justice’. There are no clear cut oppositions as in the case of the dualistic thinking, nevertheless, there is a choice to make and they also consider defending the best. The dualistic way of thinking, relies on a moral framing of the question, it sets the stage for a form of dilemma: it is the one or the other, and ambivalence is not tolerated by the person who is being interviewed. The participants focus on certain themes and underplay others. The dualistic form takes a moral stance, close in certain respects to what has been described as an ‘underdog’ culture or identity (Diamandouros, opcit; Triandafyllidou et al., 2013; Ntampoudi, 2014) is conceptualized here as a strategy of a group feeling dominated and trying to challenge the mainstream not as a cultural characteristic of the Greek culture.

If gradual thinking manifests a ‘cognitive openness’ characterizing according to Moghadam (2016) a democratic citizen, the preoccupation with moral principles is another democratic characteristic, present in the dualistic thinking. Dualistic thinking implies contestation, because those who use it, oppose a reality they don’t approve of, to their representation of democracy. Is could be related to different forms of action or inaction: staying at home refusing to engage (instead doing something that is considered alienating, from job seeking to political action), participating in civil society groups or revolting, occupying and demonstrating. Until the last study, a dualistic way of thinking does not represent a specific political ideology, but a variety of positions, from all
the political spectrum. The case of the last study in 2015-16 is the most politicized, in the sense that most of the participants not only are they informed on the public debate, but they also have a position on what has become the burning question: austerity measures. Higher education participants are found both among those using gradual and dualistic thinking.

Dualistic thinking, close to what has been characterized as underdog, is thus understood as a strategy of a group constructing a positive social identity as defenders of a hegemonic social representation which has been abused, such as democracy. On the other hand, a gradual and relatively moderate way of thinking can prioritize individual strategies in order to a social and financial integration, by those who feel part of an elite group for different reasons, and they make a choice based on a principle of realism and efficiency. Dualistic thinking as a strategy, deliberately or not, has been used by groups challenging a status quo in other contexts I have studied, (such as the African countries representatives in the WTO cotton negotiations, relying on the principle of free trade, (Abeles, 2011), or popular culture, relating to a reinterpretation of the American dream (Magioglou, forthcoming). They are not considered ‘permanent’ characteristics of groups or people, on the contrary there is proof that the same person can adopt different ways of thinking not only at a different temporality but also in different contexts (cognitive polyphasia has been studied in different studies, i.e. Wagner, Duveen, et al.). Ways of thinking don’t describe a Greek exceptionalism in any way, at least not in this study. However, future research could investigate further why a majority of young adults
construct a social identity feeling either powerless or alienated by the political system.

Despite their different ways to experience life and their conflicting positions, especially in the last study, for or against structural reforms and for or against the government, the young participants are part of the same cohort, facing the effects of intergenerational inequality and massive unemployment. Many of them seem to share a common practice: in the 2015-2016 study many young adults told me they sleep late and sometimes they walk in the streets of Athens, or drive (those who can afford it), until the first morning hours. They also wake up late: those who are students, unemployed or part-time employed. Those who identify with the elite and those who identify with the people, share a form of social suffering and search for meaning (Tsekeris et al., 2015).
References


EKKE (Greek National Research Center), (2012). *The social portrait of Greece-2012*. Athens: EKKE


Magioglou Thalia, (2008β). The creative dimension of Lay Thinking, in the case of the Representation of Democracy, for the Greek Youth. *Culture & Psychology, n° 71*


Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1988), ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ in Nelson, C. and Grossberg,


Τσουκαλάς, Κ., (1976). Εξάρτηση και αναπαραγωγή Ο κοινωνικός ρόλος των εκπαιδευτικών μηχανισμών στην Ελλάδα. Αθήνα, Θεμέλιο.
Previous Papers in this Series


107. Theologos Dergiades, Eleni Mavragani, Bing Pan, *Arrivals of Tourists in Cyprus Mind the Web Search Intensity*, February 2017


102. Chalari, Athanasia; Sealey, Clive; Webb, Mike, *A Comparison of Subjective Experiences and Responses to Austerity of UK and Greek Youth*, September 2016

Online papers from the Hellenic Observatory

All GreeSE Papers are freely available for download at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/hellenicObservatory/pubs/greese.aspx