3.3 Culture and Society

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Intangible Cultural Heritage and Climate Change:

How traditional resilience practices of Greece and Cyprus can support climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts

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Abstract

Intangible cultural heritage is connected to the climate change in various ways; firstly, it is per se menaced by the impacts of climate crisis and needs protection; secondly, intangible cultural heritage can contribute to the prevention, mitigation and adaptation to the climate change effects, if integrated into science-based climate impact and adaptation strategies. In this paper, we aim at demonstrating the unexplored potential of intangible cultural heritage in this field. The importance of examining this issue lies in the growing interest in intangible cultural heritage, as well as the imperative nature of the need to address climate change and adapt to modern conditions. Our main objectives are to identify the role that intangible cultural heritage plays in people's preparedness, recovery, and resilience (capacity building) in the face of climate change effects, as well as to explore the possibilities of involving intangible cultural heritage into strategies and policies for the climate crisis. To this end, traditional resilience practices implemented in Greece and Cyprus, currently inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, are presented.

Keywords

Intangible cultural heritage, climate change, resilience, adaptation, mitigation

Introduction

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing the world today. Its impacts are widespread, affecting all aspects of human society and activities, as well as the natural environment. The Mediterranean region is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, with rising temperatures, droughts, and extreme weather events already having severe consequences for agriculture, biodiversity, and human health. In this context, it is essential to explore new ways of adapting to this phenomenon, as well as mitigating its effects, through the use of an already existing set of tools; traditional knowledge and practices.

Traditional resilience practices, which have evolved over time, can help tackle environmental challenges. Greece and Cyprus are two countries that have a rich cultural heritage, which includes a plethora of traditional practices that constitute an integral part of their identity. Notably, a significant number of these practices is inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, demonstrating the importance of their protection and implementation. The traditional knowledge and practices have enabled local communities to adapt to changing environmental conditions and maintain their livelihoods, while also promoting biodiversity and preserving natural resources. Addressing the challenge of climate change requires urgent and coordinated action on a global scale. By examining the traditional practices followed by these countries, it is possible to identify strategies that can be used to support climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts at a wider scale, especially throughout the Mediterranean basin.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage encompasses tangible heritage (movable, immovable or underwater), intangible heritage, as well as natural heritage artefacts, sites or monuments. However, the boundaries among them are not always distinctive. In other words, a cultural good may be purely material, but the particular process of its creation relates it to the category of intangible cultural heritage and vice versa; the expression of an intangible cultural activity often presupposes the use of tangible cultural elements. For instance, handicrafts are tangible achievements, but the knowledge and technique applied to their creation constitute intangible elements. In addition, in many religions, the manifestation of the religious faith includes, inter alia, praying in temples which are characterized by specific architectural features that are intertwined with the respective religion (Kurin: 2004, p. 70).

Accordingly, intangible cultural heritage also involves tangible aspects. Monuments are constructed based on traditional building practices, such as building art, stonework, weaving, ceramics and metalwork, as well as on cultivation techniques and broader knowledge and beliefs about nature and the universe (Fotopoulou: 2018, p. 110). Therefore, the cultural heritage of a community includes a set of elements that make up the core of its particular idiosyncrasy (Lenzerini: 2011, p. 102), which is reflected in tangible cultural heritage, but also exists in its intangible cultural expressions.

For the purposes of our paper, we will focus on the intangible cultural heritage, for which we will adopt the definition of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), under which the intangible

cultural heritage means the “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills –as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith– that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage”. The intangible cultural heritage is constantly recreated by communities in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their past, gives them a sense of continuity and common identity, and encourages respect for cultural diversity and creativity. The intangible cultural heritage can be seen in performing arts, social practices, rituals, and festivals, as well as knowledge and customs related to nature, universe and craftsmanship. Oral traditions and expressions also constitute a major aspect of the intangible cultural heritage [Art. 2 para. 1-2].

Firstly, intangible cultural heritage is traditional, contemporary and living simultaneously since it represents both modern rural and urban practices that different ethnic groups engage in, as well as inherited traditions from the past. Secondly, it is inclusive, as there are many similar expressions of intangible cultural heritage throughout societies. Thirdly, intangible cultural heritage is representative, as it depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills, and practices is transmitted to the rest of the community, from generation to generation, or to other communities for it to survive. Fourthly, it is community-based, considering that it can only be heritage when it is acknowledged as such by its bearers.

Climate change and its impact on intangible cultural heritage

Today, intangible cultural heritage is threatened by natural and man-made phenomena, such as the climate change, which cause major effects that pose a serious threat to intangible cultural heritage. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change is defined as “a change in the state of the climate that can be identified by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer" (IPCC: 2018, p. 544). The term refers to any change in climate over time, whether it has to do with natural changes or anthropogenic effects. Furthermore, in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), climate change is defined as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods" [Art. 1, para. 2].

From the above, we identify a conceptual difference between the two definitions regarding the inclusion of only changes that are the result of indirect or direct human intervention, and/or natural climate changes. This difference in approach creates practical problems in decision-making about policy responses and has been the springboard for political controversies. More specifically, the UNFCCC definition, on the one hand, has a more limited scope and, on the other hand, focuses on greenhouse gas emissions. In this context, in decision-making, more attention is paid to mitigating climate change than adapting to it, while a combination of these policies would be more appropriate (Pielke: 2004, pp. 515-520).

In practice, some aspects of cultural heritage are often overlooked in the policy-making process. At the same time, studies show that climate change causes, among other things, the forced movement of a growing number of people, due to phenomena such as sea level rise and coastline erosion. Therefore, in countries affected by such phenomena, there is a question of survival and security, as well as the alteration of the cultural identity of the communities that live in them (Kim: 2011,

pp. 259-260), since the loss of cultural heritage brings immediate consequences in human identity (Chainoglou: 2017, p. 114).

More specifically, climate change presents new risks and impacts for cultural landscapes and assets. For example, the desertification of areas on continental lands due to changes in water-table levels or rising sea levels causing phenomena such as coastal flooding, coastal erosion and submergence, result in population migration, disturbance of the life and social cohesion of communities, the loss of cultural memory, and social interactions (Kim: 2011, pp. 270-271). Accordingly, higher temperatures and longer periods of drought can result in the extinction of plants used for traditional knowledge and expertise, either as medicine or raw material (Carducci: 2014, p. 132). The performance of rituals by the local communities is directly connected to local biodiversity and ecosystems, and its continuity depends on their protection. The disruption of the balance of the local ecosystems due to climate change may impede the performance of those rituals. Thus, more and more indigenous people are unable to maintain the customs and traditions of their community, due to the changes that have occurred in the local biodiversity, with the extinction of plant and animal species that are used for the making of objects that they use in their daily lives, but also during rituals, such as musical instruments, masks and tools.

The effects of climate change on cultural and natural heritage are already evident (Doussi: 2020, p. 78; Zervaki: 2010, p. 137). However, to date, more emphasis has been placed on the effects of climate change on the material aspects of cultural heritage and on natural or cultural landscapes, while fewer studies have been made on intangible cultural heritage. Due to its nature, intangible cultural heritage is the most precarious form of cultural expression, as it is not accompanied by stable and permanent characteristics that remain unchanged over time, but is intertwined with the community, the individuals who reproduce and enrich it, transmitting it on to the next generations (Carducci: 2014, p. 131). Additionally, climate change influences social cohesion, through the forced change of the lifestyle of the inhabitants. The migration and the abandonment of traditional methods of exploitation of land and sea resources alter the identity of local communities and erode their cultural ties with the respective place (Zervaki: 2010, p. 140).

Moreover, threats to intangible cultural heritage stem from the discontinuities in the chain of intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge. These discontinuities may result from the abandonment of traditional knowledge methods in favor of innovation, due to scientific and technological development, and globalization, but also from the forced movement of the populations-bearers of the specific knowledge, due to war conflicts, ecological disasters or human large-scale interventions in the environment (Fotopoulou: 2018, p. 111). The forced migration of cultural bearers due to climate change is such a case. In particular, the transmission of traditional knowledge is often interrupted in the new place of residence, while access is not always ensured to cultural spaces and materials necessary for those practices. A shift away from traditional economic practices, such as fishing and agriculture, may lead displaced communities to lose part of their cultural daily practices. In addition to the loss of their homeland and relatives, the displaced also encounter language barriers in their new place of living, a challenge that makes it difficult for them to adapt there.

The role of intangible cultural heritage in emergency situations and crises

In 2017, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) created a Working Group on Climate Change and Heritage, and introduced a resolution to support the community of cultural heritage to tackle the issue of climate change. In this resolution, it was underlined that cultural heritage is at the same time impacted by climate change, but serves as well as a source of resilience for communities. Also, heritage sites and local communities' intangible heritage, knowledge, and practices are an inexhaustible source for knowledge and methods to combat climate change. Furthermore, the resolution mentioned the importance of solutions based on cultural heritage for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The 11th meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was an important milestone in recognizing the key role of intangible cultural heritage in emergency situations and crises, where, following a Greek proposal and with decision 15 (11.COM 15), its contribution in emergency situations was recognized (Chainoglou: 2017, pp. 112-113; Fotopoulou: 2018, p. 111). Of course, the climate crisis is also included in these emergency situations.

To be more specific, the communities have developed over centuries traditional knowledge about the availability of natural resources and threats to their livelihood. This knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation, through practice, and various traditional rituals and cultural expressions such as music, theater and festivities. In order to adapt to climate variability and change, the local communities observe plant and animal behaviors to anticipate weather changes and prepare appropriately. They also use tools of cosmology, such as observing the constellations, the phases of the moon, and the direction of the wind. Forecasting the weather and assessing available resources is particularly important for planning and decision-making purposes. After all, the sustainable practices of using natural resources prevent the loss of biodiversity, support the development of the natural environment, and strengthen the effort as well to manage climate change (Zervaki: 2018, p. 189).

Today, climate change is emerging as a threat even to territorial integrity and ultimately to the very existence of states (Doussi: 2020, p. 81). Many people are forced to migrate, due to rising sea levels as a result of global warming and climate change. In their new place of residence, cultural elements of their community can still be found, such as religious customs, festive functions and sports events. The intangible cultural heritage helps addressing trauma resulting from forced migration and contributes to the integration of climate migrants. In case of wars or natural disasters, people suffer the consequences, one of which is the displacement of populations. The forced movement of people from their place of residence disrupts collective memory, as space is one of the social contexts in which people's memory is inscribed.

As experience has shown, there is intense cultural activity in immigrant communities. This is attributed to the fact that migrants want to ensure continuity and stability, while they find themselves in a new environment and come into contact with different people and cultures. In many cases, these populations are gathered in small groups and organize cultural events, trying to express themselves and create a sense of belonging. At the same time, they become recipients of the local customs and traditions. By this way, the tradition of the country of origin of the immigrant populations, as well as the acceptance of the cultural expressions of the host country can facilitate their integration in their new place of settlement (Giglitto *et al.*: 2021,

p. 15). Through the exchange of cultural elements between the country of origin and the host country, mutual understanding, dialogue and cultural diversity are promoted (Mascha: 2015, pp. 23-25).

Additionally, climate change has a devastating effect on tangible cultural heritage, especially on monuments and buildings. Rising temperatures, flooding and extreme weather events caused by climate change accelerate the degradation and damage of historical sites, such as buildings, objects, and landscapes. However, communities may use the traditional knowledge to protect and restore them. For example, traditional techniques, like stone carving or painting, can be utilized to restore sculptures or murals, while traditional construction methods and materials, like adobe, rammed earth, or stone, can be used to restore old buildings. These methods can also increase energy efficiency of the buildings and reduce the effects of harsh weather by employing natural materials and design elements.

Traditional resilience practices of Greece and Cyprus

As stated above, a plethora of traditional practices are implemented in Greece and Cyprus. The member states that have ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003) can inscribe elements of intangible cultural heritage on specific lists for their documentation and protection. In particular, Greece has inscribed 10 elements of intangible cultural heritage on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, while Cyprus 6 elements to date. Additionally, the states parties can also inscribe such elements on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. Greece and Cyprus have inscribed one element each on the Register. Lastly, there is the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, but the two countries have no inscriptions yet. Below, we will have a closer look at certain Greek and Cypriot traditional practices and the ways they contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Art of dry-stone walling, knowledge and techniques

At the same time, intangible cultural heritage can help to reduce exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other environmental shocks and disasters (ICOMOS: 2021, p. 20). For instance, the art of dry stone walling — inscribed in 2018 (13.COM 10.b.10) on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity—, known in Greek as "xerolithia", has to do with building stone constructions by stacking stones upon each other, without making use of any other materials, such as binding mortar, except for dry soil in some cases. Dry stone constructions constitute a traditional element of the Greek and Cypriot landscape, especially in the countryside. They are spread across most rural areas both inside and outside of inhabited spaces, though they are spotted in urban areas too. Dry stone walling is utilized in urban environments to provide infrastructure (water channels, retaining walls for roads, etc.) or to create natural spaces (parks, squares, open-air theaters, etc.). In the countryside, dividing walls with distinctive crown blocks and piles of stones are used to delimit land and they usually indicate the boundary between private and public space. In some cases, they are highly visible as extensive clusters of terraced cultivations and, in other cases, more subtle in the form

of auxiliary farm buildings and/or dwellings.

Dry stone constructions are critical in preventing landslides, floods and avalanches, as well as combating land erosion and desertification, enhancing biodiversity, and creating adequate microclimatic conditions for agriculture. The ecological balance is greatly enhanced by these constructions in all of their forms, particularly in regions that are at risk from the effects of climate change. These constructions include, inter alia, paths, bridges, terraces, buildings for agricultural and livestock use, diverse structures that support management systems of water, retaining walls and fences. The spatial arrangement made possible by dry stone constructions helps to increase agricultural and livestock output. This improvement is due to the development of favorable climate conditions (humidity, glare, protection from winds, etc.) for the production or processing (drying, desiccating, etc.) and storage of goods (wool, cheese, horticulture, fruits, etc.), through the construction of dry stone structures to deal with challenging terrain and weather conditions.

People have used these methods and practices over ages in order to organize their living and working space by optimizing natural and human resources. Dry stone art is a typical example of a harmonious relationship between man and nature, while it is passed on orally and empirically from generation to generation. In most cases, dry stone structures are built by farmers, animal breeders and, sometimes, artisans. Particularly in the islands, dry stone structures are quite widespread. In the mainland, they are less visible, but remain equally important for the organization of space. The maintenance and extension of dry stone structures remains challenging, due to the fact that the knowledge transfer to younger generations is increasingly limited and specialist craftsmen are usually elderly. However, dry stone workshops are organized that bring together renowned stonemasons and the next generation of craftsmen, emphasizing the important social impact that this traditional construction method plays. The process of learning the technique of dry stone walling is linked to a sense of belonging to a community, while also expressing familial solidarity and tradition. The fact that the art of xerolithia is a completely sustainable building tradition is what is driving its growing global interest.

Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock

In terms of natural disasters, the knowledge of sustainable environmental management practices is a useful guide to prevent them. As an example, transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock —inscribed in 2019 (14.COM) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity— is a form of pastoralism and constitutes another transnational resilience practice, that is implemented in Greece. Twice a year, every spring and fall, groups of herders together with their dogs and horses follow steady routes to move the livestock. The herders' families may occasionally travel with them. The practice comprises horizontal transhumance, in plain or plateau regions, and vertical transhumance, usually in mountain regions.

Transhumance shapes relations among people, animals and ecosystems and entails shared rituals and social practices, animal care and breeding, land, forest and water resource management, and dealing with natural hazards. The herders have in-depth knowledge of the environment, ecological balance and climate change, as transhumance is one of the most sustainable and efficient livestock farming methods. They also have unique skills in all aspects of handicraft and food production. In addition, rural populations highlight the importance of existing risks of natural disasters. These people are in close contact with nature and depend on its balance. They therefore know how climate change can affect their lives (Kartalis: 2022, p.

268).

Transhumance celebrations take place in the spring and the fall, during which bearers share food, customs, and stories with the younger generations. Chief herders ensure the survival of the practice by passing on their specific knowledge to the younger ones through practical experience. Recognizing transhumance as UNESCO heritage officially acknowledges its uniqueness, as well as its cultural and environmental importance for the humanity. Also, it can further encourage the adoption of measures to protect transhumance, as today fewer and fewer people are choosing this profession and way of life. As a result, a sustainable economic activity and the related social rituals, food products, and handicrafts are currently at risk.

Mediterranean diet

Nowadays, our way of living and nourishing has a major impact on the environment. The Mediterranean diet (from the Greek word ‘diaita’; the way of life) —inscribed in 2013 (8.COM) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity— involves a set of skills, knowledge, rituals, practices related to farming, harvesting, fishing, animal husbandry, conservation, processing, cooking, and the sharing and consumption of food that are noted in the olive-growing countries of the Mediterranean, and of course in both Greece and Cyprus. Sharing meals is the base of the cultural identity and continuity of communities in the Mediterranean basin, as a moment of social interaction, an affirmation and renewal of a common identity and a sense of belonging. The Mediterranean diet places a strong emphasis on hospitality, intercultural communication, creativity, and respect for diversity. It has a crucial role in bringing people of various ages and backgrounds together in cultural events. It also includes the craftsmanship and production of traditional receptacles for the delivery, storage, and consumption of food, such as ceramic plates and glasses.

The Mediterranean diet has been promoted as a healthy and sustainable dietary pattern that could contribute to combatting climate change. It is primarily based on plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, olive oil and cereals. In most cases, the consumption of food is accompanied by local products, such as wine, herbal extracts and brews. This reduces the need for animal-based foods, which are a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and land use. Also, the Mediterranean diet emphasizes the use of locally sourced and seasonal foods, which reduces the carbon footprint associated with food transportation and storage, as well as the consumption of fish and poultry instead of red meat, which requires more resources and produces more greenhouse gas emissions. Healthy food systems play a crucial role in the evolution of humanity by improving health outcomes, while also helping to keep greenhouse gas emissions within the planet's sustainable boundaries. A dietary shift towards more sustainable food systems would be an efficient way to contribute to global greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

Furthermore, the Mediterranean diet promotes sustainable agriculture practices such as crop rotation, composting, and reduced pesticide use. This reduces soil erosion and water pollution, and promotes biodiversity. It also produces fewer greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide, which contribute to climate change, while effectively using resources like water, land, and fertilizers. As a prominent example, the edible seeds of legumes, called pulses, collect nitrogen from the air and store it in the soil, reducing the need for fertilizer. The nitrogen returns to the soil when the plants die, keeping it fruitful for the following crop —a process known as "nitrogen fixing". Therefore, pulses also reduce the resources needed for other components of the Mediterranean Diet, such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.

However, the results of recent research on the adherence rates to the Mediterranean diet of the local populations are alarming, especially for children and adolescents (Naska and Trichopoulou: 2014, pp. 216-219; Farajian, P. *et al.*: 2011, p. 525-530). The majority of these age groups seems to abandon this traditional diet. Of course, the shift to other dietary patterns is closely related to health problems, such as obesity and cardiovascular diseases. Moreover, it has also an important environmental impact with higher greenhouse gas emissions mainly attributable to meat and dairy products (Cavaliere, A. *et al.*: 2023).

Conclusions and Recommendations

When it comes to natural disasters, knowledge of sustainable environmental management practices conveyed by oral traditions is a useful guide to their prevention. In this regard, intangible cultural heritage can contribute to the mitigation of climate change, since many intangible cultural elements are linked to the sustainable use of natural resources. Traditional practices could be applied on a wider scale, to develop a more sustainable way of living, production and consumption, abandoning human habits that accelerate climate change (Lenzerini: 2014, p. 157). As demonstrated above, the intangible cultural heritage also supports the adaptation to the effects of climate change, through various ways, such as facilitating the integration of climate change migrants to a new place of residence, and restoring historic buildings and sites.

Undeniably, traditional knowledge must also be considered when taking measures for the climate change, and the respective policies must be consistent with local needs. Combining scientific data on climate change with traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples can lead to the development of more effective, human-centered and environmentally sustainable policies for the mitigation of climate change effects and the adaptation to the new conditions. Climate change is transforming the entire policy landscape. Therefore, the intangible cultural heritage can offer solutions for various policy sectors like urban planning, food security, poverty reduction, and new modes of responsible production and consumption. Modern tools could supplement traditional knowledge, which is constantly developed and adapted by its bearers. Therefore, synergies among cultural heritage actors, environmental actors as well as state actors should be established. Since climate change knows no borders and affects the societies worldwide, it is important to have coordinated cooperation at the transnational level in order to make a joint effort to curb the phenomenon.

To this end, the traditional resilience practices implemented in Greece and Cyprus could lead by example and be disseminated at the international level. Especially for the countries in the Mediterranean, which share some similar characteristics, like climate conditions, and also face similar challenges, like extreme weather events, best practices exchange could contribute to the adoption of a comprehensive approach for the next day of the region. For instance, techniques used in the agriculture and construction field could be shared and adapted to local contexts. In this way, the exchange of knowledge and experience could lead to more effective and sustainable strategies for resilience.

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Never on Sunday!
The impact of nation-building policies on ethnoreligious minorities status & identity

Karmen Misiou

European University Institute

26 May 2023

Nationhood & nation-building

- The emergence of nation-states followed different trajectories across Europe

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- Different understandings of who qualifies as a member of the *core nation*

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Research Question

How do ethnoreligious non-core groups respond to policies of cultural nation-building?

Definition

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- How do minorities respond to this power imbalance?

Theory

Assimilation?

Theory

Assimilation?

Two strands of literature

Theory

Assimilation?

Two strands of literature

Melting Pot

Theory

Assimilation?

Two strands of literature

Melting Pot ——————————— Backlash

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How do ethnoreligious minorities choose between these options?

Theory

Assimilation?

Two strands of literature

Melting Pot ——————————— Backlash

How do ethnoreligious minorities choose between these options?

Their decision is based on cost and benefits calculations (Akerlof & Kranton 2000; Laitin 1998)

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What explains variation in a single groups' responses?

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Economic shock ⟶ Assimilation

Research on the marginalized groups' attitudes shows a similar pattern (Carvalho & Koyama 2016)

Treatment

Why is public holiday legislation relevant?

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Religion as a domestic policy instrument in the making of nations

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- Public holiday legislation

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Salonica: from Sephardic to Greek

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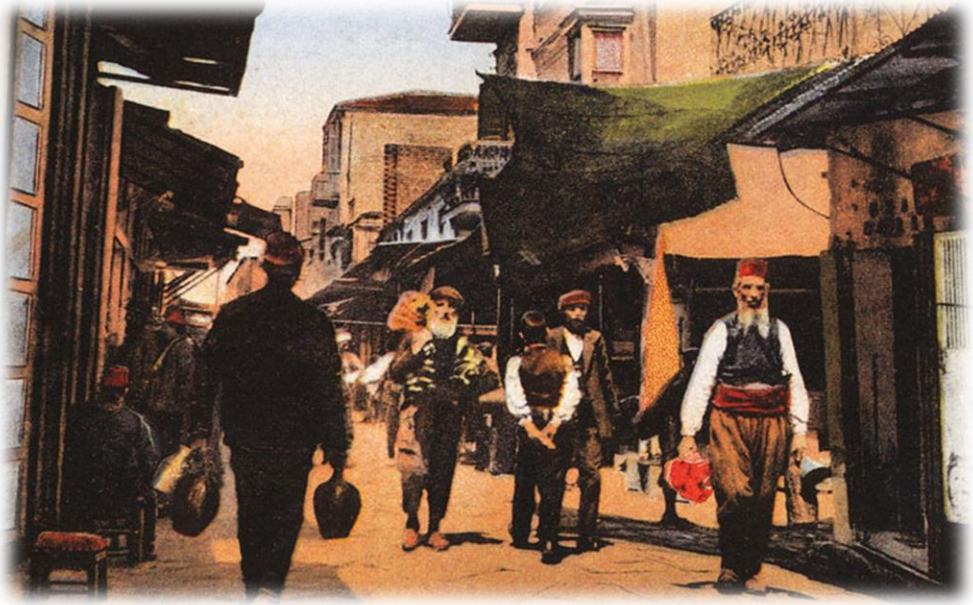

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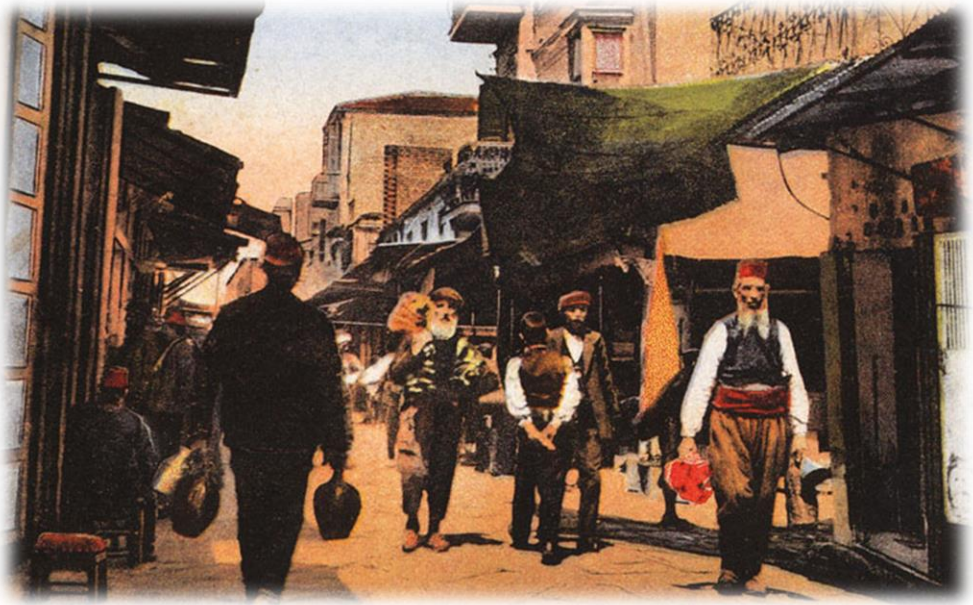
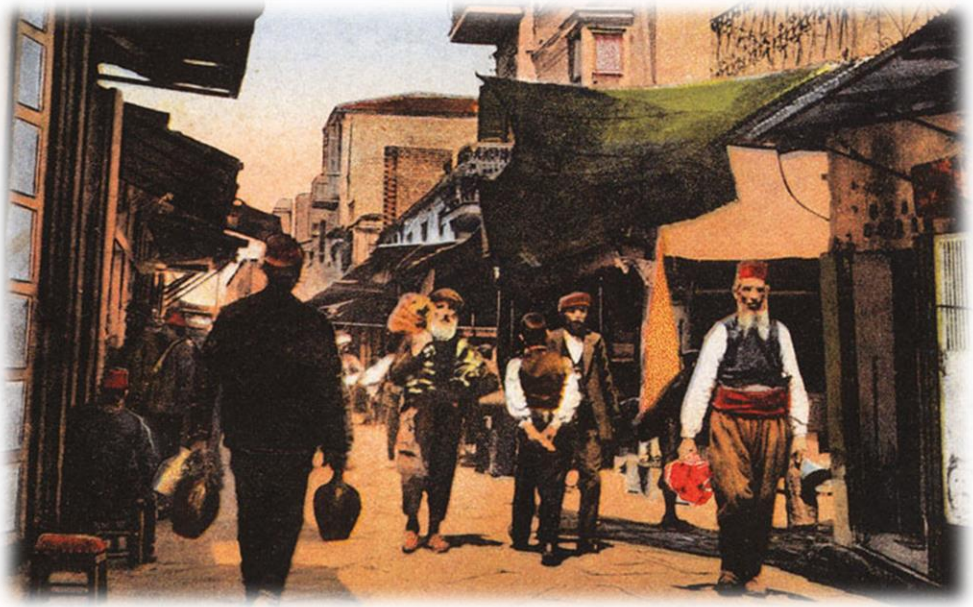


Salonica: from Sephardic to Greek

- Sephardic Jews arrived in the city in 1492, fleeing from Spain
- During the 19th, century they were the largest ethnoreligious group, amounting for about 40% of the city's total population
- Until 1912, the city was under Ottoman rule and the Jewish community was vibrant



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- 1912-1922: full accommodation → the Greek state grants Sephardim a minority status
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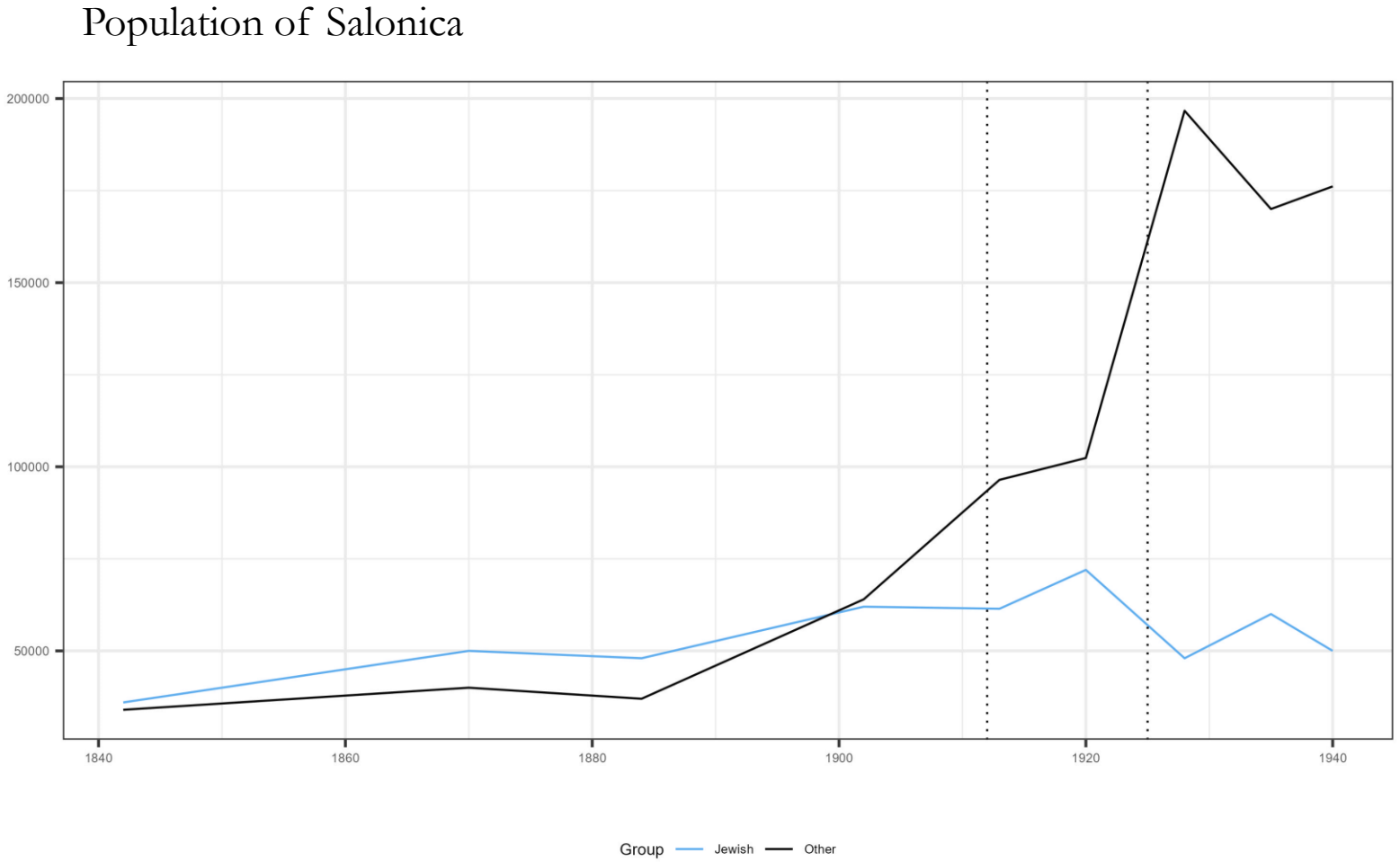
Why?

Salonica: from Sephardic to Greek

The 1922 population exchange between Greece and Turkey makes Salonica home to some 100,000 Greek-speaking, Orthodox Anatolian refugees



The Sunday closing law

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- American Vice Consul James S. Moore highlights the negative financial impact of the policy, especially for shopkeepers and small traders.
- "a blow to the communal privileges, and … only the first in a campaign by the government to dislodge the Jews from Macedonia where they have been established for about four hundred years."

The Sunday closing law

Linking the policy to the theory:

- Sunday closing caused differential shocks to the Jewish community

President of the Zionist Religious Organization, "The Jews of our city have been faced with a dilemma of whether to rest twice a week, thus suffering excessive financial loss, or to violate their religious feelings by working on Saturday" (Constantopoulou and Veremis 1999, p. 147)

The Sunday closing law

Linking the policy to the theory:

- Sunday closing caused differential shocks to the Jewish community
    a. Cultural threat (the community as a whole)

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In 1930 the Greek government adjusted the respective article of the 3103/1924 law, allowing Jews to keep their stores open on Sundays.

Measuring social status & identity choices

- Two sources of archival information:

1. The records of the Chamber of Commerce & Industry (N ≈ 8,700)

❖ I restrict attention between 1912 and 1943

❖Three groups: a. Jew (N=2,622), b. Other (N=5,820), c. Mixed (N=231)

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2. Birth certificates from the registry office (N ≈ 3,200)

❖ I restrict attention between 1923 and 1926

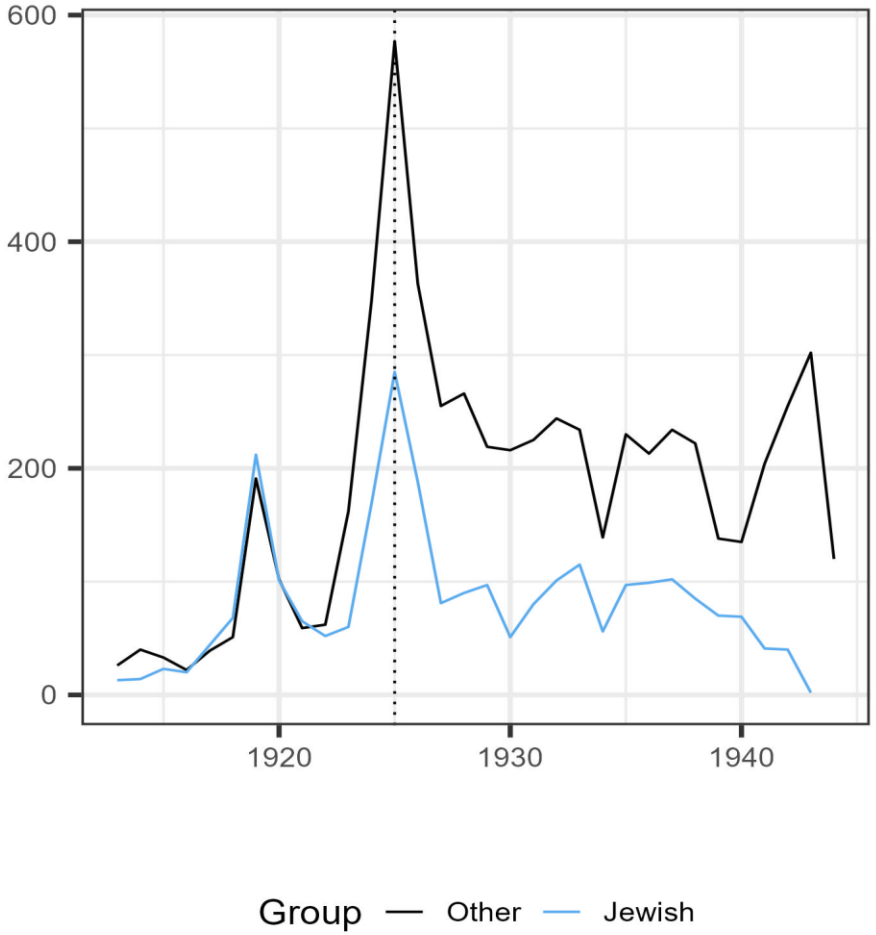
Measuring social status & identity choices

- CCIT

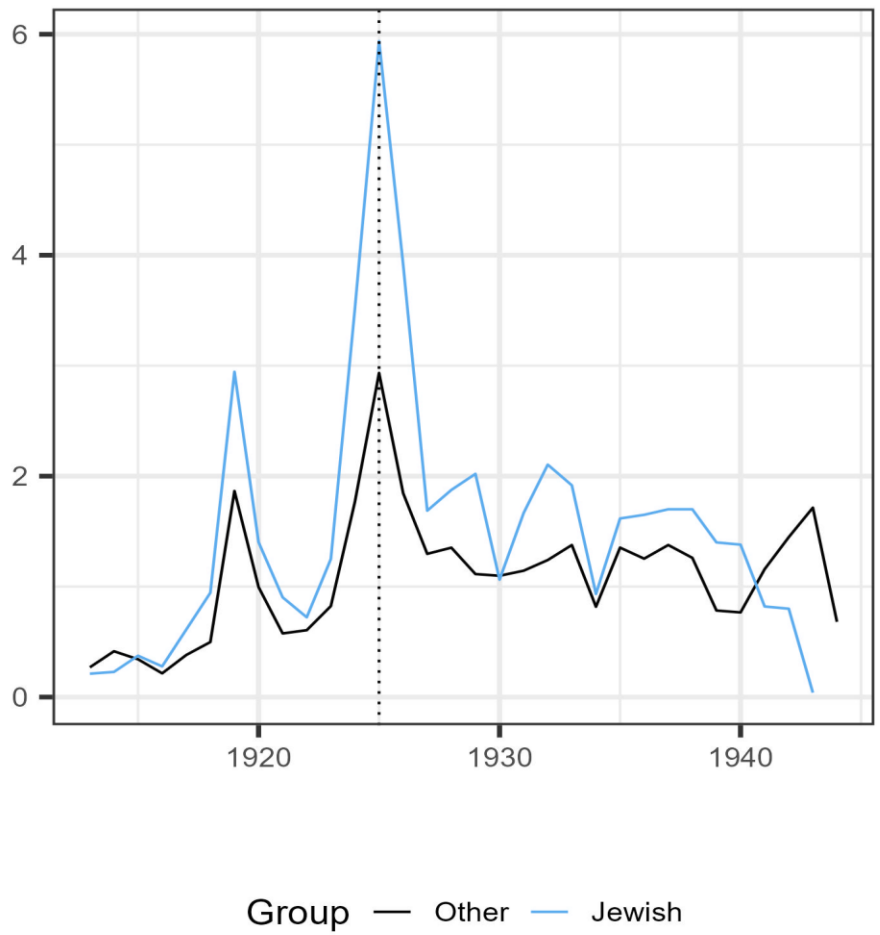
1. I classify observations based on the owners' names
2. I use HISCO to "translate" qualitative information on business activity to social class

Sunday closing & business activity

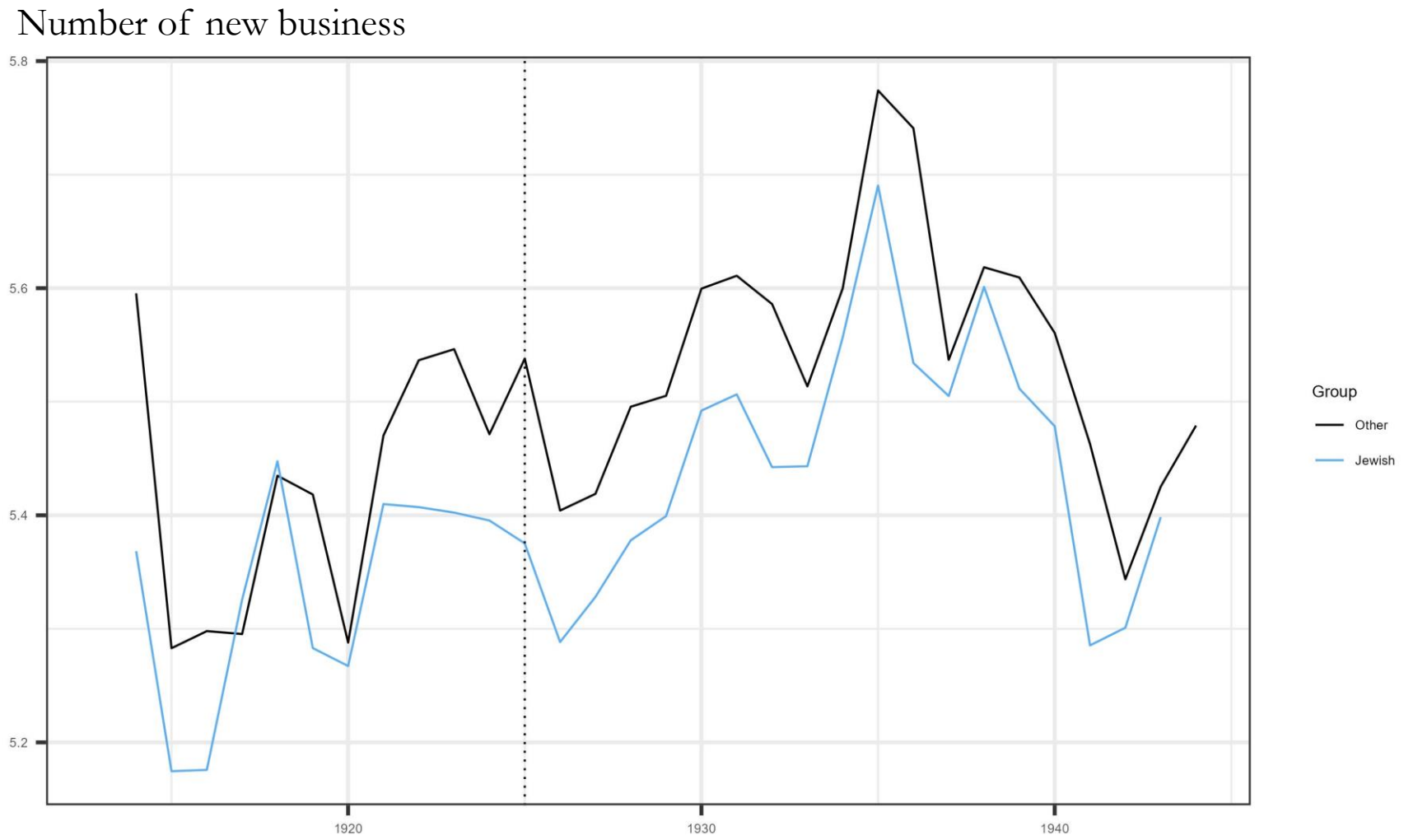
Number of new business



Number of new business conditional on population size



Socioeconomic status



Measuring social status & identity choices

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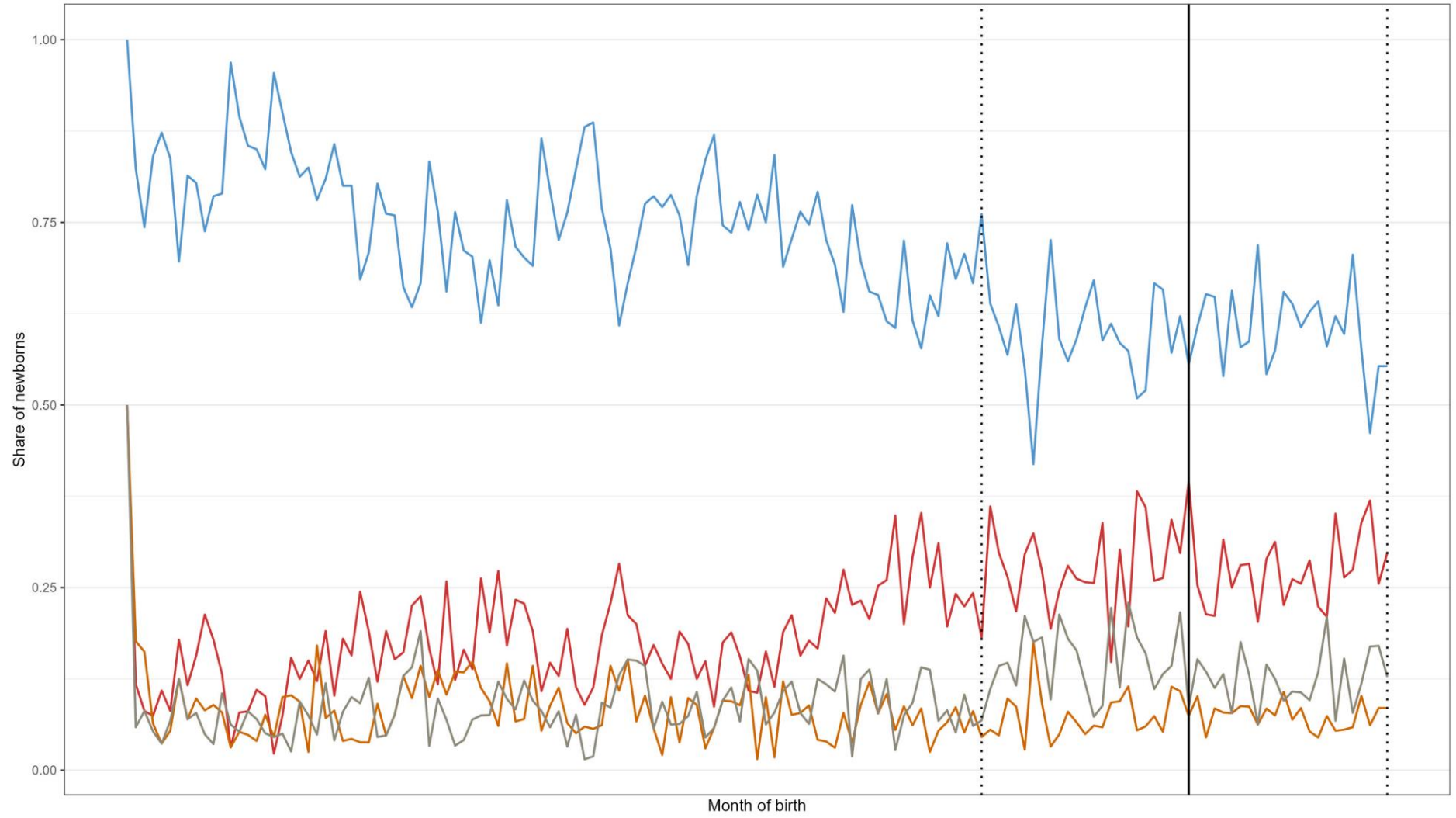
- Birth certificates

1. I keep observations that include fathers' occupation
2. I use a naming scheme provided by an expert in the community to classify names as Ladino, Hebrew, Greek & other
3. Two groups: a. Business (N=1,443), b. Other (N=1,739)

Name choices



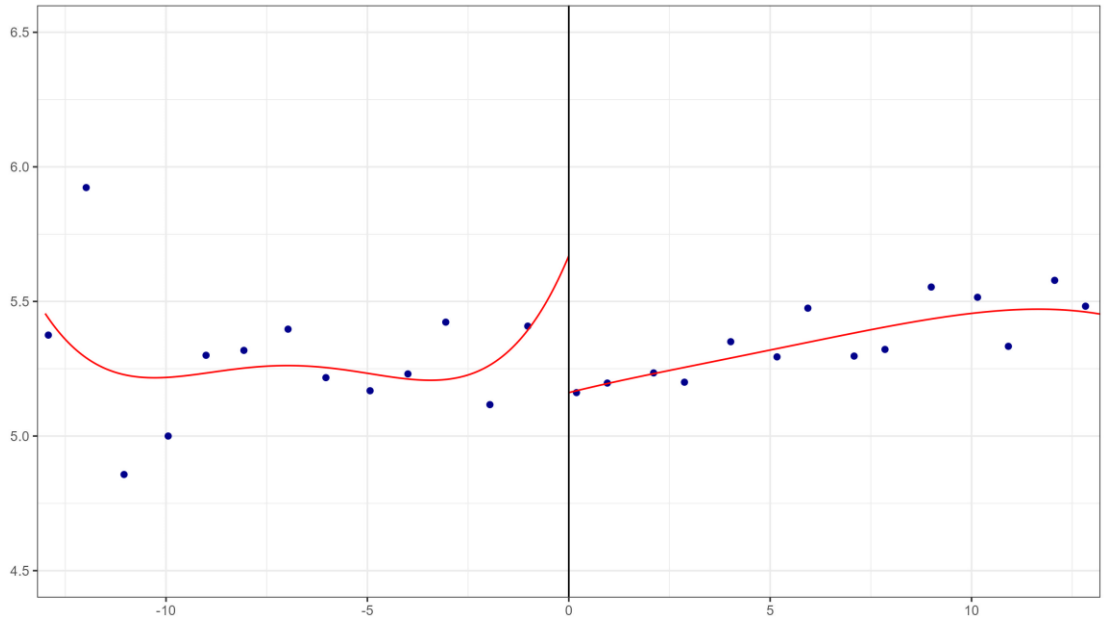
Sunday closing & socioeconomic status

$$Y_{bct} = \alpha + \beta t_{bct} + \lambda_c + \theta_t + \zeta_s + X_{bt} + \varepsilon$$

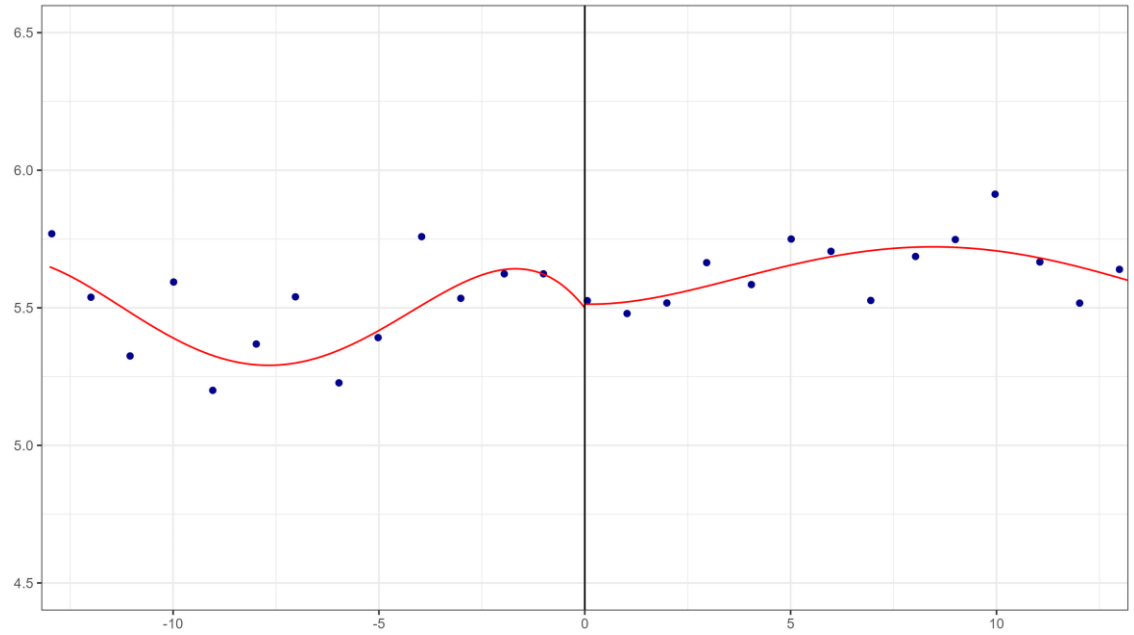
Dependent Variable	Social class				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Jew	-0.26***	-0.26***			
	(0.02)	(0.03)			
After 1925	-0.03				
	(0.03)				
Jew: After 1925	-0.10**	-0.09*	-0.11**	-0.12**	-0.12***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Observations	8,873	8,873	8,873	8,873	8,873
R-squared	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.19	0.22
Year FE	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Group FE	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Sector FE	N	N	N	Y	Y
Controls	N	N	N	N	Y

Notes: After is an indicator of the years 1925-1930 that the policy was in place. Significance levels: ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *<0.1.

Sunday closing & socioeconomic status



Jew



Other

Sunday closing & socioeconomic status

$$Y_b = \alpha + \beta(X_b - c) + \tau D_b + \gamma D(X_b - c) + u_b$$

Dependent Variable	Class			
	Jew		Other	
	Linear	Quadratic	Linear	Quadratic
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Sunday	-0.402*	-0.723**	-0.110	-0.204
	(0.206)	(0.329)	(0.187)	(0.300)
Mean Dep. variable	5.31		5.58	
Observations	2,682		5,782	
Kernel: Triangular				
Method: Robust				

Notes: Significance levels: *** p< 0.01, ** p< 0.05, *p< 0.1.

Sunday closing & identity

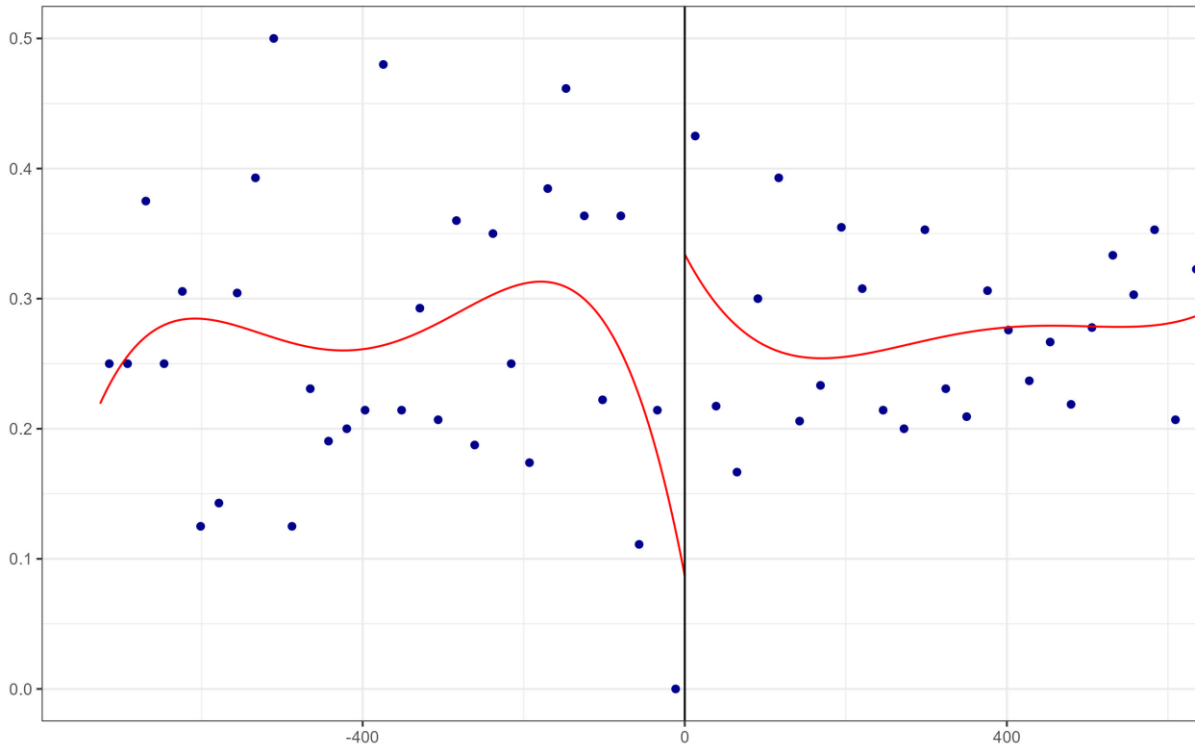
$$[Y_{it} = j] = \alpha + \beta(X_i - c) + \tau D_i + \gamma D(X_i - c) + u_{it}$$

Dependent Variable	First names							
	Panel A							
	Ladino		Hebrew		Greek		Other	
	Linear	Polynomial	Linear	Polynomial	Linear	Polynomial	Linear	Polynomial
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	0.103	0.243*	-0.030	0.009	-0.000	-0.051	-0.047	-0.182
	(0.080)	(0.139)	(0.089)	(0.167)	(0.035)	(0.087)	(0.065)	(0.120)
Mean DV 1923-25	0.26		0.59		0.06		0.13	
Observations	3,182		3,182		3,182		3,182	
	Panel B							
	0.038	0.103	-0.097	0.035	0.006	-0.046	-0.005	-0.111
	(0.118)	(0.213)	(0.129)	(0.233)	(0.060)	(0.075)	(0.050)	(0.116)
Mean DV 1923-25	0.24		0.59		0.07		0.14	
Observations	1,443		1,443		1,443		1,443	
	Panel C							
	0.224**	0.489**	0.020	-0.099	-0.000	-0.084	-0.169	-0.463*
	(0.114)	(0.191)	(0.110)	(0.229)	(0.060)	(0.133)	(0.114)	(0.259)
Mean DV 1923-25	0.28		0.60		0.05		0.12	
Observations	1,739		1,739		1,739		1,739	
Kernel: Triangular								
Method: Robust								

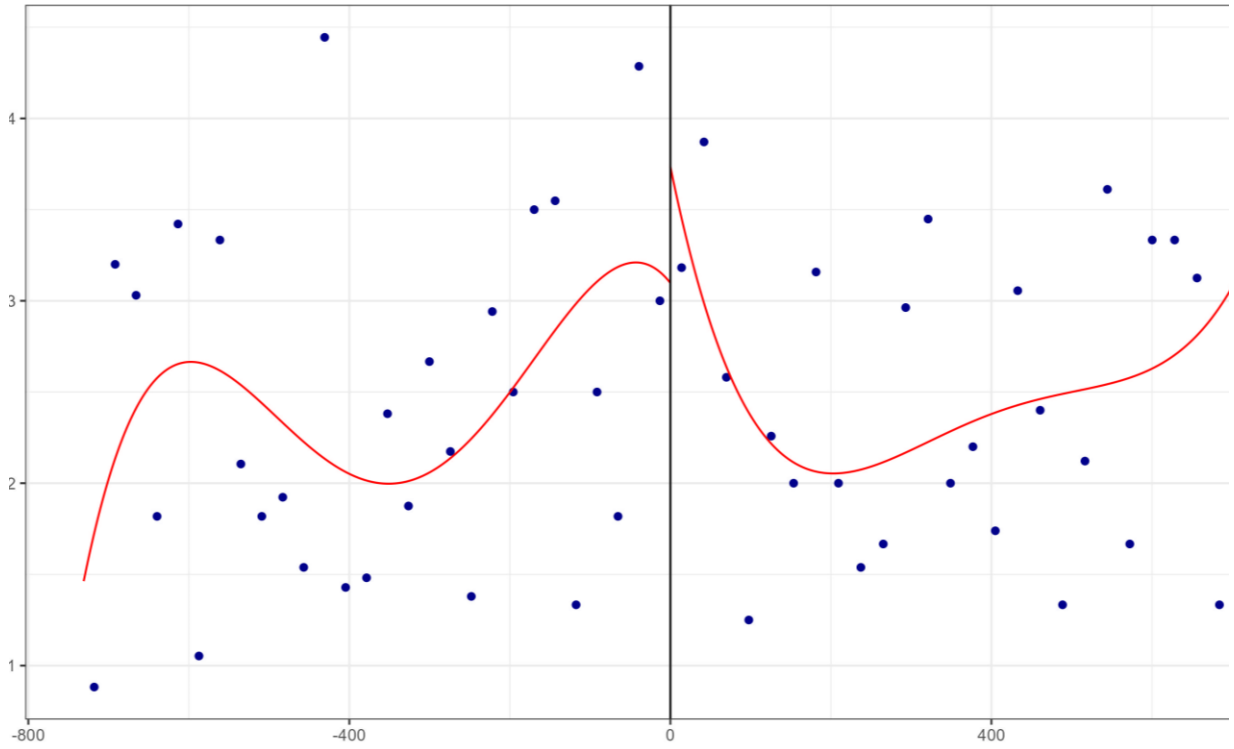
Notes: Standard errors in parentheses, clustered at the date of birth level. Significance levels: *** p< 0.01, ** p< 0.05, *p< 0.1.

Sunday closing & identity

Frequency of Ladino names

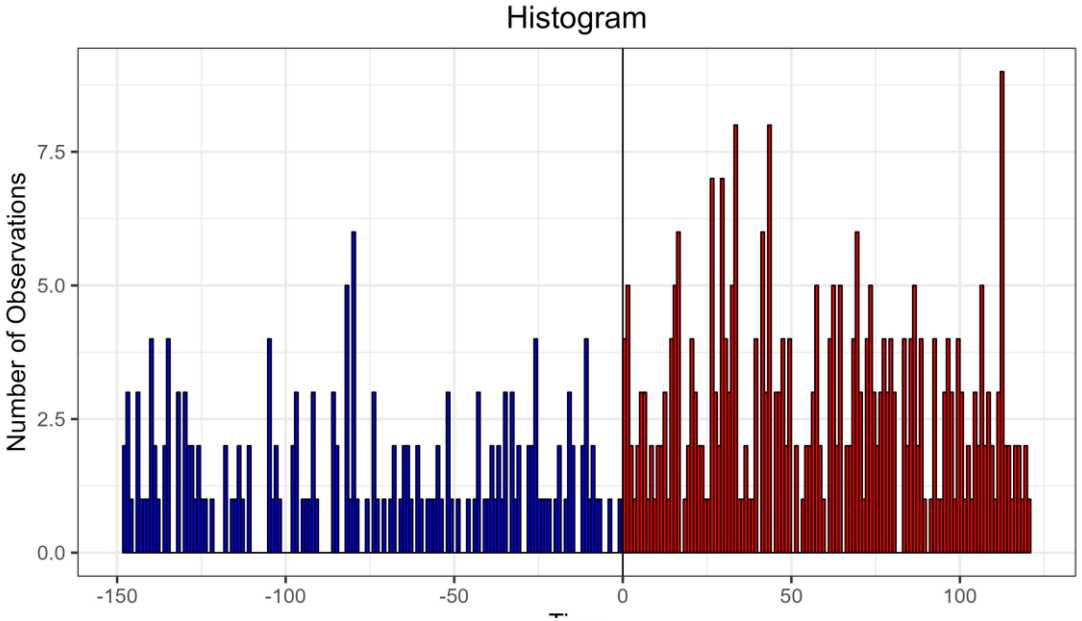


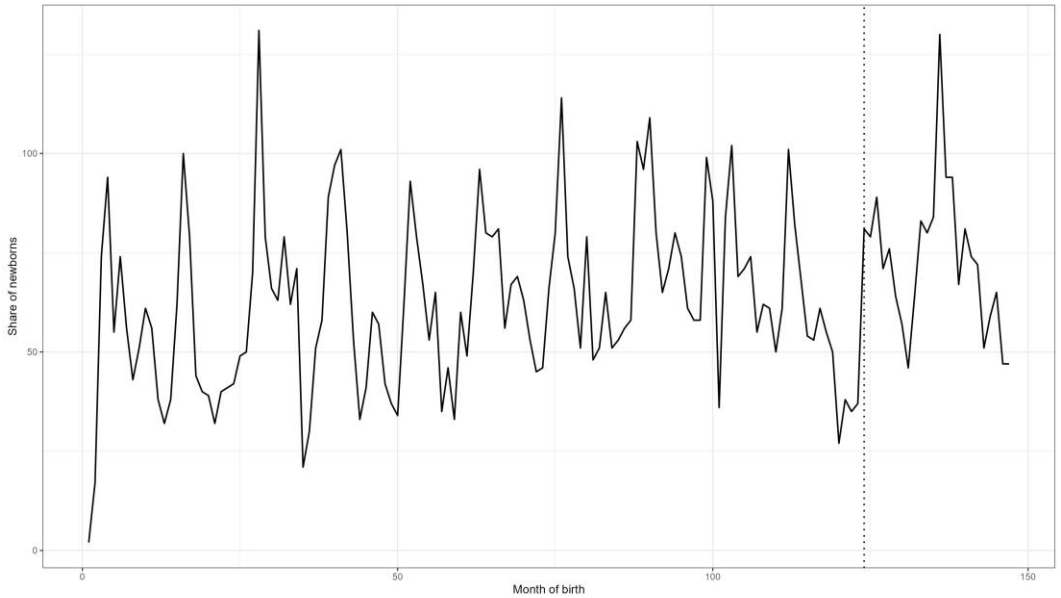
Other



Business

Sunday closing & identity





Tentative conclusion

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- When a cultural threat is accompanied by an economic threat, the latter moderates backlash
- Hence, the context of nation-building policies seems to explain non-core groups' identity decisions

Next steps

- Use the social status analysis to look at identity choices made by individuals involved in business sectors most affected by the policy (butchers, brokers, money-lenders)
- Complement the analysis of identity choices by collecting and analysing data on school choices –as a proxy of language choice- for different groups of the Jewish population
- Due to increased social conflict, the policy was withdrawn on March 14th 1930, allowing Jews to keep their stores open on Sundays. What was the effect of the Greek state's backtracking on the community's assimilation effort?
- Test the external validity of my research by studying a different ethnoreligious minority

Thank you for your attention!

The construction of European identities by young citizens in Athens in light of Brexit during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

In this paper, I present findings from my doctoral research exploring UK and Greek young people's attitudes towards 'EU membership and referenda' as well as their sense of belonging to specific groups and communities during the COVID-19 era. Drawing on thematic analysis of 10 online focus groups with young Greek citizens in Athens, I discuss the ways young voters understand 'Europe' and articulate their attachment to regional, national, and European groups. Moreover, this paper discusses Greek young people's reflections on stereotypes, assumed knowledge and common sense, perceived identities, and social practices associated with their nation. Moreover, the article explores how young people used stereotypes and widely held beliefs about the Greek nation-state to construct or deconstruct belonging to Europe. Finally, this section unpacks the emotions and types of 'guilt' observed and expressed by young Greek voters and the ways these encourage and hinder the participants' self-projection and attachment to social groups within the EU.

Keywords: European identity, Grexit, national identity, national guilt, stereotypes, e-researching young people.

Introduction

With Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the UK and Europe find themselves in the midst of a profound moment of political, economic, and generational uncertainty (Susen, 2017; Oliver, 2018). Young people under 30 years of age have been members of the European Union their entire lives (Mejias & Banaji, 2017) and now experience the detachment of the UK from the EU. The process of leaving the EU is fundamentally changing the nature of their relationships with their European counterparts, and the economic, social, and political outcomes of Brexit will have the greatest consequences for the youngest and future generations (Mejias & Banaji, 2017: 5). In the middle of this uncertainty, young (UK and other European) people are expected to make identity choices and reshape their sense of belonging to groups and societies (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990).

The current research contributes to the study of European politics, sociology, and cultural studies and furthers our understanding on the construction of identities among UK and Greek young people living in London and Athens during the COVID-19 era. The notion that younger people hold more favourable attitudes towards the European Union (EU) is dominant in both scholarly and popular discourse (e.g., Down and Wilson 2013, 2017; Fligstein 2008; 2009; Ford and Goodwin 2014; Keating 2014; Lubbers and Scheepers 2005, 2010). Much of the empirical evidence to date suggests that younger people are more likely to be positive about European integration. Apart from examining levels of European integration among young generations, it is also important to explore the ways they understand the meaning of EU membership based on their identities, experiences, and worldviews.

This article sheds light on the self-reported evaluations of young Greek participants (18–30 years of age) regarding the stereotypes, assumed knowledge and common sense, perceived identities, and social practices associated with their nation. Ultimately, the conceptualisation and social categorisation undertaken by the young citizens to reflect upon national groups are frequently raised in the discussions to highlight a contrast with other European countries or what they construct as 'European identity'. Specifically, it explores the use of stereotypes and widely held beliefs about the nation-state to construct or deconstruct belonging to Europe. Moreover, this section unpacks the emotions and types of 'guilt' observed and expressed by Greek citizens and the ways these encourage and hinder the participants' self-projection and attachment to social groups within the EU.

The Reality of 'Brexit' and the Shadow of 'Grexit'

Brexit has shaken public opinion in the UK and beyond, especially with regard to its political and economic ramifications (Outhwaite, 2017). Arguably, it poses a severe challenge to the existence of a common European identity and the idea of 'European society' (Outhwaite, 2008), especially given that it was the most recent European country that voted to exit and actually left the EU (De Vries, 2017), which has attracted international attention and political concerns across the EU. The negotiation processes for the post-Brexit era took more than four years to finalise the UK's relations with the EU, while some are ongoing at the time of writing this thesis.

In February 2023, the UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, addressed in the UK parliament the recently widespread public perception that: 'the UK has become the sick man of Europe due to Brexit'. This notion has been reproduced in several media outputs (Financial Times, 2023; The Economist, 2022). Interestingly, following the 2008 global financial crisis, Greece starred in international media headlines carrying the same label of being seen as the 'sick man of Europe' (BBC News, 2011) 12 years ago. The UK and Greece have been performing different roles in the EU based on their status, position, timing, and purposes of joining the EU. The UK, although lacking enthusiasm for the EU, has been one of the core member-states contributing to the decision-making. On the contrary, Greece, has been traditionally labelled as a 'pro-European' member (Clements et al., 2014) but remains a peripheral laggard state within the EU (Halikiopoulou et al., 2012). Despite these countries' position in the EU being dissimilar, they both offer a useful case study to explore as the 'Brexit' and 'Grexit' referenda grasped global attention and generated concerns across Europe over the importance of EU membership and the role of transnational institutions, especially during times of crisis.

The 'Grexit' Referendum

On the 27th of June 2015, the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announced that a referendum would be conducted on the 5th of July 2015 (Rori, 2016:11) to assess the people's support for the bailout conditions in Greece's debt crisis [Figure 2] suggested by the European Commission (henceforth EC), the European Central Bank (henceforth ECB), and the International Monetary Fund (henceforth IMF). Although the referendum did not concern Greece's EU membership, it was assumed by the (YES) voters that rejecting the austerity measures proposed would result in Greece's departure from the EU (Rori, 2016: 13) and the return to the previous single currency, the drachma. The outcome of the referendum was 61,31% against the plan-agreement compared to 38,69% in favour of the agreement. The bailout conditions were overwhelmingly rejected in all Greek regions.

The reason for the referendum was the failure between the Greek government and the EU to reach an agreement on the negotiations regarding Greek requests for financial support (following the 2009 economic crisis) by the end of June 2015. Nevertheless, instead of the 'Grexit' option, a plan for 'Grecovery' was implemented (Visvizi, 2014). This was the eighth referendum held in Greece since the republic referendum to restore democracy in 1974 (Vasilopoulou & Halikiopoulou, 2013). Moreover, it constituted a unique case, as it was the only referendum in modern GR history that did not concern the political regime (Tsatsanis & Teperoglou, 2016: 434).

Clements, Nanou, and Verney (2014) state in their work that Greek public opinion moved towards a Euro-critical rather than a Euro-rejectionist direction; illustrating a confidence crisis in the EU but not a holistic rejection of European integration, and certainly not a preference for GR's exit from the Eurozone. Also, based on their analysis, two of the variables that affected public support for the EU were age and education; the elderly and those who left education aged 15 or under were more likely to be against the Euro and the EU (Clements, Nanou, & Verney, 2014: 261–262). Another factor that influenced unfavourable views of EU membership and the Euro proved to be citizens' trust in the local political institutions; namely, the government or the parliament. Overall, Greek citizens simply transformed into a critical friend of the

EU under the belief that remaining a member would be the only pragmatic, sustainable and realistic option despite austerity measures.

Developing social belonging to (supra)national groups

People often identify through collective identities that we make, and remake based on collective representations and symbols of a society. By sharing sociological variables like ethnicity, class, race, religion, nationality, culture, language, profession etc. (Susen, 2021), individuals acquire particular social identities (Georgiou, 2001). One of the most representative theorists on 'social identity development' is Henri Tajfel (1981). His *Social Identity Theory* (henceforth SIT) has been widely studied and applied in various contexts, including organisational behaviour, intergroup relations, and political psychology. SIT proposed a way of understanding how people form and maintain social identities. The theory posits that individuals define themselves in terms of their membership in various social groups and that shape their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Moreover, this approach was further expanded by Turner (1985; 1987) with his Self-Categorisation Theory (henceforth SCT), suggesting that individuals undergo a process of *self-categorisation* based on a range of social characteristics, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion. These categories provide individuals with a sense of identity and belonging, as well as a framework for understanding and interpreting the social world.

According to SIT and SCT, individuals derive their self-esteem from their group memberships. People have a basic need for positive self-regard, and this need is met, in part, through their identification with social groups. When individuals perceive their group as being superior to other groups, they experience a boost in self-esteem, whereas when they perceive their group as being inferior, they experience a decrease in self-esteem. This dynamic can lead to intergroup conflict, as individuals strive to maintain their positive self-regard by defending the status and reputation of their group.

Tajfel (1981) and Turner (1985) acknowledge the relational character of social identities and thus focus on 'inter-group comparison' and 'group distinctiveness' as key terms when conceptualising identity. The 'insider vs outsider' scheme has been studied by anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, and historians for a long time. Acknowledging that social identities are, by definition, relationally constituted might come across as 'too obvious'. Yet, there is no theoretical approach that could seriously deny this, which explains the sociological persistence of the relationality of identities.

National identities are political and social identities. Thus, the examination of national identities must consider this dual characteristic. Below I will explain the difference between national and nationalistic identities considering the division between their social and political aspects. First, national identities are, in a way, inherited; we are born within a nation and, consequently, our national identity is not our choice. However, these identifications remain a point of external categorisation and self-categorisation (Tajfel, 1978; Psarou, 2003). Second, the nation works as 'an imagined brotherhood, an extended family and a geographical territory. People will defend their land as they would defend their family (Smith, 1991). Up to this point, this is a description of national identity and explains the emotions, origins, and nature of this identification. However, when this attachment becomes a choice to fully characterize a person or a group with regard to the nation, their military supremacy, or the belief of their exceptional nature, then it becomes nationalism (Demertzis, 1996). According to Billig (1995), who suggested the term 'banal nationalism', the definition

of a 'nation' depends on the definition of the 'other'. He also emphasizes the readiness of each national group to accept invented myths and habits as ancient history and traditions (Billig, 1995: 25), and to describe their feelings about their homeland as a rational justified and defensive patriotism.

Furthermore, the sense of belonging to a social and political group, like the nation and/or Europe, is a process of everyday activities that might seem *banal*. For EU citizens, identification may equally be based on daily low-level engagement in unremarkable ways (carrying passports or driving licences, conforming with legislation, walking past EU flags) which nevertheless remind citizens of their involvement in the larger EU System (Cram, 2009). Laura Cram introduced the concept of 'banal Europeanism' (2009) as a key factor for EU integration in everyday activities that reinforce the sense of belonging. While few would die for Europe, exposure to everyday EU symbols, processes, and practices familiarises individuals with transnational groups and communities. As she clarifies, in order to understand and study *Europeanism* the following aspects need to be considered: the contingent and contextual nature of identity, the importance of banal significations and the concept of unity in diversity as extending beyond and beneath the boundaries of the national states which constitute the formal membership of the EU (Cram, 2009: 111). After all, Europe has been interlinked with values of liberal democracy, human rights, diversity, and equality (Fanoulis, 2018). Those values and significations, those European societal imaginaries are more than enough to motivate us to feel like members of the European identity.

Data and methods

This study is informed by the interpretative paradigm and aims to explore young voters' perceptions of 'EU memberships and referenda'. Consequently, qualitative research and specifically focus groups were selected as a research method to explore attitudes, perceptions, feelings, and ideas about the topic (Kitzinger, 1995). Furthermore, focus groups can be used as simulations of everyday discourses and conversations or as a quasi-naturalistic method for studying the generation of social representations or social knowledge in general (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996).

I originally planned to conduct in-person research but due to the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic I decided to conduct remote focus groups instead to continue and complete the data-collection process on time while ensuring robustness of the study. I conducted 20 online focus groups via ZOOM with UK and Greek nationals between May-October 2020. In this paper, I am expanding on data from 10 online focus groups which involved young Greek people. The participants were current students or recent graduates between 18-30 years old based in Athens. Each focus group involved approximately 5 participants (4-8 participants per discussion) and 55 Greek young people (106 participants in total) took part in my study. The online focus groups were video recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The three research questions this paper aims to address are:

1. To what extent are different forms of European identity articulated among young people in Athens?

2. What do the participants' attitudes towards Europe tell us about their sense of attachment to national and/or European groups?
3. In what ways does Brexit (and Grexit) affect the participants' forms of (self-) identification?

(Dis)Continuities within Europe

Studying the development of social identities (Tajfel, 1981) and a sense of belonging to groups and communities is often the outcome of a comparative self-assessment and self-categorisation with the in-groups and the out-groups (Turner, 1985; Billig, 1995; Fanoulis, 2018). Arguably, every single member of a given social community may be similar in some ways, while to an equal extent dissimilar from other members of the group. Although belonging to an (inter)national society may be flexible, relational, and situated within a given space and time, individuals often assume and expect absolute compatibility between the unique members of the social group. This compatibility may be the result of commonly held beliefs, social norms, and stereotypes about a national community, and may hinder the development of a transnational society (Billig, 1995; Demertzis, 1996). During the Online Focus Groups (henceforth OFGs), the young (18 – 30 years of age) Greek nationals expanded on assumed, or taken-for-granted, knowledge about their home countries that were perceived as incompatible with the rest of Europe and, thus, disrupted the development of a shared European identity. Nevertheless, often conventional notions of knowledge about their culture were utilised by the participants to construct European imaginaries in conversation. The elements used to specify (in)compatibility with the EU included reflections on the nation as a *geographical location*, an *institution* (with economic, socio-historical, legal-protective, and political dimensions), and as an *identity*.

Stereotypes of the Geographical Location

Young Greek nationals had the tendency to associate geographical locations (as their place of birth: Demertzis, 1996) with belonging to regional, national, continental, and global communities. Even though geography may be considered useful in defining 'where' Europe is (Outhwaite, 2020), building a shared consensus of 'who' is or should be considered 'European' transgresses such boundaries. During these conversations, specific regions were referred to in order to illustrate or refute attachment to the rest of the EU.

The data extracts highlight the complex relationship between national identity and its relationship with Europe. These perspectives raise important questions about the nature of national identity and its construction, particularly in relation to cultural differences and similarities between nations of Europe. Furthermore, these reflections invite further exploration of the ways in which national identity is constructed, particularly in relation to the role of symbolic values and cultural factors in shaping identity. Additionally, it highlights the potential tension between national identity and a broader sense of European identity, with the former emphasising distinctiveness and

separation and the latter highlighting commonalities and connections. Ultimately, the data extract underscores the importance of considering the multiple factors that shape national identity and the potential implications for relations between nations and regions.

Greece at the (Balkan) South End of Europe

Greece belongs geographically to the Balkan peninsula in Southeast Europe. The participants often reproduced the gap between country-members located at the South-eastern and North-western Europe. This conceptualised split does not merely emphasise the geographical differences but also the power statuses, histories, and geopolitical importance of the member-states influencing the power relations within the EU. Greek participants expressed that their geographical location may explain the cultural distance of the home country from the rest of Europe. Some of the characteristics that shaped their reflections were the assumed divisions in the power dynamics between the EU countries in the West and North/Central part of Europe and those at the South end. Although 'difference' played a significant role, and was a key point at issue, it was not framed as an 'incompatibility' with the rest of Europe.

> Tasos (GR3): We can say that we are more isolated in the Balkans, Scandinavia has a different culture, Central Europe has a different culture, but we all feel a little bit of Europe as 'citizens of Europe' I believe... Even those of us who are at the southern end.

> Ilias (GR5): The way of entertainment, the music plays a role, let's say we have our own characteristic music, 'rebetika'. Greece is more oriental as part of the Balkans perhaps, so I believe that despite being part of Europe we introduce a good, different element compared to other European countries and this makes us special in Greece as a place in Europe.

Greece's geographical location at the southeastern edge of Europe has placed it at the crossroads of cultures and civilizations throughout history. While its location has allowed for interaction and exchange with neighbouring countries and regions in lay, banal and everyday aspects of the cultural life (here the local music genres), it has also contributed to a sense of cultural difference from the rest of the European Union. These factors have contributed to a complex and nuanced relationship between Greece and the EU that has been shaped by both cultural similarities and differences. In the extracts above the distinctiveness of Greece is displayed as contributing to the European identity's more diverse and unique elements instead of causing a (severe) division between Greece and the EU.

> Rea (GR3): Similar to the other Balkans in Southern Europe, we have a different perception of life, contact, work, and an extremely strong connection with tradition, which often reflects the patriarchal regime and the way it works in society.

Adversely, in this quote, the participant expands on the assumed socio-political differences between the EU and the countries in the Balkan Peninsula. Some of these differences mirror everyday routines (Cram, 2009) but others describe important perceived factors of Greek society. Specifically, Rea comments on the role of 'tradition'

and ‘patriarchy’, which is perceived to be different from (or assumed to be absent in) other European societies. The Balkan countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia, and Greece) are often followed by specific stereotypes and often the label ‘Balkan’ is used in a derogatory way. It might be used to signify ‘financial inefficiency’, ‘untrustworthiness’ – especially in the context of financial agreements, and ‘lack of discipline’ – especially towards the State. Although these stereotypes were not directly linked by the participants to the geographical location, this assumed knowledge came up later when they were discussing the Greek nation, as an institution. Nevertheless, we can observe at this stage the presumed ‘out-datedness’ of some Greek traditions and social norms, understood as incompatible with the imagined notion of Europe.

Stereotypes of the National Economy and History

The wealth of a country and its power status was a repeated theme during the conversations with young (18 – 30 years of age) Greek nationals. In many cases, the requirement for a member state to be financially independent and contribute to the EU conflicted with the participants’ imaginaries about the symbolic impact of the European identity. The country’s history was also used during the OFGs to illustrate the perceived role and position of Greece within Europe as a ‘country in need’.

Greece ‘Being in Need’

Greece’s economy was discussed by the Greek participants as a significant discrepancy with the rest of Europe, which could not be overlooked or indeed resolved. In general, the participants in the study strongly believed that a country's economic status determines its position in the world and in the EU.

> Sotiris (GR2): I think the economy is a significant difference, especially between the Northern and Southern countries and the different growth and unemployment rates are things that make us feel that we are not the same or that we have fallen behind in industry, in technology, and in such matters. (…) Economic factors can make us feel different.

The Euro currency is often perceived as an important benefit within the EU that may increase belonging to Europe in banal, everyday practices. Nevertheless, the financial comparison (or for some the financial competition) between EU countries amplifies existing inequalities and divisions within Europe. These widely held beliefs about the (poor and inefficient) financial condition of Greece remain persistent. These beliefs are further exacerbated by the counterfactual scenario of Grexit and stress the reputation of Greece for ‘financial instability’, ‘austerity’, and ‘being in need’ in the depiction of the country in people’s minds within the nation and beyond. These common-sense perceptions assume the practical inability of Greece to depart from the EU and survive (financially) as an independent State without supranational support.

> Matina (GR2): In relation to Greece and Grexit, I think that Greece would not be able to stand alone in the world outside the European Union (…) I don't think we have sufficient leadership and a strong enough economy to support such an option in practice; I don't think it could happen.

Prior to 2010, Greece did not receive any significant global attention. The onset of the Eurozone crisis, however, drastically altered this situation, with Greece becoming prominently associated with the concept of 'crisis' across international headlines (Tsatsanis & Teperoglou, 2016: 428). Moreover, during the Grexit Referendum, Greece remained in the spotlight and was often portrayed as inefficient, reckless, corrupt, and populist, with a constant need for financial support (Tsatsanis & Teperoglou, 2016: 428). This negative framing of Greece as 'the sick man of Europe' in international news (BBC, 2011), drew attention to the country's challenges and contributed to a broader narrative of crisis within the Eurozone.

Another aspect that has contributed to Greece's imaging as a 'semi-periphery' (Halikiopoulou et al., 2012) rather than a 'core' country within the EU has been its history. During the OFGs, the Greek nationals often reflected on the occupation of Greece by the Ottoman Empire (Thomas, 2014) for 400 years (1453–1821). This historical context has contributed to the Greek citizens' perception and sentiment that Greece was 'left behind' during times of socio-political, economic, and technological progression in other European countries. Interestingly, this argument was often used as a justified explanation and excuse for Greece's slow financial development.

> Pelagia (GR2): This difference that exists with the economy in the countries is also a historical difference, that is, to forget that in those centuries when Europe was developing and went through an agrarian revolution, an industrial revolution, Greece was still at a level almost medieval, in the way its economy was moving and even in its society, in how it was shaped, it didn't have large urban centres, well, so it makes sense that it was further back when suddenly it was called upon to reach the same level as the rest of Western Europe.

Moreover, this historical context was intentionally implemented to justify other perceived stereotypes and limitations of contemporary Greek society. Some of them concerned notions of citizens' 'civil disobedience' or 'suspicion' towards migration and the 'Muslim religion'.

> Dafni (GR3): Under the occupation of the Ottoman Empire, something that other European countries were not, so this brings additional differentiations and there if it stems any form of anarchy against the state, we do not respect the state because we do not consider that there are laws to respect.

> Orestis (GR3): as rightly mentioned before, the Turkish occupation has left some such different marks in history, Greeks are a little more suspicious of Muslims or immigrants, because of our history perhaps.

These examples illustrate how the participants in conversation construct the incompatibility between Greece and Europe, but also generate strategies to defend the national country. Banal 'nationalism' indicates the defence of the home country (*patrida*: Demertzis, 1996), similar to the defence of the family (Smith, 1991), in aspects that may be perceived as unpreferable or politically incorrect (such as not following the rule of Law or being suspicious of diversity). Yet, young Greek citizens (18 – 30 years of age) decide to justify these everyday facets of the political and social culture based on a historic context, which may illustrate an acceptance of these limitations of the nation.

The most interesting topic was, however, the symbolic dimension of Greece's past and its effect on its present role within the EU. Specifically, the participants

expanded on the aftermath of Grexit, as a scenario perceived likely to have caused a detrimental financial crisis and uncertainty within Greece had it been implemented. In addition to this, during the Greek OFGs, the economic status of Greece and the years of the Ottoman occupation were discussed with reference to and in contrast with contemporary geopolitical threats to Greece from Turkey. This became evident in the context of the 'migration crisis' that started at the Evros Greek – Turkey border in February 2020. Specifically, a large migrant population arrived at the Evros Greek – Turkey border and attempted to enter the EU. This situation was perceived by the Greek government and the EU as a deliberate strategy by the Turkish government to use migration as a 'weapon'[1]. This incident was repeatedly brought into the discussions with young Greek nationals and was often combined with other perceived 'risks' (Beck, 1992) posed by Turkey in relation to the geopolitical and military security of Greece.

> Iro (GR10): I think the situation with Grexit is very different than with Brexit and apart from the economic issue, Greece I think needs support from the EU in a broader, political character. Particularly now we have this situation that prevails with Turkey and the (.) violation of the waters of the Aegean and the borders at Evros, which is something that Greece alone cannot cope with, to defend itself. So, I believe that belonging to the EU at the moment is extremely necessary.

The construction of the Greek nation here follows a similar approach to the one presented earlier with regard to the financial status of the country. Greece is presented as 'weak', and unable to manage alone external military risks from non-EU countries. Europe is not simply a partnership but a 'guardian' of the nation in times of both financial and geopolitical crises. In this context, remaining resilient outside of the EU with multiple external threats is perceived as unrealistic. Hence, often the construction of the nation-country (here and in other examples, Greece being 'weak', 'at risk' and 'in need' of transnational support) may prove significant in the development of citizens' attitudes towards European integration. When this argument was used during the OFG, others in the group added more comments but a representative one is included below.

> Ariadni (GR10): That Erdoğan is a bit crazy! So, we really need help because at any moment he can do whatever he wants! So, if we were on our own, Turkey would 'destroy us'!

The assumption that Greece is threatened by Turkey was a persistent theme. Often it coincided with multiple stereotypes of the 'other' (the Turkish side: Anastasiou, 2011) using a comparative in-group and out-group framework (Anderson, 2006; Hobsbawm, 1990; Smith, 1991). Moreover, Turkey was frequently used in the conversation as an example of a non-EU country that lacks the perceived 'European values' and requirements to join the EU. Nevertheless, Greece is imagined by young (18 – 30 years old) Greek citizens as unable to survive in an era of multiple risks (financial, geopolitical, and military) and uncertainties (like the COVID-19 pandemic) without support from the EU.

In the realm of identity studies, the concept of threat plays a crucial role, as it involves constant comparisons between 'us' and 'them' in the context of uncertain and

[1] In the COVID-19 pandemic context, Greece closed its borders and denied migrants entry to the EU. In response, the European Union Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (Frontex: Zaiotti, 2007) provided support to manage the migrant crisis. Therefore, the focus shifted towards the role played by Frontex in coordinating European border management during this crisis.

conflict-ridden situations. The formation of a European identity has heavily relied on minimizing and avoiding potential risks in the history of the European Union (Patrikios & Cram, 2016: 730). Such risks include strategic threats (such as the conflicts at the Evros Greek-Turkey border), economic threats (such as the Eurozone crisis in 2008, especially for smaller, peripheral state members), and the recent global health crisis due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Stereotypes of the Socio-Political Life within the Nation

The nation was understood as an institution with specific functions and symbolic dimensions. One of the main functions is the political, but also social and cultural differences among Europeans were included. These elements are directly related to the citizens' social and political identities and citizenship values, aspects that are extremely important for young Europeans (18 – 30 years of age). The commonality among the different examples and areas that were discussed during the OFGs reflected the participants' concern about the lack of care for others within and outside of the nation.

Greeks' Disobedience to the State

A key theme that dominated the conversations with young Greek citizens over the compatibility of the national and the European culture was the notion that Greek citizens do not obey the Rule of Law. There was a variety of different examples presented in the Greek OFGs concerning the citizens' compliance with the legal framework from anti-smoking guidelines indoors to environmental policies.

> Katerina (GR4): I believe that national culture is not particularly compatible with European culture. Well, there are many examples of Greeks surpassing the law with a representative one being the anti-smoking law, which has been passed 500 times and has been imposed on all states. Yet, in Greece, we see that there is a completely different mentality in some things. I think the anti-smoking law is a good example and in general, I think we don't have that 'strict obedience' to the Law that you see in other countries.
>
> Lydia (GR4): I agree with you, clearly the Europeans decide to follow the domestic rules and laws. Also, the laws are stricter while in Greece for every case there is a loophole, you can always find a good lawyer to defend you or respectively a politician to avoid following the legal route and to do your own (illegal) thing.

These stereotypes of citizens' attitudes towards the State and the Rule of Law reflect inefficiencies and limitations that have been attached to the Greek nations throughout the last 15 years (since 2008) and have been reproduced in (transnational) media representations of the 'Greek identity'. Greece's national system has been related to 'clientelism', 'rent-seeking behaviour', 'corruption', 'conflicts of interest', and 'corporatism' (Vasilopoulou & Halikiopoulou, 2013; Featherstone, 2005). These perceptions of the modern Greek State became increasingly notorious during the Eurozone crisis (Verney, 2015) when Greece suffered from severe financial instability.

During the economic recession in Greece (2009-2015), the citizens organised several demonstrations, with the 'Aganaktismenoi' (the equivalent of the 'Indignados' in Spain) square movement being the most representative (Zestanaki, 2019; 2020), in opposition to the austerity measures and political establishment (national and beyond). These political reactions strengthened Greece's image as 'disobedient' and dominated the description of the nation across international media. Finally, the 'Grexit' referendum, which essentially concerned the citizens' (dis)agreement with the bailout financial conditions proposed by the EU partners established once more the perception of Greeks as 'difficult' and 'rebellious', in this case for rejecting the suggested terms of the bailout and risking Greece's departure from the Eurozone.

Constructing National Collective Guilt

The stereotypes about national geographical location, economy, history, and socio-political aspects of everyday life in Greece developed a sense of 'guilt'. To a considerable degree the commonly held beliefs and common-sense knowledge of the Greek young nationals appeared to be in conflict with the imaginary citizenship values that they reconstructed in conversation with others during the OFGs. The participants, instead of simply describing these stereotypes, this conventional wisdom about their home nations tended to assume responsibility for the 'national stereotypes' associated with Greece. This means that the stereotypes about their national countries are constructed as an important element of young Europeans' identity and a specific issue to act upon and, ideally, to resolve. For example, the Greek participants introduced into the discussion about 'disobedience to the State' the idea of the responsibilities of citizens towards the government.

> Elisa (GR10): I think in terms of taking responsibility, we are always aiming to spot someone else's fault, the fault of the state, the fault of the neighbour, or put the blame on someone else. Other countries, such as the UK, value the importance of personal responsibility, especially in political life.

The extract above indicates a representative example of how social stereotypes associated with the nation (not following the rules, exploring avenues to surpass the Law, creating conflicts of interest etc.) contradicted young Europeans' imaginary citizenship values. Young citizens aim to be resourceful, accountable, care about the State and the social groups they are part of, and act for the (perceived) benefit of their community. Although this example concerns the Greek participants, this 'duty' of young citizens to assume responsibility for others (the nation, the government etc.) is something that came across in the OFGs and became evident in the management of multiple crises. Arguably, this tendency to take upon oneself responsibilities that may not be included in the citizens' individual duties (such as evaluating the reasons for and the implications of Brexit) provides individuals with the opportunity of establishing a level of certainty and control over personal, social, economic, and political matters.

Most importantly, the national stereotypes about the geographical location, economy, history as well as contemporary social and political attitudes in Greece were further amplified when discussing the case of Brexit and Grexit [Figure 1]. Particularly, young Greek participants developed and expressed feelings of 'guilt' in the shadow of

Grexit as this taken-for-granted knowledge challenged their shared construction of a European social imaginary based on citizenship values.

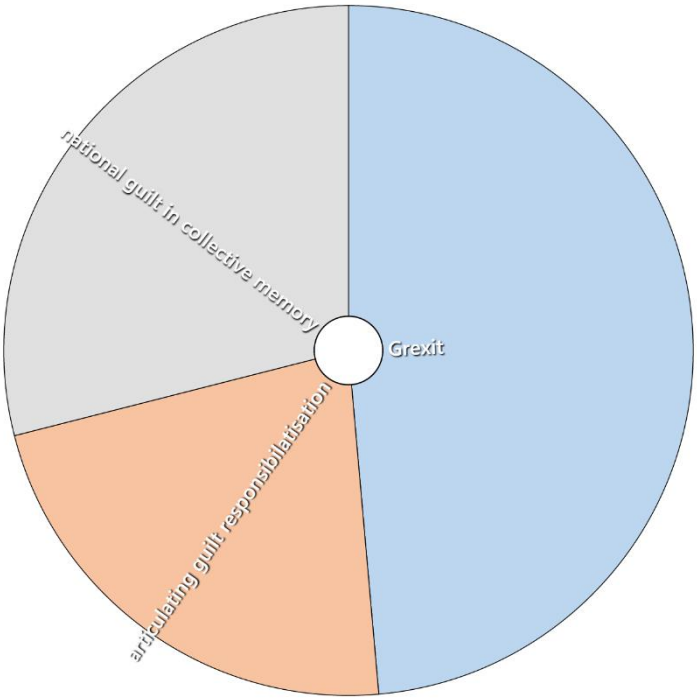

Figure 1: Hierarchy pie chart of the codes 'National guilt in collective memory', 'Articulating guilt responsibilisation' and 'Grexit' during the OFGs, produced by the researcher using NVivo.

The Guilt of Grexit

As has already been suggested in some of the passages in relation to the stereotypes associated with Greece, Grexit exacerbated the commonly held assumptions around the Greek national identity. The labels of being 'in need', 'rebellious', and 'left-behind' are mental images and sentiments that were often explicitly communicated in the group discussions.

> Petros (GR5): I do not feel particularly proud of belonging to a country that survives with external financial aid and memoranda of understanding when we have no production at all, and we are not autonomous at the moment. With Grexit becoming a reality we would be doomed I am afraid.

Petros' comment indicates how the perception of Greece's poor economic status has symbolic dimensions that hinder young Greek citizens' identification with the EU. In contrast, it strengthens the belonging to the national community but as a negative label to own (being embarrassed about the nation rather than being proud of it).

Focusing on the country's economy and power status should not, however, be interpreted as an exclusively functional aspect of belonging to the EU as an institution. Lacking economic independence and stability prohibits young citizens from putting into practice some of their constructed duties as citizens. These may include but are not limited to being resilient, forward-looking, resourceful, problem-solving, and to caring for others (Cahill et al., 2014), all of which, among other requirements, require a strong economy and confidence in the social community (national or European).

> Alkis (GR6): We are looking for someone to put the blame on and we're looking for someone to pay for the financial crisis, when we feel like we disproportionately paid a lot more for the global financial recession, or unemployment, or whatever. So, we 'voted for Grexit' for those who are better off financially to get angry, those who can afford university tuition fees abroad, and those with good jobs who support the EU. We don't care, we will lose too but those others have more to lose!

Moreover, Grexit was perceived to have been the result of ill-informed incentives by the Greek citizens who voted against the bailout conditions suggested by the EU back in 2015. Some of the assumed reasons were anti-establishment feelings, as well as 'anger' towards the well-off citizens seen as the 'elites' who support European integration. These reasons among others were also discussed to have caused the Brexit vote in 2016. On the contrary, the discursively constructed expectations from the citizens included (i) informed decision-making based on continuously seeking and curating information, (ii) considering the impact of one's vote on others in the community and (iii) upholding one's ideological values (Nakou, 2023).

Self-Optimisation: Constructing a European Identity

Brexit and Grexit are two political events that were discussed during the OFGs to hinder the identification of the participants with the EU' and endorse their attachment to their home nation in negative, stereotypical frames. According to the Social Identification Theory, individuals and groups aim to associate themselves with positive labels. Belonging to communities is anticipated to benefit the members of the group in practical and psychological terms. To this end, Greek young citizens in the study developed different strategies of resilience to optimise their self-identification. Consequently, they constructed in conversation their belonging to Europe following different approaches.

When discussing 'who' should be considered a 'European' the participants presented different points of view, but shared two specific requirements. *First,* the geographical location of the country and individuals was regarded as important – essentially it was a requirement to belong to the European continent. Consequently, being at the 'Balkans' was not a problem for being included in the European community. *Second,* using the benefits that the EU offers its citizens such as frequently travelling within Europe for social interaction, study, or work opportunities (Fligstein, 2009) was discussed as another requirement. Making use of EU citizenship entitlements was understood to confirm active engagement with the European community in banal everyday ways and thus establish a shared identity. *Third*, sharing a 'value system' in line with 'liberal democracy', 'equality', and 'diversity' (Fanoulis, 2018) was another condition for a group to be named 'European'. These values can inspire young people to identify as members of a European identity, especially if they feel that these values are not adequately upheld in their home countries [Figure 2]. Most of the Greek nationals explicitly self-identified and self-projected themselves as 'Europeans'. To this end, often the participants reflected on their perceived symbolic role of Greece in Europe and the EU.

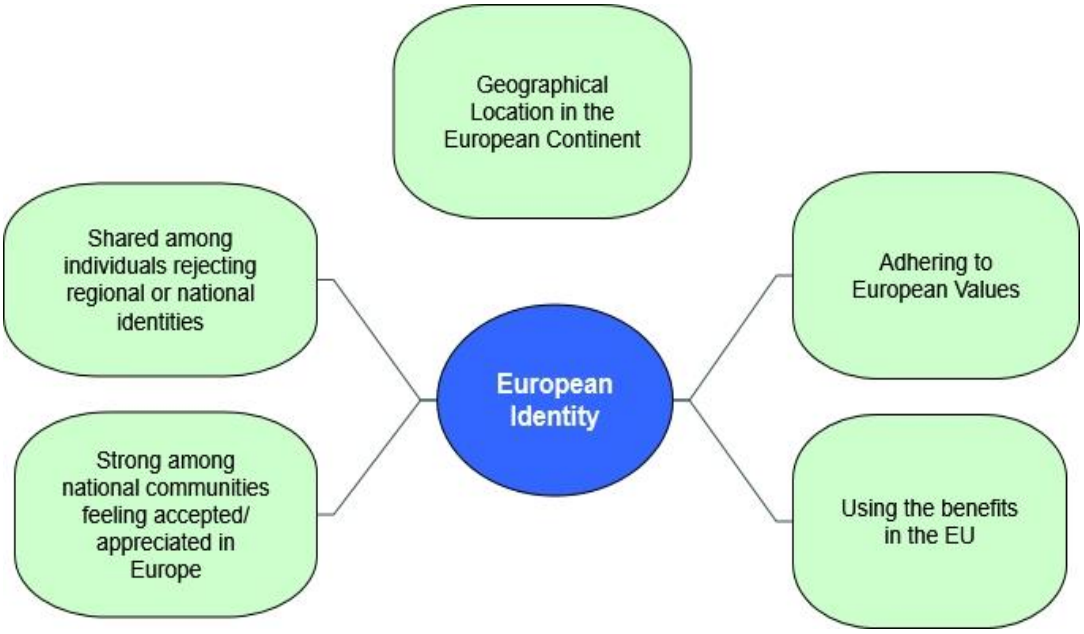

Figure 2: Mind-map illustrating the characteristics attributed to European identity and to individuals and groups belonging to European communities produced by the researcher using NVivo.

Identifying Greek Symbols in the EU

> The white bull flew Europa further and further west from her home, the kingdom of Tyre, across the Mediterranean in the direction of the isles of Greece. Delighted and entirely unafraid, Europa laughed as fresh the ground flashed beneath her and then the sea. Europa was entranced. The journey was so remarkable that the whole landmark to the west of her homeland has been called Europe in her honour ever since. They didn't stop until they reached the island of Crete where the bull revealed himself to be … who else but Zeus?

Extract from Stephen Fry's book *Mythos, the Greek myths retold* (2018: 211 – 212).

A characteristic example of this 'Europeanisation' strategy was the deliberate inclusion of 'Greece' in the definition of Europe. In particular, during the OFG 1, Dioni listed the following words to describe Europe: 'European Union', 'Greece', and 'Economy'. When I asked her to expand on her choice, she replied:

> Dioni (GR7): I selected 'Greece' mainly because (.) the name of the Continent has come from the myth of Europe and I think, in general, the name is based on Greece. Then, I included the 'EU' and the 'economy' now because the economy of Greece as far as we know, or at least as far as I know, is based (.) on the European Union primarily.

Her choice, above all, aims to establish a legitimate membership of Greece in the EU. To this end, Greece is presented as a member that has contributed to the naming of the continent inspired by the Ancient Greek myth of 'Europe' (the myth is described in the extract from Stephen Fry's book *Mythos* above). Furthermore, the use of the concept of 'economy' also reflects the case of Greece due to the financial survival of the country thanks to the support from the EU, and the International Monetary Fund. Other Greek

participants also referred to the name 'Europe' stemming from a Greek myth to emphasise the shared view of Greece as a key, culturally founding member of the EU.

Interestingly, in one of these conversations about the myth of 'Europa', one of the Greek participants in OFG 6 shared with the rest of the group a photo from their neighbourhood (Peristeri in Athens). The image [Figure 4] illustrates a statue of Europe's abduction by Zeus being transformed into a bull. Another statue of 'Goddess Europa' can be found by the Schuman roundabout at the Council of the European Union in Brussels. According to the EU 'History Series' produced by the EU parliament (2016), this statue is considered a 'place of symbolic significance'. Including mythological symbols of the European continent aims to promote a shared cultural heritage in order to increase European integration (Bruter, 2009). Evidently, the Greek participants implemented these symbolic significations in their articulation of Europe and the construction of a direct contribution of Greece to the European project.

> Manos (GR1): We influenced the development of Europe to an extent. This is evident from the EU's encouragement for Greece to join and the declarations of the EU leaders at the time confirming that Greece belongs to Europe. Greece has always been an organic part of the European identity, representing the cradle of European values and civilisation. For these reasons, Greece's membership is unique and has never been challenged by other EU members.

Figure 4: Statue of the abduction of Europa in Peristeri, Athens, Greece. Peristeri is a suburban municipality in the north-western part of Athens. The photo was sourced by one of the participants in Greek OFG 6. It was shared with me on the 10th of August 2020. I have received authorisation from the participant who captured the photo to use it in my thesis.

> Spiros (GR1): Exactly! Also, if we ask any European about the word 'democracy' they will refer to Greece straightaway, right? Not only that, but significant movements in Europe such as 'romanticism' and 'classicism' have

> their roots in ancient Greece. Thus, why Greece is so important for Europe and culturally compatible with the European Union.

Participants' strategies of presenting Greece and positioning themselves in relation to the wider debate about the European identity includes stories of historical, political, symbolic, and cultural imaginaries of young people's selves. This was also obvious when discussing social representations and stereotypes about the Greek (European) identity. These myths construct imagined communities outlining collective understandings of the past, but also projecting the past into the present and the future while creating, maintaining, and informing collective memories and using stereotypes of the nation to construct belonging to Europe. It is not a coincidence that expert, political, and media representations are often marked by the conventional understanding that Western civilisation and the European identity originated in the ancient Greek world (Coleman, 2001; Ossewaarde, 2013; Vujadinović, 2011).

> Artemis (GR3): If we follow a historical approach, the concept of 'democracy' has been characterised as a 'European ideal', which is why they want to have Greece in Europe because they did not invent these principles of 'democracy', 'freedom', Greece did.

> Kimonas (GR6): Also, we Greeks have a bit of a love-hate relationship with the West. On the one hand, we are jealous of Europeans, and we want to look like them, but on the other hand, we may claim that we built the 'Parthenon' when they did nothing. I've heard that too! So, we want to look like them a little bit, but we also feel a little superior. It's a little weird.

This narrative has been accused of constituting the basis of Greece's identity overvaluation (Ntapoudi, 2017) and an 'awkward sense of inferiority' over their EU membership (Chryssochoou, 2000: 412). This approach of suggesting 'Greek Exceptionalism' (Gallant, 1997) and 'cultural superiority' over other member countries may be an attempt to balance the negative stereotypes of the Greek economy/power status in the EU and the 'national shame' it has been associated with (Chryssochoou, 2000). Nevertheless, within such an ideational context, the dominant positive stereotypes of Greece are those of the 'cradle of civilisation' or the 'seedbed society' (Arnason et al., 2013; Kaika, 2005).

'European identity' is often perceived as a threat to national identity that could shake the importance of nation-state and nationalism (Westle & Segatti, 2016). Adversely, Risse (2010) argues that European identity can be embedded in national identity and that the compatibility between European and national identities varies by country (Risse, 2010). Others assume that identities are competing and may prevent others from becoming salient – for example, that national identity may undermine European identity (Smith, 1992), while in fact, hybrid national-European identities have been on a steady upward trend (Balampanidis et al., 2021). Also, Cinpoes (2008) argues that it is 'nationalism' and not the national identity that hinders the development of European identity (Cinpoes, 2008). Instead, embracing national identities that contribute and reflect European values seems to signify belonging to Europe. Finally, European citizenship can be seen as a way to transcend the limitations of national citizenship and promote transnational solidarity. As 'citizenship' is a contested and evolving concept and the rights and duties associated with it vary across different contexts (Susen, 2010), shaping the forms of belonging to groups and communities must take into account the complexities and symbolic significations of contemporary political realities.

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