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## THE ‘WRETCHED OF EUROPE’: GREECE AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF INEQUALITY

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on narratives of the crisis in contemporary Greece and aims to understand the current context of austerity as a trope, symbolic signifier and construct of inequality beyond austerity and in its manifestation as new social morphology in Europe. While the future recovery of Greece will require an extensive understanding of both economic and historical narratives which have sustained and fueled the modern Greek state, a deeper analysis of structural and societal cultural codes mirrored in the public sphere is paramount in comprehending the cultural politics of inequalities in academic and public discourse. In a changing political and social environment, youth in Greece face the consequences of the debt crisis, and, at the same time, re-examine their identity, values and aspirations. Drawing from narrative, visual and ethnographic data, the paper explores stories of the crisis in grounding an account of inequality as narrated by those experiencing dispossession and austerity.

**Keywords:** Greece, youth, inequality, narratives, crisis/austerity, cultural politics

### *Introducing Inequalities, Clarifying Contexts and Contemplating Crises*

If there is such a thing as a quintessential rendition of austerity in its manifestation of territoriality/materiality and visibility of the European crisis, no doubt Greece is the *paradigm par excellence*.

Greece is the ‘G’ in the stereotypical ‘Piggish’ narrative or the ‘G’ in the more than racialized ‘GIPSI’ acronym<sup>i</sup>, but, beyond euphemisms, Greece has been for some time now the laboratory in the recurrent experimentation of neoliberal governance, and, as such, by extension, the target

of an implicit neo-colonialist relationship at the core of the European agenda, coupled with a populist propaganda of racist discourse and the institutionalizing of xenophobic mechanisms.

There is an inherent triadic interrelationship of crisis/austerity/hostility translated into mechanisms of neoliberal governance/neo-colonialist oppression and xenophobic racializations (cf. Carastathis 2015). As Herzfeld (2011: 25) suggests: ‘In recent years, progressive and radical critics have been willing to examine the possibility that Greece is in a colonial relationship with the West, but this willingness has come at a time when neoliberal and right-wing forces inside the country seem to be intent on using the rhetoric of political correctness and the “audit culture” to intensify Greece’s dependency, rather than reduce it’. What I am suggesting here is a step beyond Herzfeld’s observation, namely that the 60 year old European project has diverted from its founding principles of democracy, peace and unity to one of bullying, arrogance and division with transforming Greece into a ‘debt colony’.<sup>ii</sup>

The project of ameliorating austerity in crisis-ridden Greece has been equated with the reconstitution of democracy, dignity and dreaming. The Greeks, the ‘Wretched of Europe<sup>iii</sup>’, starring in their very own postmodern tragedy, have been demonized, denounced, ridiculed and racialized. They are that acute and ever present ‘G’ in the ‘PIIGS’ formation or leading the way in the more poignantly racist ‘GIPSI’ equivalent. Participant narratives underscore their existential liminality of being demoralized yet defiant, destitute yet determined but also afflicted with the heavy burden of a particular neo-colonialist neo-liberalization and structural adjustments slowly eroding sovereignty along with social welfare, the Greek intransigence against invasion is once again at the spotlight. The Greeks are no longer waiting for the

Barbarians<sup>iv</sup>. The enemy has indeed dismantled the gates and eroded whatever residual of a welfare state, evaporated the future legacy of young generations, paralyzed a nation while transfixing their despair and metamorphosing what they themselves perceive as a natural affinity for hospitality and jouissance into a distorted portrait of laziness<sup>v</sup> and corruption.

To a large extent, ‘both the state-nepotism of pre-1974, and *partitocrazia* of the last three to four decades created and sustained political and economic elites with privileged access to state resources, a condition which hindered economic development and damaged the citizens’ appreciation of democracy, transparency and equality as *par excellence* dimensions of the Social Contract’ (Kirtsoglou 2014; italics in the original). In research with narratives of the crisis, the analysis aims at rendering temporal, spatial and social insights at the core of the discussion. All of which recognize the need for a gendered, critical and feminist approach to understanding strategies of control, oppression and neo-colonial politics of austerity embedded in a masculinist, white and elitist culture of global financial privilege. As Kabeer and Sweetman (2015: 188) advise: ‘A focus on inequalities should mean a renewal – or in some cases the adoption – of a gendered perspective on poverty’. A gendered and equality approach is one that calls into question austerity policies adopted in the wake of the crisis as being clearly unsustainable and inequitable (Perrons 2015). The wider research focus is on the most vulnerable groups, that is, women, youth, migrant and ageing populations but this paper concentrates primarily on youth narratives. The study employs a multi-method research approach in understanding subjectivity, social actors and social settings as interactive contexts. **The research explores inter/intrapersonal and family relationships and the complex interplay between social, structural expectations and personal affinities. Such relations are focal points in the**

**constitution of socialization patterns. Perhaps more inclusive sociabilities can lead to productive possibilities that resistance to dispossession of the sovereign self in the age of austerity may engender.** In light of a politics of hope and transformation, the exploration incorporates opportunities of constructive appropriation of the effects of dispossession, including the opportunity to create new social bonds and forms of collective struggle against the suffering and immiseration of austerity politics.

*Hellenic Atopia: At the Crossroads of Europe, the Balkans and the Mediterranean*

More so on the margins of a periphery and constantly in the making and unmaking of discursive, historical and cultural signifiers that translate, redefine and shape contemporary Greece, what I refer to as ‘Hellenic Atopia’ is a manifestation of the processes and outcomes over decades since its entrance into the European Union (in 1981) of a continued struggle to ‘Europeanization’ and ‘modernization’ projects. Rupturing rigid boundaries that hermetically seal Greece within the confines of an obsession with past ancient glories (cf. ‘ancestoritis’ as per Clogg 2013: 2), or trapped between an Ottoman, Balkan, Southern, Mediterranean past and a Western, European present, are part and parcel of a dialogue with contemporary youth that aims to understand how their experiences articulate contemporary Greece. Thus, I perceive such an account as one that draws on emergent and experiential crises as both articulated and analyzed through perpetual confrontation, contestation and construction of the contemporary human geographies of Greece.

The empirical data on which this paper draws on and that grounds the analysis of youth agencies perceives those as political performativities in the midst of financial, social, economic and cultural crises. As praxis such political performativities also refer to actors outside of Greece, especially given that in the recent context of wider challenges with the EU bailout negotiations,

the relationship between Greece and Germany, Greek and German politicians and the public, has been varied, with latter expressions of support from the German public in solidarity toward Greece but also critical stances.

Both of these experiential accounts of support and criticism have been overwhelmingly reported, deciphered and depicted in the international media, additionally, in a more academically grounded fashion, historians, anthropologists, sociologists on an international scale have articulated varying accounts of such a relationship. For instance, Thomas Gallant (2015) tries to put the complicated relationship between Greece and Germany into a longer term historical context and admits that: ‘many of the structural flaws in the Greek political system and the economy have long and deep roots that have their origins in the foundational years of the modern state. From the very moment of independence until now Germany, Germans and Germanophiles have exerted profound and almost invariably deleterious influence on the development of Greece. For centuries, Germany has treated Greece like its Mediterranean dependency or even as a colony. The histories of Germany and Greece are intricately entangled. But, there can be no doubt who was the lead partner in this centuries’ long dance. This most recent episode of German bullying of Greece is just the last of many such episodes; it just may be the worst. Germany wants Greece out of Europe’.

At the same time, Herzfeld (2011: 25) indicates that the very idea of the national debt is inherently contradictory to the cultural codes of Hellenism: ‘The modern idea of a national “debt” that simply has to be paid off – in other words, is a one-way affair – runs counter to the view, deeply embedded in Greek culture, of obligation as something that maintains a necessary and oscillating tension in all social relations – a tension that can be sexual, interpersonal, or political, and that is often misinterpreted by outside observers as the brooding presence of

endemic violence. When Greek slogans announce, “We won’t pay!”, they are implicitly rejecting a one-way indebtedness antithetical to Greek notions of obligation, in which creditor and debtor are roles taken in endless alternation’.

However, ‘since the 1980s, people have lived with a government advocating neoliberalism while simultaneously taking advantage of deeply engrained clientelistic practices such as exchanging favors in return for votes, finding prestigious jobs for friends and family, and accepting bribes in return for contracts to improve transport infrastructure’ (Knight 2015: 242). Such a historicity would account for how versions of the past assume present form in relation to events and political circumstances that materialize in cultural forms and emotional dispositions, thus implicating historical pasts with present conditions (cf. Hirsh and Stewart 2005). Although this section offers as a brief historical note some insight into the dynamics, parameters and forces that have intertwined in shaping contemporary crisis in Greece, it is beyond the scope of this paper to deconstruct such historicity in understanding the current crisis. On the contrary, what is aimed here is to evidence some of the hidden layers of ambivalence in showcasing that Greece is a constellation of several incomplete projects, either emergent or imposed but nevertheless part of the everyday life fabric of Greek society. This clearly points to what Gropas, Triandafyllidou and Kouki (2013: 44-45) perceive as ‘multiple modernities’ either ‘sought’ or ‘accomplished’ in the ‘unfolding of national history after 1974<sup>vi</sup> as a conflict between tradition and modernity’. The cultural dualism that Gropas et al. (2013) point to is one that juxtaposes traditional ‘topoi’ as an alternative path to modernity with the objectives of a European-driven neoliberal reform programme<sup>vii</sup>.

In the ‘Greek Cauldron’ an article published in late 2011 in the *New Left Review*, Stathis Kouvelakis succinctly and revealingly captures the ‘Hellenic exception’ from the 70s to the long

rule of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Party) in the 80s, 90s and 2000s leading up to the global plunge into deepening recession that saw widespread budget cuts in Greece in 2010 followed by a downward spiral to relentless austerity, proportionally comparable to the effects of the 1930s Depression, with unemployment and suicide rates escalating to the extreme and overall health and welfare of the population deteriorating dramatically.

### ***Pathologizing or Provincializing? A Note on Epistemologies, Ontologies and the Research***

#### ***Field***

I have been keeping a CID (Crisis Interaction Diary) since the crisis first emerged as I sought to record interactive instantiations of crisis-related talk unfolding in personal encounters, phone, email and skype contact. This was a decision in taking positionality, social location and subjectivity in consideration in the context of reflection and action. Although the visceral and social experiences of research provide the balanced accounts of penetrating deeper into a phenomenon under observation, the reflexive moments usually tip the scales in stripping the layers of the issue. Positionalities of (social) pain and resistance can become a complex web of ethical, epistemological and ontological entanglements. Yet, they can also become a channel to an affinity of disavowal of power and oppression. This is the gift of activist research<sup>viii</sup>.

So, what personal and theoretical insights might be blurred in the sometimes painful path of reflexivity, a question that always follows us in the field. While personal considerations of gender/citizenship/class/age lead to specific research experiences, even as conceptual frames and self-knowledge are shaped by our inquiries and subsequent findings, occupying differing positionalities from those studied requires the sophistication and depth of feminist research that

can maneuver analytically from bodies and individuals to households, communities, intra and supranational institutions, global, transnational and translocal networks.

In addition to longitudinal research in Greece from 2008 to the present, this paper also draws from an ongoing study on ‘Narratives of the Crisis: Storied, Embodied and Visual Accounts of Gendered Violence’. The project is rooted in my wider interdisciplinary work but has a profoundly sociological underlying objective to mobilize theory and research for a transformative political struggle as a vital component of feminist, critical, activist work for a better understanding of the contemporary world, changing social relations and increasing social inequalities. A register of criticality within a register of paranoia as perceived in Greece where participants feel a sweeping pessimism for a future lost and a present under demise and their sense of self is one both ruptured and sutured, dismantled and divided between a vision for Greece and the Greek vision (which also incorporates a Eurosceptic platform).

The research on which this paper is based forms an eight year journey of immersion and introspection as the Greek crisis unfolded between 2008 and ongoing in 2016, the time of writing. Coupled with a series of lengthy field visits and data collection in different stages, the study is also deeply auto/ethnographic, political and personal. Grounded on the premises of social justice research, it is a narrative journey of storied accounts of the cultural politics of inequalities. Difficult dialogues seep into the research experiences of in-betweenness when one conducts research as both an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’. As critical and reflective researchers we have to consciously recalibrate the zones of being and becoming in our life pathways, the sub-narratives within our life stories and the nation-states that seep under our skin, in everyday embodied social experiences. Moments of rewarding experiences can swiftly be erased by challenging and contentious ones especially when the researcher’s social location, subjectivity

and positionality are scrutinized to the limits. More often than [I] anticipated the researcher can become co-opted as a punching bag, a therapist, a friend, a scapegoat, a resource. Negotiating roles thrust upon us in the field adds more layers of complexity and often saturates the research with tensions and dilemmas. The field mandates muddling and often is messy. Unraveling the messiness into conceptual coherence is very much part of the research process.

While feminist, ethnographic and narrative approaches shaped the data collection process, and a reflexive stance informed research positionality and conflictual zones in the field, the analytical lens is one deeply rooted in sociological insights of social inclusion. It draws guidance from an analytical approach that views culture as a social force and one that is entangled with contentious narrative discourses reproduced through social practice inherently framing our understanding of societal relations.

The study is also one that grapples with questions of survival and the desire for an autonomous self. In a context of crisis, what kind of life is possible for those whose sense of control and integrity has been expunged? How is humanity to be understood when one has been dehumanized? And, as Leanh Nguyen (2007: 57) asks: ‘Is our engagement with the traumatized subject a sign of fetishization, in disguise of our own inability to master the violations of our modern culture?’ Judith Butler (2005; 2008) and Slavoj Žižek (2005; 2008) have drawn on psychoanalysis in articulating a debate of considerable importance to the cultural turn, that on the nature of ‘ethical violence’ on the recovering of ‘ungrievable’ and precarious lives.

Inspired by Achille Mbembe’s thesis on ‘necropolitics/necropower’ in the colonial/postcolonial context and as underscored by Gounari’s<sup>ix</sup> (2015) reflections on the current Greek crisis as one exemplary of ‘social necrophilia’, I utilize Young’s (1994) concept of a ‘seriality<sup>x</sup>’ to identify a

‘seriality of neo-coloniality of social necrosis’ where if ‘Europe is dead’ (Balibar 2010), then Greece ‘must experience death’ as part of the European family where a neoliberal Europe cannot allow the historically first democratically elected Left government to become the paradigm of social resurrection from austerity (read as death) and instead must be transformed/conformed through an economic necropolitics into a zombie society. Therefore, Greece must fall if the European project is to stand tall. In the following section I draw from youth narratives to contextualize this discursive realm of inequality and oppression.

**The core sustaining and consistent argument that frames the analysis is that neoliberal austerity has created vast inequality for youth, which has solidified as a new social morphology curtailing their aspirations and futures. The paper narrates such stories as both accounts of inequality and tropes for re-examining alternatives such as social solidarity in the ‘Atopia’ of the both the Greek context and the failing European project which has created a new ‘debt colony’.**

### ***Youth Narrating the State of Exemption: Regimes of Inequality and Oppression***

In fact, European leaders are finally beginning to reveal the true nature of the ongoing debt dispute, and the answer is not pleasant: it is about *power* and *democracy* much more than money and economics. (Joseph Stiglitz: ‘how I would vote in the Greek referendum’, The Guardian, 29 June 2015; italics added)<sup>xi</sup>

The struggles to survive the crisis in the everyday life of the ordinary person inhabitant<sup>xii</sup> of Greece are reminiscent of a battlefield, literally, as the continuous loss of life<sup>xiii</sup> correlated with austerity bleakly illustrates. Against the backdrop of struggle, among actors, one of the prominent figurations of power draws attention to what Grewal and Kaplan (1994: 1) refer to as the ‘European unitary subject’, generally conceived as a white, male, heteroeducated and able-bodied, who has citizenship in a developed, ‘Western’ nation-state. More compelling are those

representations that evoke the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel and the Head of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, as figurations of disciplinarian mothers who in the long path to austerity are the authority figures who will control the disobedient children of the Greek state.

According to Brassett and Rethel (2015: 19), ‘rather tellingly, Christine Lagarde, in a much-publicized interview with The Guardian in 2012, compared the conditions in Greece with the little kids from a school in a little village in Niger who get teaching two hours a day, sharing one chair for three of them, and who are very keen to get an education: I have them in my mind all the time. Because I think they need even more help than the people in Athens’.

Reminiscent of colonial discourses of noble savages, infantilizing and rendering them primitive and helpless (Saminaden, Loughnan and Haslam 2010: 91), gendered constructions of financescapes (Appadurai 1996) mask the deeper structural issues that such inequalities entail: ‘These gendered constructions of money and finance, and the hetero-normative politics that they entail, bring their own silences with regard to phenomena such as the credit card debt of the young, the financial difficulties faced by single parent households, etc., which are placed outside the concern of hetero-normative finance. Once again, the tropes of gender and hetero-normativity are deployed to underpin policies and practices that carry significant implications for gender relations’ (Brassett and Rethel 2015: 19).

**In the extract that follows, Elias, a 28 year old man talks about his best friend who is Albanian. While Elias acknowledges his personal and family circumstances as challenged by the crisis and admits the compromises already made (e.g. his parents have had to move back to their ancestral home in the village), he also recognizes that the divide is wider**

**between the majority and migrant population in austerity saturated Greece. As such the impact on mental health is evident to Elias when he realizes how depressed his friend is while struggling on a menial salary despite working long hours continuously. Hence, a core realization here is that austerity driven neoliberal policy has a detrimental effect on mental health, well-being and quality of livelihoods. Moreover, it is apparent that migrant populations are hit even harder by the effects of the crisis.**

My best friend is Albanian and he and his family are really on the verge of poverty and hunger. Personally, I have done more than ten different labor-intensive working-class jobs and although I feel a sense of uncertainty, I am still making a pretty good salary and my family has moved to the village so they wouldn't have to pay rent. ... I definitely see more inequality in youth migrants and I can see they have more obstacles despite the fact that they are very hard working, a lot more hard-working than my family experiences and under precarious and difficult working circumstances. I have Albanian friends who work from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm, seven days a week and they make 300 euros and it is tough because they can't live on that money, and they have no personal life, no rest, no prospects. As a friend, I offer him solidarity, support and money but he is too proud and he won't take it and he is very upset about his personal circumstances, he is very depressed. (Elias, 28 years old)

The dominant market rationale in addressing the crisis has on the contrary exacerbated inequalities through the mechanisms introduced to resolve the problem in the first place. Moreover, the very rhetoric of neoliberal policy misrepresents patterns of social inequality while embedding recurrent restructurings to suit the market perspective of privatization which further sustains austerity. Raewyn Connell (2013: 279) asks and responds to such pertinent questions: 'Why do market "reforms" persistently increase inequality? The short answer is that they are intended to. The global spread of neo-liberal politics through the last 40 years has led, in almost every affected country, to rising inequalities of income and wealth, new and startling concentrations of privilege and the weakening or dismantling of redistributive mechanisms. This

is not an accidental side-effect. Restoring privilege is central to the political dynamics of neoliberalism, which has drawn its main strength from threatened elites and hungry new rich. Inequality is central to neo-liberal strategies for capitalist development especially creating labour market insecurity (flexibility) and replacing collective bargaining with incentives for individual “achievement”.

**In the excerpt by Amelia, she underscores some of the psychosocial effects of the crisis on youth living in Greece. One of these is the sheer cessation of dreaming a future for themselves, crafted by their own interests and professional aspirations. Amelia talks about a world crumbling in front of her eyes where employment is a rare privilege and not a right or opportunity, often a mandatory pathway into the family business which may be undesirable for one's self-growth and autonomy.**

The current crisis and subsequent unemployment has had a tremendous impact on youth in Greece and their maturity in turn. They want to follow their dreams but they can't actually do what they want, they have to integrate in this new world of crisis, this new reality of austerity, this new world of 2015 where everything has collapsed. So if you are lucky enough to have a job, it probably isn't what you wanted to follow professionally, perhaps it is the family business that you wanted to get away from. (Amelia, 25 years old)

Civic consciousness implies the imperative of agency where resistance and change of direction can happen when practices, publics and social configurations are seen as detrimental to growth and dignity. As Giroux (2013: 20) underscores: ‘For many young people today, human agency is defined as a mode of self-reflection and critical social engagement rather than a surrender to a paralyzing and unchallengeable fate. Likewise, democratic expression has become fundamental to their existence’.

**In that sense, Zoe recognizes the widespread nepotism and corruption in Greece which has been documented at length through experiences of a range of participants in several different studies (e.g. Christou 2006; Christou 2011; Christou and King 2011; 2014; Christou and Michail 2015; Michail and Christou 2016).**

Before the crisis everybody managed some way or another with corruption and nepotism, and there was no solidarity in a country of corruption where in order to succeed you must take advantage of someone else, that is not solidarity. (Zoe, 27 years old)

Youth are driven by a sense of dignifying existence, one coupled with agency in their ongoing struggle for equality, invoked as an imperative to citizenship in the horizon of true democracy. While this is a driving force, at the same time, the reality of previous behaviors veils their project with the ills of a failed European project and the pathologies of its demise. An illustration of this is no doubt the current migration crisis in the Mediterranean, as Europe is struggling to assist people in need while at the same time preoccupied with securing its borders, a return to a Fortress Europe strategy of policies which no doubt is not an answer to the refugee crisis.

Equality in suffering does not exist; there is inequality when it comes to crisis and austerity where the gap among social classes opens wider. The law was only just passed in 2015 giving the children of migrants the right to citizenship. But at the same time there is a case where the crisis becomes an excuse for some young people to say that they are destitute and they cannot make ends meet. That there is no way they can survive. And instead of grabbing the crisis and life by the horns in order to find alternative solutions and in order to move forward to improve our life circumstances, there is a large percentage of youth today that say: 'My parents stole, the previous governments destroyed our future, the Germans want us to be in destitute'. So they either vote for the ultra left, Syriza or for the ultra right, Golden Dawn or they don't vote at all instead of trying to change Greece where they reside, they can't see the trees from the forest and a unique opportunity to achieve change and something different. (Stephanie, 29 years old)

**So Stephanie in her narrative above talks about the disillusionment that youth feel when they come to certain realizations. In her words, this sense of disillusionment leads to either voter apathy or voting extremes, according to Stephanie's account.**

Dipesh Chakrabarty (2007: 4) in *Provincializing Europe* suggests that: 'Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history. One simply cannot think of political modernity without these and other related concepts that found a climactic form in the course of the European Enlightenment and the nineteenth century'. Not only is the above a heavy burden of historical achievement in the humanism of equality and democracy that Europe embraced, it is an added burden of responsibility to promulgate globally such values to the rest of humanity. Yet, the current crisis as epitomized in the Greek case sheds light into the darkness of its conditions in eroding the political modernity of rights and social justice. In an epistemological sense, the social sciences have thrived within the theoretical traditions of those thinkers as invariably encountered as Chakrabarty (2007: 5) indicates, 'within the tradition that has come to call itself "European or Western"'. While further declaring that: 'I am aware that an entity called "the European intellectual tradition" stretching back to the ancient Greeks is a fabrication of relatively recent European history'.

**Yet, as Stephanie alludes above, youth in Greece need to mobilize in order to 'change' Greece, the country where they reside, and, now seems to be as good a time as ever. In the next section, we explore the possibilities for a renewed publics of transformation.**

*Youth as Actors of Societal Appropriation: Reclaiming Governance while Contesting the Politics of Blame and Accountability*

We are the 62%<sup>xiv</sup>! We are the multitude! The Greeks again defied their invaders with a loud ‘No’! (Anna, 26 years old)

**Through previous studies, either historical (e.g. Clogg 2013) or ethnographic (e.g. Christou 2006; Christou and King 2014) it becomes apparent that a great majority of Greeks perceive their national destiny as having had a long historical trajectory of defiance and resistance; deeply grounded in cultural codes from ancient times.** Inequality as epitomized in the Greek crisis is one that requires solidarity, especially ‘with the younger generation, growing up at this very moment in a country where all certainties are collapsing and a better future seems hard to imagine’ (Triandafyllidou, Gropas and Kouki 2013), a phrase that certainly encapsulates the core actors and agonizing modalities of the ‘Greek cauldron’ (Kouvelakis 2011). At the same time, those Greeks living overseas, are frequently stigmatized expressed in a rhapsody of critique as Costas Douzinas (2013: 1-2) illuminates in recent experiences in academic and social life in the UK: ‘In lectures and seminars, in conferences and pubs, friends and strangers became distanced, occasionally aggressive. I was trying to explain that many criticisms and attacks were based on ignorance of facts, that the media and the government were presenting a distorted view, that austerity was liable to fail, to no avail. For the first time, I felt a ‘racism-lite’ affecting me. It was ideological not ethnic’. Such an ideological exclusionist behavior links practices of the crisis to the crisis of democratic governance.

The idea of revolt is relevant. There is this ideology that people don’t care if they are financially ruined but they think they can maintain their self-respect by not kissing up to Europe. This is what the young generation thinks. They think that revolution is the Left against the European Union but I think that the root of all evil is the party politics that

enters young people's lives at age 18 when they first go to University and the propaganda is all over the buildings full of graffiti, blasted in posters and all the political parties lurking around trying to recruit students. There is a crisis of institutions. The result is that contemporary youth do not see a future. They only see a low hanging ceiling. The crisis has clipped their wings and inequality is rampant. Whoever has a European perspective is stigmatized as a rightist. There are a lot of arguments and no tranquillity. So, those who migrate and leave Greece don't really do it on their own accord but rather the country throws you out to fend for yourself. (Luke, 21 years old)

Luke's take on the impact of political parties actively recruiting youth members at University settings and the stereotyping of rightist vs. leftist views by sheer correlation with or against European perspectives highlights arguments of deep rooted social pathologies.

At the same time, undeniably, pathologizing the current Greek crisis as an outcome of years of clientelism and corruption is a rather simplistic narrative that excludes the pertinent historical and structural elements that have triggered, shaped and sustained beyond the fiscal, a crisis of a type of that of a 'social contract' (e.g. Kirtsoglou 2014). The saturated Greek self, and embodied by young people and their rising protests to anti-democratic pressures imposed on them, brings the register of a moral and political imperative into perspective. I consciously refrain from qualifying such a saturated self as one of indignation, infuriated, outraged, exasperated youth etc. in moving beyond simplistic causal explanations to more in-depth and contextualized explorations of the multi-layered affective domain.

Beyond a blaming culture of 'enemies within and outside' the nation/state, from those who mismanaged European funds to those who indulged in the mirage of neoliberal-consumerist traps, (and the list is potentially endless), it is apparent that in addition to the mourning of a loss of all the tangible and intangible lifestyle/status acquisitions in the last decades and the very real

pain embodied in such processes of a lost Self, there is additional suffering saturation as values are reconfigured along with relationships in both private and public/social spheres. So, for instance, my discussions with Greek professionals in the mental health sector, (and particularly in group therapy settings), have repeatedly confirmed that irrespective of class, socio-economic and educational backgrounds, not only has there been a proliferation of adults seeking professional support for themselves but also for their young and teenage children. While there may be an element of projection or displacement here, the fact that there is a recognition/realization that vast social changes need to be addressed in a group setting is an indication of a focus on the collective (Self).

The Greece of crisis and austerity has less opportunities and everybody is confused, especially with the recent developments with the banks closed and capital controls, if I was to compare last summer (2014) to this one (2015) it is a lot worse. Last summer there was a glimpse of hope and some growth but now things are gloomy with a few strategic survivor solutions for some. But I am well and personally my dreams still exist, although I would prefer to have more state provision so I don't have to be concerned about my welfare. But nobody is happy and all this misery affects you too. I see this new fashion of emerging 'Che Chevaras of the Facebook' but there is not enough solidarity in action. (Philip, 26 years old)

Ordinary stories of everyday dispossession are compounded by a seeping sentiment of suffering, vocalized in a politics of resistance, as a marker of both critique and collective belonging in crisis-stricken Greece. Youth participants articulated an agentic, yet autonomous, infuriated yet determined stance to the crisis, and, vocalized endurance along with solidarity in struggle for a community of equals, where the intimacy of suffering and struggling becomes re-materialization of a national myth, one of agonistic (cf. Herzfeld, 1985) pride in re-inventing a new publics of participation. Namely, one, which will erase the past ills and will revitalize a healthy and

sustainable future and public domain. **So Philip above still maintains a personal vision of hope as he dreams of a better future and recognizes the need for more solidarity to be manifested in action.**

While the discussion is enriched and illuminated by the voices of Greek youth, at the same time, I do not wish to essentialize these ‘voices’ as either ontologically distinct representations of ‘locality’ or a product of sheer resistance and antithesis to the (European/Western/German?) external discursive power entanglements. Neither do I situate such actors as an amalgamation or refraction of internal or external politics and representations.

Listen, I am a survivor so even if you dump me in the middle of the ocean, I’ll find a way to survive. But the psychology of austerity is very bad and I see it with my friends who are older in their late twenties and they had to move back in with their parents and there are so many fights and arguments and no privacy. You can’t cope with it. A lot of misery and you see that the minute you land and you step your foot into the airport bus shuttle you can feel, sense and experience the anger and frustration. (Paul, 23 years old)

**Paul here talks about his sense of resilience and agency in describing himself as a survivor. Nevertheless, he also juxtaposes how demoralizing and de-humanizing the effects of austerity are on young people in their late 20s. From my wider participant observation this extends to people in their late 30s, 40s and even 50s who have had to move back into the parental home with ageing parents, in order to make ends meet. Such ageing parents often provide care and financial support to their adult children; this is derived from their limited means as their pensions have been depleted by the government imposed austerity cuts. Yet, this is a necessary imposition on ageing parents in order to support their under/unemployed middle aged children. Shockingly antithetical to the normative pathway**

**of generational roles where ageing parents in certain cultures/countries (such as Greece) are cared for/by their children, the reverse is happening in the here and now in Greece.**

I perceive the respondents as individual actors of particular (social, cultural, political, classed, gendered, etc.) spheres that have discussed their arenas of activity and interaction within the crisis as parameters of *new materialisms* in Greece. This embodied destabilization of the crisis as going beyond the articulated/discursive realm to a corporeal landscape grasps the potential of Greek youth as active actors with the transformative potential of being drivers of social change. Instead of simply oscillating between media representations and wider rhetoric, such youth agency can epitomize change ‘from below’, at the grassroots level. Instead of ephemeral enactments of solidarity and collective consciousness, the challenge remains to embed such accomplishments into the fabric of societal reconstruction.

As critical social scientists we tend to feel mortified with any implicit reference to ‘patronizing’, ‘orientalizing’, ‘romanticizing’ and ‘exoticizing’ such accounts in our research and writing when exploring the ordinary, everyday life, cultural politics of the social actors/groups we study. There is much complexity in the historical and socio-political elements entangled in the crisis ‘stories’, as to suggest that there is just one sole narrative that captures crisis in Greece would be unhelpful and unrealistic, if not rigid and erroneous. This contribution does not claim to have illuminated any particular account as this was not its objective. It does however aim to put youth at the center stage of a continuous dialogue of resolution of the Greek crisis which will continue to benefit from incorporating them at both discussion/decision-making and action/application stages.

I wish that the crisis will help us become an ideal society and place us in a pathway of goodness, solidarity and hard work. It is not enough to have a glorious past ancient history, we need to move beyond the lies and corruption and we can't have it all and just think about our needs and ourselves. We need new criteria for future development. (Katherine, 24 years old)

Everybody is out there for themselves and how to find a solution. Of course there are some soup kitchens, and some actions like doctors without borders and free medications given but that is in an organized group way. Individually, we really don't care about anybody else than ourselves, we focus on our needs and we don't care if we each devour one another. Very competitive especially when it comes to jobs. (Marina, 26 years old)

If there is one thing I could wish for is that the young generation is strong and that they defy the ceiling so they don't let their ideas go to waste. They should follow their dreams, do what they want and travel which is educational. (Leo, 22 years old)

**Katherine, Marina and Leo above encapsulate what I perceive as a 'transitology of post-crisis innovation' that seeks to move beyond misery and suffering to empowering youth for better livelihoods and sustainable societal transformations and development.**

The intensification of the anti-democratic neoliberal modes of governance has a direct impact in 'the way in which young people are increasingly denied any place in an already weakened social contract' (Giroux 2013: 9) where they have no central agency in defining their futures, as long as a market driven instrumentality shapes their potential. Thus, youth have been 'cast in a condition of liminal drift, with no way of knowing whether it is transitory or permanent' (Bauman 2004: 76). As Giroux explains: 'There is more at work here than, as David Harvey points out, a political project designed "to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites"', there is also a reconfiguration of the state into what might be called a merging of the warfare, corporate, and the punishing state, or what Foucault and Virillio call a suicidal state' (2013: 13). Such a 'suicidal state' can only function with a zombie economy and zombie residents, who will endure living with a dilapidated social contract, and, under

continuous attack of social responsibility to alleviate social problems, for what are increasingly perceived to be disposable communities.

***Conclusion: On Struggle, Suffering, Sovereignty, Societal Transformation and Future***

***Generations***

The Allied Powers should have never humiliated Germany after the Second World War and the Americans should never have given them so much financial support and written off their debts. It was a historical mistake. Not only has Germany risen from the ashes in a state of utter arrogance and power, the deep psychological humiliation they endured after the war and the war reparations they were forced to pay has left a deep seeded need for revenge. They will never get over it until they crush all those who resisted then and we are weak now so Greece has been delivered on a platter for them. (Matthew, 27 years old)

The above extract from a conversation shortly after the July 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 Greek referendum results, and during the next week when banks continued to remain closed, while capital controls were imposed with a maximum ATM withdrawal of 60 euros a day, (for those who would brave the summer heatwave and the endless crowds waiting to make that maximum cash withdrawal), was one that epitomized history, psychology, international relations.

If the Balkans are perceived as the unconscious of Europe (Žižek 2008), Greece is a signifier for conscience in the pursuit of ethical participatory governance. The latter, a limit and challenge to the possibility of a European project that re-embraces democracy, is critically central for its very future and survival. The European project has to be re-defined as one of having a future, but in its survival it cannot possibly eradicate the foundations of peace and prosperity.

Access to institutions and the possibilities of self-sustainability and autonomy is a pathway to rebuilding inclusive societies. The experience of social exclusion is a debilitating process that

exacerbates loss of individual autonomy, and, by extension, a loss of self-worth which can have profound consequences on people's lives, and, can have transgenerational effects such as social violence, powerlessness and lack of agency (Archangelo 2010).

While Joseph Stiglitz clearly indicated a week before the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2015 referendum that a no vote in line with Greece's strong democratic tradition would be an option of grasping destiny, shaping the future in at least a more hopeful way than the unconscionable torture of the present (Guardian 29 June 2015), a few days post the referendum outcome of a sweeping no victory, he has further suggested that the continuation of austerity for Greece would mean depression without an end (Time 9 July 2015). More specifically:

As the Greek saga continues, many have marveled at Germany's chutzpah. It received, in real terms, one of the largest bailout and debt reduction in history and *unconditional* aid from the U.S. in the Marshall Plan. And yet it refuses even to discuss debt relief. Many, too, have marveled at how Germany has done so well in the propaganda game, selling an image of a long-failed state that refuses to go along with the minimal conditions demanded in return for generous aid.

The facts prove otherwise: From the mid-90's to the beginning of the crisis, the Greek economy was growing at a faster rate than the EU average (3.9% vs 2.4%). The Greeks took austerity to heart, slashing expenditures and increasing taxes. They even achieved a primary surplus (that is, tax revenues exceeded expenditures excluding interest payments), and their fiscal position would have been truly impressive had they not gone into depression. Their depression—25% decline in GDP and 25% unemployment, with youth unemployment twice that—is because they did what was demanded of them, not because of their failure to do so. It was the predictable and predicted response to the austerity.

The U.S. was generous with Germany as we defeated it. Now, it is time for the U.S. to be generous with our friends in Greece in their time of need, as they have been crushed for the second time in a century by Germany, this time with the support of the troika. At a technical level, the Federal Reserve needs to create a swap line with Greece's central bank, which—as a result of the default of the ECB in fulfilling its responsibilities—will have to take on once again the role of lender of last resort. Greece needs *unconditional* humanitarian aid; it needs Americans to buy its products, take vacations there, and show a solidarity with Greece and a humanity that its European partners were not able to display.

Inequality, austerity and dispossession are at the heart of a crisis of humanity and human rights and the lack of solidarity is at the center of a crisis of a humanitarian and democratic ethos. The combined lack of democracy and humanity is one that finds its place in the agenda of a program of European necropolitics and social necrosis. Reclaiming humanity and democracy in the age of necrosis is to revitalize the post-war European project of peace and prosperity. Such a European project should inherently involve the exercise of sovereignty of all European members, in this case, Greece, which would consist of its societal capacity to self-governance and self-creation through its own recourse to its institutions as a signification of its social imaginary (cf. Castoriadis 1987). Such a social imaginary cannot fundamentally diverge from achieving a sovereign, good life, one lead by moral agents as a path tantamount to freedom for social subjects to self-institute and self-limit (cf. Mbembe 2003).

While parliamentary votes on political reforms are underway in Greece, and the left-led current government is experiencing signs of fragmentation with increasing dissent from within the party, there are inevitable questions of what prospects does the future hold for both institutions and the public sphere in Greece. But, as Mbembe poignantly indicates, ‘our concern should be with those figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy but *the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*’ (2003: 14; italics in the original). A European project of sovereignty should combat any such instrumentalization and material destruction of human existence and collectivities, much so as in the case of human immiseration and dispossession as experienced through the Greek crisis.

This paper has addressed how the cultural politics of inequality in austerity/crisis-ridden Greece are articulated and experienced by members of the younger generations in their struggle to capture a glimpse of the future. It is a study grounded in ‘a critical sociology of the age of austerity’, that explores the cultural and symbolic domination of economic inequalities, as exemplified through opportunity, suffering, denigration, self-worth and thus should be linked to both a politics of redistribution and recognition, as well as a politics of possibilities (cf. Atkinson, Roberts and Savage 2012).

The ‘cultural politics of inequality’ is a term used to bridge the private with the public sphere in re-energizing our understanding of processes of meaning making in both everyday/political life and action. The politics of austerity have triggered the unfolding of precarious subjectivities, a vast transformation from the self-confidence, prosperity and assertiveness of a Greek society that idealized the achievements of technological progress in the wake of the 2004 Olympics, as exemplified in the new state-of-the-art Athens airport, a new under and overground railway system, new highways and bridges. A new technocratic horizon had been articulated in a politics of progress and development.

The financial devastation in Greece has expanded from a fiscal to a social and humanitarian crisis, eroding the physical, mental and emotional well-being of the population in the harshest dehumanizing way. The social and political turbulence, often in post-apocalyptic images as the right to the city evaporates under the ruins of destruction and tear gas smog engulfing neighborhoods and hopes<sup>xv</sup>. As Kouvelakis (2011: 18) explains, ‘Greece has been on the receiving end of the most punishing austerity programme ever implemented in post-war Europe, which has produced a cycle of increasingly radicalized mass mobilizations since May 2010, with huge demonstrations, general strikes and the occupation of Syntagma Square’<sup>xvi</sup>.

The horizon of neoliberalization through austerity has not offered an alternative vision for the future of Greece. On the contrary, it has advanced a different narrative of Europeanization, one in stark rift with and contrast to the historicity of democracy and human rights. More importantly, such a new paradigm drastically limits the agentic potential of those submerged in the neoliberal governance of European politics, which in turn further exacerbates inequality, and, such austerity policies impact women in particular in negative ways (e.g. Evans 2015).

Such a necropolitics of eradicating social welfare and sovereignty has been perceived as a bloodless coup whose planning and execution has been guided by the EU, while ‘even the remnants of national sovereignty and democracy that had still existed in Greece, already largely formal, are now a thing of the past’ (Kouvelakis 2011: 27). The social unrest and political fragmentation that resurfaced in the weeks following the July 2015 referendum saw the country rapidly blanketed in blazing wildfires, and, the government requesting assistance from other European countries, as dilapidated firefighting planes crashed at the scene while battling the fires. Greece has been at the forefront of historical moments yet, if the country will emerge as a phoenix from the ashes is another burning question.

Another relevant issue here is the role of academia, and, as Étienne Balibar prophetically asserted: ‘But the question also concerns the intellectuals: *what should and could be a democratically elaborated political action against the crisis* at the European level, walking on both legs (economic administration, social policy), eliminating corruption and reducing the inequalities which foster it, restructuring debts and defining common objectives in order to legitimize transfers of tax resources between mutually interdependent nations? It is the task of progressive intellectuals, whether they see themselves as reformists or revolutionaries, to discuss publicly this subject and take risks. If they fail to do so, they will have no excuse’ (2010: 122;

italics in the original). In an increasingly divisive academic and public European sphere, in the lack of a politically and socially just action plan against the crisis, and, the violent politics of austerity and inequality, intellectuals do need to speak up to ‘the Barbarians’ whether they have temporarily withdrawn or changed names, no doubt new ones will come along and they have to be addressed, if Europe will not be saved from itself.

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### ***Appendix***

"Waiting for the Barbarians"

By Constantine Cavafy

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?

The barbarians are due here today.  
Why isn't anything happening in the senate?  
Why do the senators sit there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.  
What laws can the senators make now?  
Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.

Why did our emperor get up so early,  
and why is he sitting at the city's main gate  
on his throne, in state, wearing the crown?

Because the barbarians are coming today  
and the emperor is waiting to receive their leader.  
He has even prepared a scroll to give him,  
replete with titles, with imposing names.

Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today  
wearing their embroidered, their scarlet togas?  
Why have they put on bracelets with so many amethysts,  
and rings sparkling with magnificent emeralds?  
Why are they carrying elegant canes  
beautifully worked in silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are coming today  
and things like that dazzle the barbarians.

Why don't our distinguished orators come forward as usual  
to make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Because the barbarians are coming today  
and they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

Why this sudden restlessness, this confusion?  
(How serious people's faces have become.)  
Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,  
everyone going home so lost in thought?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.  
And some who have just returned from the border say  
there are no barbarians any longer.

And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?  
They were, those people, a kind of solution.

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<sup>i</sup> PIGS or GIPSI is an acronym that was used in economic and financial reporting originating in the 1990s and popularized during the European sovereign-debt crisis of the late 2000s. The derogatory term usually refers to the economies of Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain, in Southern Europe. The characterization of the acronym ‘GIPSI’ as racialized refers to the inference to Roma populations historically racialized and excluded as not emulating ‘European values’ (e.g. Vincze 2014).

Refer for instance to: “Say goodbye to PIGS and GIPSI: Tinkering with the words will not fix Europe's economic problems, but can stop reproducing negative public perceptions”: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/12/201212392653337846.html>

<sup>ii</sup> See for instance, Seumas Milne (2015): “The crucifixion of Greece is killing the European project”: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/16/crucifixion-greece-killing-european-project-debt-colony-breakup-eurozone>

<sup>iii</sup> Frantz Fanon’s “The Wretched of the Earth”, specifically dedicated to the Algerians seeking independence from France in the 1960s, is an inspiring and inspirational manifesto on de-colonization. While the hubris of the contemporary condition of the violence of austerity can easily draw parallels with those of the formal colonial era (and hence the suggestion in this paper of a neo-colonialist regime), it is the lurking divisions of *deserving* and *undeserving* Europeans, along with the dependency economics of the bailout plight that manifests an exemplification of the Greeks as the ‘Wretched of Europe’.

<sup>iv</sup> The analogy is from a poem by celebrated Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, written in 1898 and entitled, “Waiting for the Barbarians”. The poem is one that enables Cavafy to vividly describe the politicians of the contemporary era while holding them responsible for the political, social and spiritual decay of modern Hellenism. Refer to Appendix.

<sup>v</sup> According to the Guardian, “data published shows that Greek workers actually put in longer hours than anyone else in Europe — 42.2 per week, compared to just 35.6 in Germany. If you look at full-time figures, it is even starker”. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/dec/08/europe-working-hours>

Additionally, according to the BBC, “figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that the average Greek worker toils away for 2,017 hours per year which is more than any other

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European country. Out of the 34 members of the OECD, that is just two places behind the board leaders, South Korea. On the other hand, the average German worker – normally thought of as the very epitome of industriousness – only manages 1,408 hours a year. Germany is 33rd out of 34 on the OECD list (or 24th out of 25 looking at the European countries alone). Only one other OECD country's workers put in fewer hours, and that's the Netherlands with 1,377 hours. The average Greek is working a full 40% longer than the average German. Moreover, Germans take more holiday, sickness leave and maternity leave – on average four weeks more than the Greeks. See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17155304>

<sup>vi</sup> The military dictatorship that devastated Greece for seven long and traumatic years (1967-74) has undeniably left a mark on the social, economic and political trajectory of the country (as has the period from 1974 to the present). Discussions, debates, research and writing (mostly in Greek) continues to hold center stage in both ordinary and academic life (in Greece) to this day. At the same time it is rather challenging to offer a brief account in a footnote or to suggest further reading for a variety of methodological, ideological, linguistic and other parameters that make this a complex choice. Thus, for an overview of core historical periods and salient events shaping contemporary Greece, see Clogg, R. (2013) *A Concise History of Greece*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>vii</sup> Over the last decade, a number of shocking scandals have rocked both the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek State. These range, for instance, from financial and sexual scandals committed by the former Bishop of Attica now deposed by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece amid charges of such financial and sexual scandals, to the imprisonment of an ex-Defense minister jailed for corruption in what has been viewed as an 'anti-corruption crusade' to appease the debt and austerity ridden Greek public. In just two of the most high profile cases in recent history, a high-rolling extravagant life-style enjoyed by both the former clergy-man and the former politician took center focus in the media as did the populist discourse of the outrage expressed by Greeks in feeling ridiculed, violated and betrayed by both the Church and the State. We can only speculate that such devastating blows to the core of the nation can cast some doubt as to the sacredness of religion and the ethnos, nevertheless, caution is necessary in not making any definitive claims.

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<sup>viii</sup> It is impossible to acknowledge either neutrality in the terms and concepts we use or utter clarity in their positioning. Unpacking and unpicking terminology situates our research within layers of conceptual clarity but nevertheless one concept never ‘fits all’. Interchangeably the kind of research I discuss here has been named ‘action’, ‘activist’, ‘participatory’, ‘critical/radical’ or conducted by ‘critical/radical researchers’, ‘social movements researchers/academics’, ‘activists academics’, ‘academic activists’, ‘participatory activist academics’, ‘politically engaged academics’, etc.

<sup>ix</sup> Panayota Gounari: “The Neoliberal Politics of Social Necrophilia in Greece”, January 27, 2015, Published in *Time of Crisis*: <http://www.analyzegreece.gr/topics/time-of-crisis/item/73-panayota-gounari-the-neoliberal-politics-of-social-necrophilia-in-greece>

<sup>x</sup> Sally Kitch (2009: 240) indicates that: ‘Young borrowed Jean Paul Sartre’s definition of a “series” as a form of commonality created not by shared characteristics, which would constitute a group, but by shared proximity and entrapment within the “structured relations” of a particular social milieu’.

<sup>xi</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz is University Professor at Columbia University, recipient of the 2001 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics. Cited in: <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jun/29/joseph-stiglitz-how-i-would-vote-in-the-greek-referendum>

<sup>xii</sup> I consciously use this term as to incorporate migrant and minority populations with no current entitlement to citizenship inclusive of documented/undocumented, refugee/asylum seeker and minoritized groups, not only equally but obviously further detrimentally affected by austerity. I avoid the term ‘resident’ as this implies a legal status of the right to reside.

<sup>xiii</sup> From a range of published sources evidencing this, for instance Madianos *et al.* (2014) in the *European Journal of Psychiatry* report the following findings and conclusions from their recent study:

*Results:* Suicide mortality rates were increased by 55.8% between 2007 and 2011 while the total mortality was increased by 1.1% only. Significantly increasing trends in public debt, unemployment rates, consumption of daily units of antidepressants as well as divorces per 1000, homicides per 100,000 and persons with HIV per 100,000 were also observed. Suicides have been found to bear strong correlation with unemployment ( $r = 0.64$ ). Significant

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associations were also found between suicide mortality and the percentage of public debt as percentage of GDP, the incidence of infections from HIV and homicides.

*Conclusions:* People suffering from income and job losses, living in a demoralized social state caused by severe austerity measures and restrictive health policies, are exposed to risks for developing depression or commit suicide.

<sup>xiv</sup> Indeed the referendum returned a landslide victory for the "No" campaign, gaining 61.31% of the overall vote, however, the ideological connotation here is similar to the Occupy Movement and its well-known slogan, "We are the 99%" to refer to income inequality and wealth distribution between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population, namely in the United States as expressed through Occupy Wall Street, but as part of the global justice movement similar slogans resonated with anti-austerity protests across Europe in the past five years and continuing to this date, highlighting the social and economic inequality, greed and corruption, particularly from undue influence of corporations on governments and the financial services sector. The rage and protests, also materializing in general assemblies of the indignant movement, swept across European capitals.

<sup>xv</sup> This has clear resonance with Judith Butler's passionate demand for hope: "If hope is an impossible demand, then we demand the impossible". Speech delivered in New York City as part of the politics of the 'Occupy' Wall Street social movement in 2011: [http://www.salon.com/2011/10/24/judith\\_butler\\_at\\_occupy\\_wall\\_street/](http://www.salon.com/2011/10/24/judith_butler_at_occupy_wall_street/)

<sup>xvi</sup> Translated as 'Constitution Square' it is the iconic location of the Greek Parliament where most demonstrations take place, as it is not only the central square of Athens but the most important square of modern Athens from a historical and social point of view and at the center of contemporary Greek politics. The Square is named after the Constitution that the first King of Greece Otto was obliged to grant, after an uprising during the September 3, 1843 revolution. It is located in front of the 19th century Old Royal Palace, housing the Greek Parliament since 1934.