

Abstract

Greece has since the revelation of its public debt in 2009 experienced an economic crisis. Governments in Greece has since the emergence of the economic crisis implemented austerity measures, such as tax hikes and cuts in public spending as well as pensions, to stabilize the debt issues of the country. The implementation of austerity measures has been done in compliance with terms of three bailout loan deals with the EU member states and the International Monetary Fund. 2015 saw the year where the Greek political party SYRIZA was voted into the government offices of Greece and subsequently held a national referendum on the terms of the third bailout loan deal.

In the spring of 2016 I took on ethnographic research amongst students of the Greek city of Thessaloniki where I aimed to research how the economic crisis had made an impact on the lives of Greek students. This thesis will explore how students in Thessaloniki experienced the economic crisis and how it had impacted their lives as students and their choices in education. This material will be analyzed within theoretical frameworks on crisis, practice-theory and the constructions of imagined futures to argue how the economic crisis in Greece can have an impact on actions and practices amongst students in Thessaloniki.

Acknowledgements

There are many who deserve credit for their roles in making this thesis happen. The following list will probably not cover all of you who deserve credit nor will it be a good representation of how immensely grateful I am.

Thank you to you lovely people who I was able to meet in Thessaloniki and who was so kind as to spend time with me and letting me learn about their lives.

I firmly believe that this thesis simply would not have been had it not been for the incredible supervision of Carla Dahl-Jørgensen. I owe you a big thank for all the help and counseling that took place before and during fieldwork, as well as in the process of writing this thesis.

Thank you Theodoros Rakopoulos, for introducing me to the field of Greece and Thessaloniki both through your literature and by taking your time to meet me in Thessaloniki.

This thesis also marks the end of five years of Bachelor and Master degree programs at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. I want to thank all of you who I got the chance of getting to know and consider my friends – also to you who parted ways with us along the years. This one goes especially out to Emil and Matilda, but also to Else Mari, Hanna, Madelen, Hege, Marisel, Ragnhild and Mathias.

Thank you to the skillful flatmates of mine, Aida and Helga, who took their time to read through drafts and point out my insufficient knowledge of English language.

At last, but definitely not the least, I want to thank Mamma and Pappa, Kyrre, Frode and Hogne. Thank you for being the incredibly supportive family you are.

All faults and omissions are solely my own.

Rune Søholt
Trondheim, May 2017

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Chapter One:

Introduction to the thesis

The ambiguity of crisis

In the spring of 2016 on a Thursday night in a central café in Thessaloniki, a social meeting was held. These meetings were quite usual, and I had attended several of them. The crowd was usually a mix of nationalities, many were Greek nationals, or “locals” as they would refer to themselves as. Others originated from other European countries, there on education mobility programs, NGO-missions, or even vacation. In this particular case, I was seated at a table with, amongst others, a Greek woman who was older than what the usual attendees was, and a younger polish girl who had recently arrived on a vacation. After revealing to these two that I was in town to do research on the ongoing economic crisis, the polish girl stopped and asked the table: “About that, where is this crisis exactly?”.

In some way, I can understand why a polish girl on a vacation in the city would ask such a question. The main streets of Thessaloniki were at any given time full of cars and scooters, either parked or passing down the roads. You would need to make turns to avoid walking straight into the people filling the pavements. And the many shops and cafés of the city looked fairly busy. For my own sake, this was a contrast to how the contemporary Greece was presented in international media, where stories of social unrest and protest had flourished in later years. The official travel advice to Greece in Norway advised travelers that Greece was in the midst of a difficult crisis, and that strikes and protests could emerge spontaneously and one was advised to stay away from these. This representation was to some extent confirmed when I arrived Greece and Thessaloniki in late January of 2016. Farmers across the Greek mainland rallied against an official initiative to lower subsidies and pensions for farmers. Highways across the country were therefore blocked by tractors, and made the national news in a dramatic fashion with live coverage of angered farmers and frequent updates on which routes that were blocked. And on the very first day of my fieldwork I witnessed protests against the same initiatives outside an agriculture convention in the city of Thessaloniki. Yet meanwhile, a stone’s throw away from the protest, the cafés on the Odos Nikis were full of young people leisurely sitting in the sun and sipping from tall glasses of *frappe*. Scenes like this could both show a sense of immediate crisis and sense of normality at the same time.

In the case of the polish girl I mentioned above, she had might not seen scenes that could give a hint that there indeed was a crisis. The older woman who was sitting at the same table that night reacted

to her question. She quickly, and somewhat angered by the question, remarked that she was a mother whose children, because of the economic crisis, had moved abroad to find work. There was no work for them in Greece anymore, she said. This was a narrative that was common during my fieldwork. The economic crisis had removed the possibility of working in Greece for many people due to austerity measures that the government had put in place the last six years. Stories of friends and family members who had left the country to find work was therefore a common consequence of the crisis. Yet, in between these stories of friends or family leaving Greece in search of job opportunities, in between the protests and angered resentments towards politicians and government, it could almost seem as the city of Thessaloniki was unfazed.

The crisis and its consequences

By the year of 2016, Greece had already had six or seven years of crisis depending on what one points out as its beginning. In 2009, Greece's sovereign debt was revealed to the public. With this revelation, Europe and the Euro currency went into a crisis as the large indebtedness of the Greek state devaluated the common currency of the continent. 2010 saw the beginnings of the austerity measures which aimed at cutting Greece's public spending and stabilizing the country's public economy. This meant lay-offs of public sector workplaces, cuts in wage and pension and an increase in taxation. However, these cuts on their own would not be enough to help Greece service its debt. Greece has therefore since 2010 agreed with the other members of the Eurozone and the International Monetary Fund on three separate loans, colloquially referred to as bailout packages, to avoid defaults. In return for receiving these loans, Greece would need to introduce further measures which were aimed at improving the economy (BBC, 2012). The austerity measures have however been met with large waves of protest and anger (Theodossopoulos, 2013) as unemployment rates increased as much as to 27,3% in 2013 (The Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), 2016).

The economic crisis of Greece has since 2009 received massive attention in the media, and eventually an increasingly larger attention in academia as well, to which I will return. In the media, the crisis has largely been covered in terms of the political and economic turmoil it has caused for the European Union and the Euro currency, and the impacts it has caused in Greek society at large. The economic crisis in Greece is presented as a global consequence that occurred in the aftermath of the crash in the US stock market of 2007-2008, showing the ripple effects the crash in the US caused outside the US. (Harvey, 2011; The Economist, 2013) As events unfolded in Europe, Greece became one of the countries of the PIGS-grouping (signifying Portugal, Ireland/Italy, Greece and Spain) who started having debt problems among the Eurozone countries. Amidst the economic crisis, there have been several talks of Greece leaving the Eurozone, eventually reverting to its old

Drachma currency, although this, to this day, has not happened (BBC, 2012). Since 2010, governments in Greece have continuously implemented austerity measures to tackle debt issues and to meet the requirements set by creditors of three bailout loans. These three loans were issued in 2010, 2012 (BBC, 2012) and in 2015 (Featherstone, 2016). The crisis in Greece became notorious and the politics of austerity measures have received attention for its social consequences. Along with the surging unemployment levels, one saw an increase of poverty as the population had become 40% poorer by 2013, and by 2015, the country's population had declined by 400 000, a large part of this number were professionals who had migrated (Rodgers & Stylianou, 2015). Media have frequently reported on waves of protest as new policies to counter the growing debt have been legislated (Smith, 2016). In the year of 2015, the anti-austerity political party SYRIZA, known as *The Coalition of the Radical Left*, won power in the Greek parliament and initiated a referendum on a third bailout-program. Though the results of this referendum swung towards a “no” to this bailout package, this bailout package still went through. The austerity measures were therefore not brought to a halt, and the Greek people faced increasingly tougher measures.

About this thesis

My thesis is concerned with material and findings that came about as a result of an ethnographic fieldwork in the city of Thessaloniki in the spring of 2016. The fieldwork was concerned with how the economic crisis was felt and experienced among and by the university students of the city. This thesis will therefore offer ethnographic insight to topics related to being students in Greece during times of crisis.

Students are in a way “preparing” for a life after their studies. They choose and take an education and a degree which determine their working careers in the aftermath of the “period of studies”. I wanted to take a closer look at how the economic crisis in Greece had impacted the lives of students and how it had affected their prospects of future life. Were they exempt from the economic crisis, or did the economic crisis impact their lives as students? Had the crisis impacted how students chose to prepare themselves for a future of work? And how did they imagine their future would look like?

Time and practice¹

The aim of this thesis is to present an analytical framework revolving around the concepts of crisis, temporality and practice. With this framework in hand the thesis' aim is to explore if, and how, practice is formed in crisis, and to explore and analyze actions in the context of crisis. This takes as

¹ *The subject of practice-theory will be further elaborated on page 19*

an analytical basis the relationship between structures and practice, central concept in practice theory. Theories of practice, such as Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) original theory, followed up by Sherry Ortner's (1984) conceptualizations, can help analyze, on the one hand how structures can shape how practices are carried out in life. On the other hand, theories of practice also seek to analyze how practices can reproduce structures, or in cases of structural change, produce a different form of structure. In the context of the economic crisis in Greece, theories of practice can help to analyze how the economic crisis has affected choices made by the students, yet also to analyze how actions of students produced or reproduced certain forms of structures.

Time is an important factor here. Firstly, I want to describe how the economic crisis was felt and experienced by the informants and what it was that constituted their experience of crisis. And in the objective of describing the crisis, as well as its relation to practice, temporality becomes a crucial concept. Secondly, in terms of practices, their narratives and, following Lorenzo Cañas Bottos (2008), imaginations of future can be seen as a vital part in motivating actions.

Ethnography of the economic crisis in Greece

In academia, and specifically to anthropological literature, there has been a focus on the reactions and responses to the economic crisis and the austerity measures in the everyday lives of Greek citizens. Some of the earlier ethnographic accounts of the Greek debt crisis were published by Michael Herzfeld (2011) and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos (2013, 2014). Both of these two authors studied the initial wave and voices of protests that followed the launch of the austerity measures.

Herzfeld (2011) and Theodossopoulos (2013) both situate their fieldworks in the summer of 2011. Their focus was on the protests that were staged immediately after the Greek government had signed the deal which would grant them the first of the three loan deals mentioned above, and by that agreeing to impose fierce austerity measures. Somewhat inspired by similar reactions to the economic crisis in Spain staged by a movement which was called *los indignados*, the protest movement in Greece was called *oi aganaktismenos*, i.e. "the indignant" (Theodossopoulos, 2013:200) or "the exasperated" (Herzfeld, 2011:24).

After he himself was attacked and robbed in Athens, Herzfeld (2011) wrote about how media produced an image of essentialism regarding incidents of violence in the city of Athens and in the protests. There were violent incidents, such as the one Herzfeld experienced, but also raids and attacks on the buildings of banks and public institutions. Herzfeld argues that there exists an acceptance in Greece of some of these incidents as they were purposefully targeted against

perpetrators of what Herzfeld calls “structural violence” (ibid.:24), such as the elite or banks. As Herzfeld argues, this way of accepting violence against oppressive actors or forces has deep roots in culturally embedded forms of reciprocity.

In the work that he published on the reactions to the first bailout loan, Theodossopoulos (2013, 2014) aims to analyze the rhetoric amongst Greek nationals situated both in Greece and in a diaspora in Panama. In his article *The ambivalence of anti-austerity indignation in Greece*, Theodossopoulos (2014) writes about how “anti-austerity indignation” (ibid.:490), i.e. folk resentments on the issue of austerity measures, became an important factor in SYRIZA’s rise to power. As Theodossopoulos explain exactly how these resentments had this he unveils an interesting concept. According to Theodossopoulos (ibid.:493) the name of austerity in Greece is *Mniminio*. The word itself is the Greek translation of the word memorandum and is a clear reference to the actual memorandum with the Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece. However, the concept of *Mniminio* is used in an abstract way. As such it becomes what Theodossopoulos calls the “spectre of austerity” (ibid.). This *spectre of austerity* is according to Theodossopoulos “treated as the source of all evils that come with austerity” (ibid.). *Mniminio* is therefore the source to why there are no jobs, no raises in salary, *et cetera*. *Mniminio*, as explained by Theodossopoulos (ibid.), is a breakdown of the basic idea of modernism in Greece, i.e. how every generation after the Second World War in Greece would gradually become more prosperous. As Theodossopoulos says: “Until recently, university graduates invested in postgraduate studies hoping to qualify for a “better job”; in the life after *mniminio*, “there are no jobs”” (ibid.).

In the later years there has been published ethnographic works on movements, or initiatives, within what is defined as the “solidarity economy” (Rakopoulos, 2015:161). Two anthropologists who has published works that covers the initiatives that operate within this term are Theodoros Rakopoulos (ibid.) and Heath Cabot (2016). In short text, these initiatives are voluntarily run. They can be based on “counter-hegemonic” (Rakopoulos, 2015:165) ideas, such as Rakopoulos’ case with the “anti-middlemen” (ibid.161) food distribution initiatives, i.e. buying and selling food without expensive middlemen or grocers. However, solidarity economy initiatives, such as the social health clinic which Cabot (2016) writes about, is run as an alternative to people without access to expensive medicine. In the wake of the economic crisis and the austerity measures, these initiatives have flourished.

In Daniel Knight’s (2015a) book, *History, time, and economic crisis in Central Greece*, Knight utilizes a theory which he calls “cultural proximity” (ibid.:3). This term denotes how actors can

experience two historically distant points in time, notably a historic event and the present, in real time. This is also the way Knight conceptualizes his informants', the inhabitants of the Greek central province of Thessaly, experience of the crisis. In Thessaly, certain events in history were remembered by Knight's informants who were old enough. Yet the informants who were not old enough to possibly remember these events, they still had a way of internalizing and reliving these past events. One point in history which was both remembered and internalized was the Nazi occupation of the Second World War and the subsequent famine that hit the region in the same period. Among informants of Knight, this historic event was being relived. Thus, Knight's informants experienced living two separate temporalities in real time. In Knight's empirical material this is for example showed in the man who equated the solar panels erected in previous agricultural fields with a new form of occupation (ibid.:53). The farmers saw more economic output in erecting solar panels, encouraged by EU subsidies, these fields were no longer being farmed. Likewise, this experience of experiencing two different time was apparent by his 77 year old informant who, at the sight of children searching rubbish bins for scraps of food, expressed that the society in Trikala had returned to the dark days of the famine (ibid.:69).

Finally, a recent ethnographic publication on the topic of the economic crisis in Greece has revamped the concept of the moral economy. This is done by Dimitrios Gkintidis (2016) in his article *European integration as a moral economy*. In this article Gkintidis' shows not only how the economic crisis in Greece is framed by a moral discourse, but also how the political actions of European integration in Greece since the 1980's was framed in the same way. As such, the developmental funds which Greece received from the EU were interpreted as "moral gestures" (ibid.:477) instead of political actions which entailed conditionality and neoliberal restructuring. Gkintidis' ethnographic research, which is situated amongst Greek EU specialists and technocrats, shows exactly how these actors were morally, as well as politically, engaged in the project of European integration in Greece.

The structure of the thesis

The thesis will be structured as followed:

Chapters two, three and four will be reserved for the methodological and theoretical overviews, and give an account for the historical and statistical background, or context, of the thesis. In chapter two I will give an account for the methods that was used during the fieldwork and how the material and findings of this thesis came about. This contains an introduction to the location of the fieldwork, along with descriptions of how I conducted the ethnographic research.

Chapter three will contain the theoretical overview of the thesis. This chapter will contain a historical overview of the concept of crisis, anthropological theory of crisis, an overview of practice-theory as well as an introduction to anthropological theory on time, in the sense of future.

In chapter four I will give an account for the history of the crisis and the statistics of the crisis whereby I will try to give background information about the crisis and the context in which my research and informants was situated.

In chapters five, six, seven and eight I will go through the empirical material and findings of my ethnographic research. The material have been thematically organized into the four chapters.

In chapter five I will introduce the students of Thessaloniki, along with introducing the factor of economic pressure as an impact on the students and the aspect of prestige in education in Greece. In chapter six I will describe how students geographically moved, along with the housing situation for students in Thessaloniki as well as descriptions of housing among students. Chapter seven will deal with the consequences the crisis had for the employment market in Greece, sentiments about unemployment as well as how students imagined the future of employment opportunities.

Finally, in chapter eight, the last of the empirical chapter, I will try to sum up how the crisis had created a physical and social environment that was physically felt by informants and which was manifested in bodily reactions. These could be reactions of feeling empathy, depression or anger. I will explore how this embodiment of crisis

In chapter nine I will analyze the empirical material of the thesis and explore the concepts of time and practice in the context of economic crisis.

Chapter two:

Methodological overview

This thesis and the empirical material it comprises is based on an in-excess of five months (from late January throughout June 2016) long ethnographic fieldwork. During this time, I lived in the Greek city of Thessaloniki and gathered qualitative data through methods of ethnographic research. The focus of said fieldwork was to research if and how students of Thessaloniki had been effected, or impacted, by the ongoing economic crisis. To highlight how the empirical basis of this thesis came to be the current section will be dedicated to review the methods used during the fieldwork.

An introduction to the field: The city of Thessaloniki

My ethnographic fieldwork, the basis of this thesis, took place in the city of Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki is the second largest city in Greece. It is located in the northern part of the Greek mainland in the region of Macedonia, close to the borders of The Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria. The city is the second most populated city in Greece with a registered population in the municipality of 325,182 while the population of the larger area surrounding Thessaloniki, Central Macedonia, is 1,882,108. (figures according to The Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), 2016)

Thessaloniki is the city of two of the largest universities in Greece, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and The University of Macedonia. These two universities accounts for approximately 50,000 students, in other words a significant part of the city's population. The city was therefore a good location to meet students, whom were the segment of the population that I wanted focus on in my research.

During the fieldwork, I settled in three different urban and residential parts of the city, Kato Toumba, Ano Poli, and Saranta Eklissies. The two areas of Ano Poli and Saranta Eklissies were located close, or at walking distance to, the city center and the campuses of the universities. The last area, Kato Toumba, was situated at a further distance away from the city center than the two others. During my stay in Kato Toumba I had to take a substantial bus trip of around 20 minutes in order to reach the city center. Said bus trip was during the time of my stay also subject to a large scale



Overview of the central area of Thessaloniki from the Ano Poli district. Private photography.

general strike, and was therefore from time to time either delayed, blocked from following its usual route, or was simply just not driving at all. The research in itself was not bound to the areas where I settled in. My research largely took place “all over” the city’s central and commercial area.

Thessaloniki is a city founded 300 BC, and so it is a very historically rich city. In the city you will find remains, buildings, churches and defensive walls from ancient times, to Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods placed in between the densely built modern buildings. During my stay in the city there was also frequent archeological excavations in the middle of the city. One major and visible industry in the city was the industrial port, and there were constantly ships in the bay in which Thessaloniki was situated. To the west of this port was a large and vast industrial area as well which contained large industrial complexes and factories. The campuses of the abovementioned universities were both located in the central commercial area, to be more precise, just east of the city center.

Doing ethnographic research

Going into the field to do ethnographic research was a very new and awesome experience for me. I had been to Greece before, though this previous experience was limited to the context of a vacation on Crete. Thessaloniki was a large and overwhelming city at first glance. I did not know anyone in this town other than my AirBnB-hosts who I stayed with the first week, and a fellow anthropologist. In the city, there were thousands walking around and minding their own business. As a researcher, I could in a sense become invisible in this crowd, not really becoming part of any group or community. As such I would rely on both to attend and engage in frequently organized meetings at cafés, like the one in the introduction, gatherings at political protests or the campus, and on *snowballing* (Wikan, 1996:183) in order to find informants.

I had an intention of doing participant observation, by for example trying to blend in at some *social arenas* (Spradley, 1980), but this yielded very little data as I did not speak or understand Greek, as well as I did not manage to take a part in what happened. There are a few examples, to say the least, from my fieldwork that can highlight the problem of the language barrier. I encountered many situations where I followed one or more informants and had a conversation with him, her or they in English, but then it suddenly ended as friends would approach this informant and they would carry on in Greek. Likewise, when I joined an informant in a group, for example of friends, they would carry on in Greek before turning to me and explaining what they were talking about and what they were saying. Though, it must be said, it was really helpful when my informants were aware of my research project and highlighted talking points that they thought I would benefit hearing.

One of the methods that I really benefitted from was spending time with, and follow up more in-depth, specific informants. This eventually led me to research *key informants* (Wadel, 1991) as a method to gather material about the lives of students.

The use of key informants

As mentioned, the use of key informants became an important method for me to gather ethnographic material. As a first time visitor to Thessaloniki and unfamiliar to the language, social situations was hard to become part of and to get a real inside view of. Getting to know informants better, and receiving material through interviewing and have talks with them proved very useful to the research project that I had set out to do. Eventually, I would get to know some informants better than others and they became key for me to learn about the lives of students in Greece and Thessaloniki.

My conceptualization of the use of key informants as an ethnographical method is through Cato Wadel's (1991) descriptions of his fieldwork among unemployed people in Canada. Wadel's approach was to get thorough knowledge of the topic of unemployment through following and studying his informant *George* to great depths. He then managed to gain a thorough description of how an unemployed person, which *George* was in this case, lived, talked and behaved in everyday life. This data could then be used to explain concepts in the larger sense like norms, reciprocity and the society through *George's spilleregler* which roughly translates to "game rules" (Wadel, 1991:146), i.e. how an unemployed like *George* should convey himself in terms of working and consumption. Material on key informants can thus be used to reveal cultural or structural aspects of the field and how informants "deal" with them. This is also a way I intend to approach the material which was gathered through using this method.

In my fieldwork, there were particularly two informants that can be considered to be my key informants. These are Angelika and Lisa. The two were very helpful in giving me material. They were both students, although they studied different subjects, had different ages and origins as well as no relation to each other. Lisa was 20 years old, studied architecture, and lived in Thessaloniki with her family. Angelika was 27, studied pedagogics, and had moved from the town of her family to study in Thessaloniki. This of course has an impact on the data that I was able to obtain regarding Lisa and Angelika. For example, at the emergence of the crisis the two would be in very different situations. Similarly, the two would have different outlooks on the future. The two would have different personal backgrounds and personal stories. Yet, I aim to consider their backgrounds and stories in the context of the economic crisis, imagination of the future, and practice-theory and thereby help to get a better understanding of their life lived in the economic crisis in Greece.

The way I went forth to do research with this method of key informants was that I, on one hand, followed them around at places and activities. The aim in doing so was to gather data on what places and activities they went to and participated in, what was going on in these situations and how and why the informants was taking part in the situations. On the other hand, much of the material I gathered is based on interviews and conversations that took place between the researcher and the informants. Through these two approaches I managed to gather material that highlights what life as a student in Thessaloniki might entail.

The kind of data I managed to gather through the method of key informants, and which turned out useful, was for the most part narratives and personal stories of the informants. These were either gathered through interviews or in conversations that occurred between researcher and informant.

The latter instance was the usual one when I followed the informants around, and when informants was explaining what went on and what I was looking at. Informants in these instances often said things that I would note and which I could follow up on later.

Furthermore, aspects of the method of key informants were used as an approach to researching in other instances with informants other than the two I consider my “main” key informants. Although in these cases the data was in comparison not as abundant or thorough.

On the methodology of interviewing

In the course of the fieldwork I ended up interviewing, in some form or another, 37 informants. Not all of these informants were students. The ages of these informants spread from 18 to in their sixties. Some informants were interviewed more than others due to how good a relationship I managed to get with them and how frequently I met these informants. And some informants were interviewed more in-depth than others. As a result, some of the informants will be represented more frequently and in-depth than others.

I use Bernard’s (2011) continuum as a reference in saying that the interviews I conducted were either informal interviews and field conversations, or formal semi-structured interviews. The informal interviews, or field conversations, was the form that occurred the most. These often took the form of conversations that I had with people that I met for the first time. In a personal and topical matter, they were therefore very open-ended. When I met people in the field for the first time, I introduced myself and explained that I was in town to do research on the crisis. The person I spoke with would therefore venture in on the specific topic of crisis and what the person would consider relevant to my research. As the conversation went on I could then ask them to explain more about a topic that the person introduced, or ask what the person could say about topics that I had in back of my mind. After getting to know the informants better, and getting to meet them several times, I would still use this method of interviewing. These interviews were although different as I had some background information and could ask more specific topics they had shared their views on before. Yet, in these particular cases, no real preparation was involved before the interviews taking place.

The other form of interviewing which was used was the formal and semi-structured. Before these interviews, I would prepare by writing down topics that I would want to cover and examples of question I would like to ask in the interviews. Yet, the topics and questions only served as a reference point to me throughout the interviews. When the topics were duly covered and

respondents had nothing more to say on the topic, I would simply move on. The form was still very open-ended, and as the informants responded I would listen and ask for more information on certain parts of their responses. These interviews were formal in the way that the respondent agreed to meet and be interviewed in front of either a recording device or a note book in which I took notes as they responded. Hence, in these situation my position as a researcher became even more pronounced.

Ethical considerations

To preserve the informants' anonymity, I have taken a few measures to cover personal information. First, names that are used in the thesis are pseudonyms. Secondly, names of geographical places such as towns of specific informants' origin, the areas where informants lived, or other places that could be traced back to their personas will be obscured. Other things that might give too much details, such as certain information on education will also be obscured. However, I will state the details that are of analytical value, like some of the fields of education as it helps to analyze how the crisis had affected choices in educational degrees and what considerations students had made as they chose to study.

Chapter three:

Anthropology and *Crisis*: time and practice

Koselleck: on the history of crisis

In his article, *Crisis*, Reinhart Koselleck (2006 [1972-97]) gives a comprehensive historical overview over how the concept of crisis has developed throughout history. The concept went from being one with specific usages in a few spheres, through continuously being applied in new spheres, to become one that depicts temporal horizons and is used in everyday language. The origin of the concept is found in the ancient Greek word *krisis* which was used in the spheres of law, theology and medicine (ibid.:358). Koselleck (ibid.) notes that the word's meaning, as it originally was used in the sphere of law, was that of being a "judgment" or "decision" as in the sense of reaching a judgement subjectively, but also in the objective sense, that of matters "reaching a crucial point that would tip the scales" (ibid.). The concept was therefore used in the sense as in "trial", "court" or "legal decision" in ancient Greece (ibid.:358). In theology, the same judicial concept of crisis was incorporated into being used in the teachings of the Last Judgment, as "the crisis at the end of the world" (ibid.:359). In medicine, Koselleck (2006 [1972-97]:360) notes, the concept was used in cases of illness, both in referring to "the observable condition and the judgment about the course of the illness". In this definition, it is also distinguished between what is a perfect crisis, and what is an imperfect crisis, which depended on whether the crisis led to a full restoration of health or not. Furthermore, prolonged in time, a crisis could also be chronic (ibid.)

When the word was Latinized, and subsequently entered other languages in Europe, the medical concept of crisis had become what defined crisis the most. However, this medical concept was, in the 17th century, applied to politics due to traditions of applying the metaphor of the body upon society. By the 18th century, crisis began to stand as a political concept on its own, albeit drawing heavily on the influence of the previous medical concept, and was used as a term to denote situations of political nature, such as wars, revolutions, uprisings, and governmental changes. Later in the same century, this medical-political concept, as well as the old theological conceptualization, was beginning to become used as concepts to express certain developments in time, as "philosophies of history" as Koselleck (2006 [1972-97]:370) calls it. In the aftermath of this, Koselleck notes that the two original concepts of crisis, the medical-political and the theological, formed two distinct conceptualizations where crisis either denoted a chain of events which led to a decisive point where action was required, or denoted a final and unique point after which everything

would be changed. As well as these two, there were two new historical concepts of crisis. One in which a crisis was a critical situation, be it permanent or recurring, in which decisions had momentous consequences. The other saw crisis as a transitional phase, imminent in history, which could either lead to better or worse conditions. All these possible interpretations implied a meaning to a present situation, yet it also saw into the future, in the aftermath of a crisis. As the following years would bring a series of momentous revolutions, the concept of crisis became ways to describe the situations in, or leading into, the revolution, but also to prospect what would happen in the aftermath. (Koselleck, 2006 [1972-97]:371-372)

These four interpretations of crisis, in terms of historical time, were all brought along into the 19th century. However, in this century the concept gained additional significance as it entered the sphere of economics. Previously, as Koselleck (2006 [1972-97]:389) notes, economic emergencies, or emergencies within trade or commerce, had been described with the use of medical terms. Thus explaining the historical use of terms such as “relapse”, “calamities” *et cetera*. As the use of concept of crisis became a more frequent to describe situations within trade and commerce, the concept gained specific meanings in economics as well. It described undesirable factors in the processes of, for example, production or demand. By time, crises were viewed as recurring phenomenon, and they began to be seen as transitional. As such, economic crisis became certain philosophies of history themselves. This was highly influential to both liberal and Marxist political thought. To liberals, crises became steps on the ladder of progress. For Marxists, however, this same progress would lead to the final point, to a final crisis. (Koselleck, 2006 [1972-97]:390-393)

Koselleck’s (2006 [1972-97]) ends his article by assessing the use of the concept in the 20th century. In this century, Koselleck (*ibid.*:397-398) notes that the use of crisis has expanded massively in quantity, yet the precision of the use, as to what the term might imply, is vague. Crisis, as such, becomes ambiguous, it is open, it doesn’t imply what the future of a crisis might imply. Koselleck’s assessment shows, according to conceptual historians Melvin Richter and Michaela W. Richter (2006), how the concept of crisis, with its massive political potential, over time has become “semantically bleached” (*ibid.*:353). Thus, the concept can encompass a massive variety of domains, yet lose the distinctive meaning in the sense of what kind of situation it is explicitly trying to frame in the first place.

Crisis, in general and post-2008, in anthropology

An alternative take on conceptualizing what commonly is thought of as a crisis is made by anthropologist Henrik Vigh (2008) in his article *Crisis and chronicity*. Vigh (2008) describes these

common notions of crisis as experiences of “temporary abnormalities related to traumatic events such as violence, disease or bereavement” (ibid.:7), and “a rupture in the order of things; an intermediary moment of chaos where social and societal processes collapse upon themselves only to come to life after the crisis is overcome” (ibid.:9), as well as a “condition of instability” (ibid.:10). The first concept emphasizes traumas at a personal level, and crisis and traumatic experience can in some cases be used as synonyms. Though experiences of trauma, such as being subjected of violent acts, life-threatening diseases or losing friends and families occur at a personal level, they can also happen at a societal level. This happens, for example, in instances of war, or in times of epidemics. The second conceptualization somewhat builds on this societal experience of crisis. One has a way of thinking how society is normally ordered. In times of crisis this sense of normality, how society is usually ordered, ceases, and it is only after a crisis has passed that this normality can be restored. In these two conceptualizations, the one emphasizing trauma, and the other which emphasizes crisis on a societal level, crisis is seen as limited in time, and as transient moments of abnormality. When described as such, crisis can be of the same nature as what Turner (1979) denoted in his concept of the *liminal phase* in *rites de passage*. Crises are intermediary and transitional phases in between two “normal” states. The third of Vigh’s (2008) concepts, the one in which crisis is defined as a condition of instability, somewhat sums up the two others. Both subjective and societal experiences of crisis, such as of violence, or of wars and illness, entail conditions of instability. Though, as Vigh points out, such conditions can in empirical cases be drawn-out, or prolonged in time. These cases present a whole new conceptual dilemma to which I will return.

Another take at conceptualizing crisis is made by economic anthropologists Susana Narotzky and Niko Besnier (2014) in their article, *Rethinking the economy*. This article also has a specific focus on the post-2008 global financial crisis of today which the economic crisis in Greece is seen as a part of, or as a consequence of (Harvey, 2011). In conceptualizing what crisis is, Narotzky and Besnier (2014) writes that economic crisis works at two different levels. One is that economic crisis represents structural processes that are beyond what actors can control, processes that occur in the global capitalist market. But economic crisis also impact the actors as it forces people to rethink the economic practices that used to work for people in order to make a living, both for themselves and for the sake of future generations. As a result of economic crisis, people must adapt their practices to the new economic conditions in the crisis. Here, stability is a keyword. Periods of stability, such as in times of economic growth and expansion, is often perceived as the idea of normality. Times of crisis therefore breaks with a notion of stability, the perception of what is normal, and as such, crisis effectively contrasts this notion of stability. Narotzky and Besnier notes that the economic expertise’s faith is that a relative stability will be achieved through monetary policies after a crisis.

This perception consolidates the belief in crises understood in the sense of being transient (Vigh, 2008), and that the situation at hand is exceptional and will bounce back into a stable state.

However, the perception that economic crises are exceptional is one that has been up for analytical scrutiny in the article of Narotzky and Besnier (2014), as well as in other literature, such as David Harvey's (2011).

In Marxist oriented literature the exceptionalism of economic crises however is refuted. Crisis is in these theories rather seen as an inherent feature in capitalism, a cyclical and recurring phenomenon, increasing in strength by each crisis and ending in the final revolution (Koselleck, 2006 [1972-97]). Yet, crisis is not just viewed as unexceptional in this historical sense. Geographer David Harvey (2011) notes that the circulation of capital in capitalism in itself, i.e. how capital is placed in the production of a product to eventually yield surplus capital by selling the product, has a series of crisis, or "blockage points" (ibid.:7), that it has to overcome in order to sustain economic growth. These blockage points, as he empirically shows, are in the access of initial capital, in the labor market and the labor process, in the access of resources and raw materials, in technology and in organizational forms, as well as in the demand of the product. As well as this inherent feature, Harvey argues that economic crisis does not cease, instead it moves around geographically, impacting different parts of the world in a continuous nature. Regarding the post-2008 global financial crisis, this is how a housing bubble in the American market became a problem for Southern European countries such as Greece. Similarly, Narotzky and Besnier (2014) further nuances the notion of crises as being exceptional by making the historical argument that it is periods of economic growth that are the actual anomalies. Crisis can in this way move from the analytical view of being exceptional to rather become a cyclical and recurring phenomenon. Crisis can be analytically viewed as a concept that is not as bound to exceptional moments in history. In the case of economic crisis, crisis can be viewed as a more enduring and systemic feature that is inherent of the dominant capitalist model of economy (Harvey, 2011). This is contradictory to the view of crisis, as in a transient sense, where it is expected that a normality, or stability, will be restored. Furthermore, it opens to the possibility of thinking of crisis in terms of being endemic and something that for many people shapes their perception of everyday life.

Returning to the article of Vigh (2008), this everyday experience of crisis is also what presents the conceptual dilemma. When he lists the common definitions of crises, such as of personal or societal moments of trauma or conditions of instability, in the likes of violence, wars, or epidemics, he also notes that such experiences in many empirical cases is what defines peoples everyday experience. This is for example the case for human beings living in areas with drawn-out conflicts, under

structural violation, or in abusive conditions. Vigh notes that in these cases, the definition of a crisis, that it is a condition of instability which is limited in time, is contradictory. Therefore, he wants to shift the focus away from seeing crisis as momentary to seeing crisis as chronic. In chronic crisis, the condition of instability does not cease or return to the normal, but is rather being internalized into becoming the new “normal”, or part of what people experience as “normal”. As such, Vigh also wants to shift the focus away from seeing actors who live *through* crisis to rather see how actors live *in* crisis (ibid.:8).

Similarly, Narotzky and Besnier (2014:8) notes how economic crisis, in many cases, is what defines the everyday reality to ordinary people. While these people are presented with the case of a crisis that is exceptional, and as such that it will be momentary and that the situation will return to normal, what they experience is a “permanent vital insecurity” (ibid.). This permanent situation is what they are adapting their livelihood to.

Theories of practice, and practice-theory in *crisis*

My thesis will discuss the impact the crisis had on students and the choices of actions they made. How then can the economic crisis impact the choices university students, or aspiring university students, make? Or, how can we understand the choices of actions taken in the context of the economic crisis? This is a theme I aim to explore in this thesis regarding the crisis’ impact on actions informants take, and why informants make the choices they do. In doing so I draw on, as an analytical point of view, theories of practice (Bourdieu, 1977; Ortner, 1984).

The relationship between structure and practice are central concepts in practice-theory. Practice is, in the conceptualization of Sherry Ortner (1984:149), defined as “anything people do”. However, in the models in practice-theory, due to what practice theory tries to analyze, Ortner (ibid.) gives a more theme-specific definition of practice as actions with “intentional or unintentional political implications”. What is implied in this definition is the role of a culturally dominant structure, or a “system”, which is the concept Ortner (ibid.:148) uses. What practice-theory then seeks to analyze is the relationship, or relationships (following Ortner (ibid.)) between systems and practices. Ortner notes that there are two ways to look at such a relationship, one is how structures shape practices. The other way is how practices shape systems by either reproducing a dominant system, or by producing new forms of structure.

In Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977) original theory of practice, he uses the concepts structures and *habitus* (ibid.:78). In his concept of structure, Bourdieu is encompassing Ortner’s (1984) concept of “the

system”. Yet, the *habitus*, in Bourdieu’s (1977) theory, is the bridging element between structures and practice. *Habitus* is defined as the embodiment and internalization of structures, and it is the *habitus* that produces practices. However, Bourdieu’s conceptualization also works both ways. Hence, the structures are being internalized in the *habitus* of the actors which subsequently produces the practices, but structures are also formed as a history of this process. Practices are therefore, either actively or inactively, taking part in reproducing a dominant structure, or forming structures through practice in general. And in the case structural change, these are failures in reproduction.

Considering the theme of crisis, these concepts of structures and practices are put to analytical use in the articles of Narotzky and Besnier (2014) and Vigh (2008) as well. In Narotzky and Besnier’s (2014) article, they depict crisis as a breakdown in the social reproduction that is conceptualized by Bourdieu (1977) and Ortner (1984). According to Narotzky and Besnier (2014), the stability, of growth or prosperity, is a basis to which practices can follow through, both in terms of actions that are long-term projects, but also the means of making a living. In the breakdown of reproduction that crisis represent, the stability that enabled practices to “work”, and to be reproduced disappears, and as a result, agents will therefore need to adapt to new forms of structures.

Similar to Narotzky and Besnier (2014), Vigh (2008) also conceptualizes the impacts a crisis can have upon both structures and practices. Though in Vigh’s case, he makes some theoretical attunements which considers his actors’ situation in a chronic crisis. In situations of chronic crisis, the structures that shapes practices are, in Vigh’s conceptualization, in flux and constantly changing. Due to this, Vigh’s actors in the chronic crisis must speedily adapt to the fluctuating structures. This dialogue, between fluctuating structures and adaptive practices, is what Vigh (2008:19) calls social reflexivity.

Motivation in practice-theory, and *the imagination of the future*

In her article, *Theory in anthropology since the sixties*, Sherry Ortner (1984:151) asks the question: “what motivates action?”. Actors in theories of practice choose to act, and it is these actions that have either intended or unintended political implications, be it long term strategies or projects, or immediate, ad hoc actions or short term moves. Be it actions with either intended or unintended political implications, choices of actions need some form of motivations. In the abovementioned article, Ortner (ibid.) lists two theories of what it is that motivates action: one is the interest theory, and the other is the strain theory.

Interest theory is based on the view that actors are seen to strive to accomplish personal goals and gains through actions with rational, pragmatic and maximizing orientations. Thus, their action, their practices, are seen to be strategic moves or actions that seeks to achieve the best, or most rational, output for the actor. Although the interest theory is analytically useful, in the way that interest in personal gains can be a part of actors motivation, Ortner (1984:151) notes that the interest theory has met criticism, as well as from Ortner, for being a theory “too narrow” (ibid.). The theory fails to capture emotional considerations, such as fear, need, desire, suffering *et cetera*, that might have a role in decisions. Thus, as Ortner notes, it becomes too active, and too political.

Strain theory, according to Ortner (1984), is based on the view that actors considers the whole of their situations, the systems they are in, as they make choices regarding how they should act, how they should solve problems these systems can pose. In using the strain theory, Ortner (ibid.:151) notes that it requires an effort to analyze the system in itself and the social forces that can have an impact on the choices that actors make. This analysis will then provide a context in which the actors are situated. This context will give an understanding of the agents’ motives and what they want to achieve.

Motivations or motives for action do have temporal orientations into the future. This is seen in both the interest and the strain theory in that they foresee an outcome or a development. However, I want to explore how abstract ideas of what the future will look like are created and used as guides as to how actors should act as well (Austdal & Helgesen, 2015). One analytical concept that aims to explore how abstract ideas, or ideals, of the future are created and implemented to shape practices is the *imagination of the future*, as conceptualized by Lorenzo Cañas Bottos (2008). In Cañas Bottos monography, *Old Colony Mennonites*, he explores how imaginations of the future are used in the case of Mennonites. The Mennonites construct an idealized image of where their religious group ought to be in the future and use this as “guiding beacon” (ibid.:9) to legitimize the groups order. As such, his analyzis also contain certain elements of social control as authorities can enforce an imagination as a guiding one, and by that also enforcing how practices should be carried out. *Imagination of the future* also helps in analyzing the processes of structuration, i.e. how structures comes into being. Furthermore, imaginations of the future can be constructed individually by actors. As such, imaginations of the future can guide the actions of individual actors. The temporal orientations of such imaginations can also vary from daily, weekly, or yearly to generational.

Orientations into a future, and the construction of abstract ideas of the future, are also seen in the articles of Narotzky and Besnier (2014) and Vigh (2008) as well, albeit in the concepts of *hope*

(Narotzky & Besnier, 2014:10) and *narrative and social imaginaries* (Vigh, 2008:20). In his article, Vigh (ibid.) points out that people construct narratives that give a meaningful relationship between events and the experiences of actors in the past and their experiences of the present. These narratives, he notes, also point into the future. In the chronic crisis, where structures are constantly changing, actors are constantly imagining, anticipating and predicting future scenarios, such as how events and structures will unfold in the future. This *social imaginary*, as Vigh (ibid.) conceptualizes it, gives the actors a chance of envisioning what will come and act towards this abstract idea.

In their article, Narotzky and Besnier (2014) points out that economic practices also has a temporal orientation into the future, and like Vigh's (2008) idea of narratives, these are also framed by either past experiences or ideas of what it was like in the past. In the article, Narotzky and Besnier (2014) use the example of the "American Dream" to illustrate how actors can have aspirations that are framed by already established expectations, but also seeks to exceed these to achieve a better life. In some cases, migration can also be seen as a similar *hope*-based economic practice. In these cases, actors move geographically to other places in a hope that this will result in upwards social mobility.

Chapter four:

Greece in crisis: Historical and statistical contextualization

In this section of the thesis I aim to provide historical and regional contextualization in terms of Greece, Thessaloniki and the current economic crisis. This is a means to show the context and background in which my informants, fieldwork and research were situated. The section will therefore contain data and historical facts which can help shed light on the current situation in Thessaloniki and Greece as a whole.

The economic crisis: blame, background and origins

The economic crisis in Greece, is a term ascribed to a period following the late 2000s and that is carrying on into the present. In this period, Greece has received large media and scientific attention due to the country's involvement in a larger debt crisis, known as the Eurozone debt crisis, and the affects this crisis has had on both Greece itself and on political cooperation in Europe. The way in which Greece came to be involved in this, however, is a rather complex one as it has origins in different developments such as the finance industry of the United States, EU policies, and the policies of the Greek state. The way in which this crisis has come about is a contested subject and is crucial to how people in Greece position themselves in the situation, and to how people placed antipathy and sympathy towards agents, institutions and other countries.

One beginning of the tale is set to be the revelation of Greece's debt problem by the then newly elected prime minister George Papandreou in late 2009 (BBC, 2012; Knight, 2015a). By December of the same year, news broke out about Greece's debt level being a record-high in the country's modern history, at 300 billion Euros, then at a 113% of Greece's Gross Domestic Produce. Initially, the newly elected government blamed the previous government for this scandal, but shortly thereafter a report was published by the European Union condemning irregularities in Greece's accounting procedures. However, this crisis which first was specific to Greece eventually evolved to take part in a wider crisis in the region of Europe as other countries within the Eurozone started having problems with their debt, notably Ireland, Spain and Portugal (BBC, 2012).

As noted, the blame was initially put on previous holders of office. Yet, analysts have different views on how the crisis came about. One is the portrayal of the crisis in Greece and Europe as an aftermath of the collapse in the US stock market in 2007-2008 which impacted markets worldwide (Harvey, 2011; Mishkin, 2011; The Economist, 2013). This particular incident was caused by

bubbles in the housing markets across USA (Harvey, 2011), and American finance institutions' venture of capitalizing on subprime loans, i.e. loans issued to borrowers who were likely to default on said loans (The Economist, 2013). Due to this crash, the issuing of credit in the American market were brought to a halt which in turn affected markets worldwide, such as in Europe (Harvey, 2011; Mishkin, 2011). Analysts have also located the origins, and blame, of the crisis in the European single-currency, the Euro, and in the economic policies of both Greece and the European Union. As an example of this, timelines in the media which chronicle the Greek economic crisis can vary between starting off in the 1980's when Greece joined what was to become the European Union, then called the European Economic Community, and early 21st century, when Greece adopted the Euro as its currency (Knight, 2015a).

One statistic that supports the theory of the crisis having its roots in the economic policies of Greece is Greece's large historic employment of civil servants after the fall of the dictatorship in 1974. The statistic, as shown in Fouskas' (2013) analysis of Greece's political economy, shows that in 1961, before dictatorship, 1,4% of Greece's population worked as civil servants. By 1988 the number had risen to 5,7%. And in 2013, after three years of cuts in public spending, the number stood at 7,1%. Fouskas argues that this was a policy which was devised by the two historically largest parties of Greece, the center-right party Nea Dimokratia and the center-left party PASOK, in order to maintain power and votes among their constituency. However, the large recruitment of civil servants inhibited growth and demanded a high level borrowing (Fouskas, 2013). Consequently, the measures that were introduced after 2009 were aimed at slimming the public sector (Knight, 2015a:14).

Another focus of blame is the notion of corruption. Corruption, in the petty sense, is also covered in ethnography by Daniel Knight (2015b) on the subject of *fakelakis*, i.e. small envelopes containing money that was given to officials in public sector in return for favors. Fouskas (2013) however argues for the case of massive tax evasion by the "comprador bourgeoisie" (2013:135), i.e. businessmen that operated in trade between foreign companies and the Greek domestic market. This is a term which is referred to by Featherstone (2008:11) as well. Fouskas denotes these as "a faction of the economic elite" who acted as a "go-between for foreign companies in domestic and foreign trade" (2013:135), and Featherstone (2008:11) argues that these activities served foreign interests rather than domestic manufacturing. These types of activities could be the likes of Greek based companies importing cars or participating in investment ventures in foreign business. These activities, Fouskas (2013) argues, were given financial privileges and tax breaks to by the Greek government. Furthermore, some avoided tax completely by registering in tax havens.

The accession of Greece into the European Union, at the time called the European Economic Community, has also been criticized. Claims have been made that the accession of Greece was made knowingly that it would pose difficulties for the European Economic Community. At the time Greece was a “recently democratized, economically weak and politically volatile applicant” (Karamouzi, 2014). Historically, however, given the geopolitical environment concerning the Cold War, a possible conflict with Turkey and the hope of preserving democracy in Greece, the accession was justified and accepted (Karamouzi, 2014). In Greece, the popular support of European integration has since the accession ranked among the highest in the EU (Featherstone, 2011:198)

The pinnacle of the focus on the EU has been the entry into the Eurozone, whereby Greece adopted the Euro at the turn of the 21st century. According to the authors of an OECD 2016 report (OECD Publishing, 2016), the adoption of the Euro created increases in wage which was not proportionate to the country’s production. Within the Eurozone, before the crisis erupted in Greece and the rest of the Eurozone, there was a growing divergence between the surpluses of Germany and the Netherlands, and the deficits of Southern European who faced crisis, i.e. Greece, Spain and Portugal. (Featherstone, 2011) When Greece entered the Eurozone the country needed to comply with requirements of a government deficit ceiling of 3% of GDP. In reality the country’s deficit exceeded this ceiling upon entry (ibid.) as it was revealed that Greece had paid the American financial institution Goldman Sachs 3 billion Euros in order to manipulate Greece’s accounts (Fouskas, 2013).

The recession and austerity in Greece since 2009

After the revelation of Greece’s level of debt, the government acted by introducing austerity measures to handle their debt. In the immediate aftermath of the revelation of Greece’s debt levels, the then newly elected prime minister Papandreou insisted that no bailout would be needed (BBC, 2012). However, by May of 2010 the first bailout-loan of 110 billion Euros was agreed with the EU and the International Monetary Fund. As prerequisites for receiving this loan, Greece would have to undergo structural economic reforms and take austerity measures which met large waves of protest from the Greek citizens (Herzfeld, 2011; Theodossopoulos, 2013; Vegh, 2014). The austerity measures which were implemented involved cuts in the public sector, including getting rid of bonus payments for public sector workers, reducing holiday bonuses and banning increases on public sector salaries. Along with these measures government also increased the VAT from 21% to 23%, raised taxes on fuel, alcohol and tobacco and introduced fines for illegal construction. (BBC, 2010)

However, these measures did not yield the results that were expected. Five additional packages of austerity measures was introduced up until 2012. They introduced new taxes on pensions, income and real estate. There was a freeze on salary, as well as cuts in public services like health and defense, as well as in minimum wage (Vegh, 2014:302). Despite these efforts, further bailout-loans was needed and a second one of 130 billion Euro was agreed upon and finalized in March of 2012 (BBC, 2012). In 2015 a third bailout-loan of 86 billion Euros (Featherstone, 2016:56) was agreed upon. By 2016, new austerity measures had been introduced continuously, further cutting the public budget, while the country's debt in 2016 was at a 180% of its GDP (Smith, 2016).

In the economic crisis, statistics of The Hellenic Statistical Authority, ELSTAT (2016), shows that the total unemployment rate in Greece increased from numbering 7,3% in 2008 to a peak of 27,3% in 2013. Since the peak in 2013, the number of unemployed in Greece has slightly decreased by year, and the latest number in ELSTAT's report, of 2015, showed the number had decreased to 24,9%. The youth unemployment numbers of the same report, showed that the unemployment among the population aged between 15 and 29, has a similar development, although being consistently higher. In 2008, the youth unemployment rate stood at 15,5%. In the peak year 2013, this number had increased to 49,5%. From this peak, it decreased to 41,3% in 2015. Additional statistics presented by the BBC in 2015 (Rodgers & Stylianou, 2015) shows that Greek citizens became on average 40% poorer in the years from 2008 to 2013. Four million people in Greece was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2014. An estimate of 800 000 was without access to medical aid due to lack of insurance or poverty. In terms of brain drain, the population had declined by 400 000, 120 000 of which had been professionals, such as doctors, engineers or scientists. Of those who migrated, nine out of ten had a university degree, while 60% had a Master's degree. Another statistic that the authors highlight is that long-term unemployment in Greece is at a particularly high level. This they point out as significant as long-term unemployed over time becomes increasingly more difficult to employ (Rodgers & Stylianou, 2015).

In a report by the OECD from 2016 called *OECD Economic Surveys: Greece*, the authors write that "Greece scores low on several dimensions of well-being" (OECD Publishing, 2016:14), with "subjective well-being" being the lowest among the OECD countries (ibid.). This is in the report attributed to the increase risk of unemployment and uncertainty about the future and collapse in income and pensions.



Storefront window of a closed shop showing a rental sign. Private photography.

Overview of the crisis in Thessaloniki

During my fieldwork, the ongoing crisis was very visible in Thessaloniki at times due to strikes and protests. Such an event occurred early on in my fieldwork as government planned cuts in pensions and subsidies for farmers. As a response, farmer unions across Greece arranged a strike at a major scale. At this particular event, farmers blocked infrastructure in and around Thessaloniki with tractors. This action was repeated for several weeks, momentarily blocking access to airports and highways. Several other strikes, such as a general strike in the months of January and February, were also held. This left shops and petrol stations closed, as well certain infrastructures, buses and taxis were also brought to a halt. Frequent sights of closed shops and enterprises, with signs in the storefront windows reading *enoikiazetai* (in English: for rent), also reinforced the notion of an ongoing crisis.

In conversations, similar strikes as the ones mentioned above were remembered among informants. One event which was remembered was a strike carried out by electricians who cut the lights out in

many homes for hours during a summer. Another was a strike which was carried out by the cleaning personnel at the university which rendered hallways uncleaned, and garbage to pile up.

Another implication that the austerity measures had in Thessaloniki during my stay in the city was due to government obligations to sell off state assets. As a consequence of this, large-scale employers such as the regional airport of Macedonia and the industrial port in Thessaloniki was being privatized. In the course of my stay, the regional airport was sold to the German infrastructure company Frapport (I Kathimerini, 2015). The port was not sold in the course of my fieldwork, though bids at buying the port was being made at the time (I Kathimerini, 2016). These cases were reflected in conversations that took place, both conversations between informants and the conversations I had with informants.

Regarding the large presence of the higher educational sector in the city, I do not have records which presents implications on any of the academic institutions of Thessaloniki. However, a study by Moniarou-Papaconstantinou Koulouris and others (2014) has been published which focuses on the impacts of austerity measures on an academic institution in Athens. This study shows that the institute at the time experienced a decrease in public funding and shows how budget cuts have impacted the institute's ability to hire staff. This paper also concludes that austerity measures also impacted student performance and teaching quality at this institute (Koulouris et al., 2014).

Chapter five:

Students of Thessaloniki: pressure, implications of crisis and the prestige in education

Introduction: students of Thessaloniki

The students, who were the focus of my research, were by and large students who attended the Aristotle University, the largest of the two public universities in Thessaloniki. Their lives very much revolved around the premises of the university, where studied and went to class, as well as the buildings the halls and the green areas of the central campus, and *Leski*, the free meals and medical aid service of the university. If the students were from Thessaloniki, they lived in their homes with their family in the residential areas of Thessaloniki. These residential areas could be up to distances of miles away from the central commercial area and the campus. If the students had moved to the city, they lived closer to the center, in small shared apartment flats with other students, at a walking distance away from the campus, or if they met the criteria, they were housed in free student condos.

During their spare time, students would often gather together and they would pack the hangout spots, such as pedestrian streets of central Thessaloniki, the area around the Kamara, the ancient Roman landmark located centrally in Thessaloniki, or the three-kilometer-long pedestrian zone by the sea, Nea Paraglia. They often met at one of the many cafés or bars in the city center as well, meetings that could last for hours into the evenings and nights. Some cafés and bars also provided workplaces for many students who took on part time jobs. As the springtime descended on my period of fieldwork I also became urgently aware of how important Halkidiki was for the students as well. This peninsula, an hour by car away from Thessaloniki provided beaches that were popular leisure destinations among students.

Being students, “pressure”, and the implications of crisis

“When you’re done studying, the state doesn’t care about you anymore”

-Iordanis

Iordanis was one of the first to introduce me to how life as student in Thessaloniki was. Although he himself was not a student anymore, he had attained an education through the medical school at the Aristotle University. Now in his thirties, he had a job as a physician at a local hospital. The citation above tells quite a lot about how being a student can be perceived in Greece. Being enrolled at a state university, as the two large institutions of Thessaloniki, The Aristotle University and The

University of Macedonia, was, you could to some extent be provided of everything you needed by the university, like housing and meals, as well as free books and discount on bus fares. To Iordanis, this life was perceived as more carefree compared to how life would be the day they were no longer students. After the studies, they would be on their own, and would have to work in order to get by. Students were in this sense in a unique position, considering they did not need to worry as much about things like making a living as other members of the Greek civic society would. This perception was shared by informants who were students as well.

Angelika was at the present a student at the Aristotle University and had been so since 2008. She had initially been a student of journalism, and had attained a degree in journalism as well. After she had attained the degree she had a brief stint, and got first-hand experience of working as a journalist through internships. Now she had returned to life as a student and had begun on a second education. As such she had a reference point in how it was to be a student, contra how it was to be employed:

Angelika: “It’s a great gift that you don’t have to spend eight to ten hours doing something you’re not totally satisfied with, as happens with the majority of people who work. I don’t meet many people who are happy with their jobs and feel they can express themselves through their jobs.”

This perception of how it was to be a student highlighted a form of uniqueness to the situation of being a student as opposed to being employed at a workplace, seemingly leaving students as being better off than the other citizens who worked. However, many students had in some form or another been impacted by the later years’ economic crisis, either in a direct way of financial destitution, i.e. they or their family experienced being less financially able, or through the changes that could be perceived in their social environment. This was also dependent on the students’ economical background or geographical origin within Greece. Four areas in which these impacts were substantially felt were (1) through the action of moving from one’s family in order to attend university, (2) in the process of getting admitted into a higher educational institution, (3) through the decrease in public funding, or austerity measures which affected education, and (4) in the public services aimed at helping students with a low-income background, such as *Leski* and free student housing.

1. On the geographical origins of students

Iordanis had a way of categorizing students which helps illustrate the issues and impacts of student

mobility. He told me that I was likely to meet four “types” of students in Thessaloniki. These were the military students, the international students, the students “from” Thessaloniki, and the students “from outside of” Thessaloniki. The two last types concerned the students’ geographical origin which specifically proved to have an analytical value. The first of the two types were the students who originated from Thessaloniki, meaning they could live at home with their family while they studied. The other type was the students who had moved from other areas of Greece to Thessaloniki in order to attend university. The ones that came from other areas in Greece would not have the same opportunity to live at home while being students and, therefore, had to find their own places to live. As Iordanis explained, this effectively put a lot more economic pressure on the family of the students who moved to the city.

This factor was also emphasized by other informants. Angelika, as well as two other informants named Giorgos and Sophia, had all moved away from their families to attend university in Thessaloniki, and they all received, or had at one point in their studies received, financial support from their parents to be able to study. Sophia also specifically highlighted how the reliance on financial support from parents in some cases could pose an issue. She told how many families of students had felt the impacts of crisis, which either had left them economically pressured, or in some cases, due to loss of jobs, left them without an income. Sophia was therefore thankful that her parents had been able to keep their jobs as shop owners back at her home place. If they had not done so, it would have caused serious issues for her education.

State universities in Greece, such as the Aristotle University and the University of Macedonia, are free of charge. This means that it costs nothing for students to enter the universities or take degrees. However, students who moved away from their family in order to study would have costs in living away from home. Contrary to practices in other countries, taking up student loans was also unusual. The costs of studying therefore often ended up with the parents of students, which was implied by Iordanis. In other cases, students took up part-time jobs, or funded their lives as students through work. Angelika did this for example.

2. *Panellinies and the university admittance system of Greece*

University students in Greece are admitted into universities based on a score they receive in the *panellinies*, the final exams of *geniko lykeio*, the secondary educational level. The admittance system is in a way competitive. Admittance into an educational program is determined by the number and score level of applicants. Giorgos explained it in saying that the applicant with the

lowest score “set the bar” for the others, which meant that the others needed to achieve a minimum of that person's score in order to become admitted into the university program.

The issue that was raised when the admittance system was discussed, however, was the requirements needed to get a good score in the *panellinies*. Many informants stressed the need to have extracurricular private schooling as a basis for acquiring a good score. Lisa, who in turn took private classes in addition to attending public school, said about public schools that “... the system is not very well. We have to get some more lessons to cover that void”. Others, like Giorgos, explained private classes as an absolute necessity in order to have the education you wanted.

Private schooling amounts to a great expenditure for the families of students. Giorgos explained that the cost could be 5000€ a year for the classes. Lisa, who inquired her mother about the costs, put it in the range of 3000-4000€ a year. And although the cost of the private schooling had decreased by 10% the last years, the cost still amounted to approximately 10-15% of their family income. In turn the necessity of having private classes to obtain a good score out of the *panellinies* increased the pressure on family economies that to varying degrees had been impacted by crisis in Greece. Lisa explained her own family's experience with this pressure in this way:

Lisa: “Five years ago it was easier for my parents to send me to private schools. Now, it's not that easy for my [younger] brothers to go to a private school...”

Rune: “But you were able to have private education?”

Lisa: “Yes, I did. But the crisis had already hit, so it wasn't that easy for my parents to pay for it.”

As the economic conditions of families were increasingly pressured, this practice of paying for private schooling became increasingly harder to sustain by time. However, students still felt the need to fill gaps of knowledge that the public and free educational system could not provide them with. Similarly, students felt the need to take the private schooling as it made outlooks on the future look brighter.

3. *Cutbacks in education spending and expenses in studying*

Giorgos explained how he experienced impacts of cutbacks in public spending at the university. He had been attending university for four years. He commented, “if the funding was 100 percent when I started, now it's 20 percent”. Giorgos saw this decrease in funding through the state of the

university's appliances, for instances the computers, claiming "the computers are falling apart". Giorgos and Christos also remembered a strike that had taken place at the university some years ago. This particular strike, which was organized by the cleaners at the university, effectively left garbage and cleaning unattended. "It was a mess" Giorgos recalled, "the hallways were dirty...", "there were dogs in the class rooms", Christos quickly added.

Though, these strikes did not occur every day, others perceived the environment at the campus to be unclean. Lisa, for example, often described the environment at the campus as a "ghetto" and expressed a notion of embarrassment as she watched the paint scraps which came of the wall and broken windows around the buildings. However, public austerity measures also made students afraid of legislation of new policies which took away the rights that students had, such as the case was with Angelika.

In a period during my time in the field, Angelika was anxious about a law-proposal that would impact students who studied beyond their first degree, like herself. She had a degree in journalism and studied pedagogics now. Specifically, it was proposed to deny the students who studied beyond an attained degree free educational books. This was somewhat of a privilege to young university students. Not being eligible to receive free educational books meant Angelika would either need to borrow from a library, or deal with an extra expense of buying the needed books. Angelika also pointed out a few other proposals that would hit her as a "second-time" student. These were higher fares on public buses, which "first-time" students got on reduced cost. Also, Angelika explained that universities had recently reduced the number of times students could try to pass a course. Whereas before, the number of attempts she could have was unlimited. What all these measures add up to, is a way of making studying for an extended time more expensive and less attractive.

4. *Leski*

Leski is a shorthand term for *Panepistimiaki foititiki leskis*, which translated into English means "university students' club". *Leski* is an initiative run by the public Aristotle University to provide some of its students with free medical aid and free meals. Although, when students I talked to usually mentioned going to, or having been to, *Leski* they would refer to the free meal-services of the place. *Leski* was located in a building on an eastern corner of the central campus of Aristotle University. The University of Macedonia was also located close to *Leski*, on the opposite side of the heavily trafficked Odos Egnatia. Inside this building was a dining hall with a 1000 people capacity.

The food service at *Leski* served three meals every day. These services, however, were reserved to a group of students who formally applied for, and was granted permission to the meal services. This permission would be based on the income of families as shown on official tax records. If this level of income were too high, one would be prohibited of meal services. Though, among student informants, this level was not perceived as being a particularly low one. The meal services were, therefore, not a service that was reserved just to the ones in need of extra support while studying. Rather, students from relatively wealthier backgrounds could also apply and have access to this service.

There was a clear distinction between the students who originated from Thessaloniki, and the ones who did not, in the attendance at *Leski* as students who had moved away from their families attended more frequently. This distinction became more apparent on the weekends than during weekdays. In weekends the attendance at *Leski* was visibly lower, though queues still lined up from the staircase leading up to the service counter and snaked its way along the walls. As such, demand was high, even for the weekends. Angelika, who I visited *Leski* with on a few weekends, pointed out that the ones who were there were likely to be students who had moved to Thessaloniki, such as herself. The students who originated from Thessaloniki were more likely to stay at home and eat with their families in the weekend. This explanation was reflected in other informants as well. Lisa, a student whose family lived in Thessaloniki and who had permission to the meal services, explained that she “would go there between classes, instead of going home”, but she would go and eat with her family in the weekend. The meal services offered by *Leski* can therefore be seen as having a more significant meaning for the students who had moved away from their families. This was somehow also reflected in something Angelika said at the end of the semester. As she was finishing up her exams, she knew she still would be in Thessaloniki as she would have to work in the café where she had a part-time position. After the semester had ended and *Leski* had closed for the summer, she was slightly worried as to how she would provide herself with food when *Leski* had closed for the summer, as *Leski* usually was the place where she would go to eat.

Informants brought up a few issues that related the case of *Leski* to the later years’ economic crisis. Angelika informed that she observed an increase in people who attended the meal services at *Leski*. This, she explained was particularly visible during the breakfasts that *Leski* offered. Another issue that was raised was that *Leski* had seen an increasing number of attendees who were not students, an occurrence which subsequently led to in an increased presence of guards checking for students’ identification in the entrance of the building.

These two factors, the increase of both students and non-students were part in how crisis had manifested itself in the environment at *Leski*. On the one hand, the pressure that students felt economically had led more students to make use of the free meals that *Leski* provided. On the other hand, non-students, who would have felt the economic crisis in other ways, perhaps due to inaccessibility to work or financial destitution, had taken advantage of the access to free meals of *Leski* in order to reduce the costs of meals. These two factors also shows how the crisis had an impact on the actions of students and others in the city.

The prestige of educations in Greece

During the fieldwork I met Anna, 20. She, herself, was not a student, though she was a friend of a group of students that I spent time with. She was working for her father in his retailing business. When I asked her why she did not study, she answered that she had chosen not to study, and she also had this to say about those who studied:

“I think many Greeks want to be at the top, have the great jobs and be in the top positions. So, the reason why they are studying is to be able to be at that top. I sort of want to work my way up”

As such, it was not in Anna’s intention to be in the same position later on, but to move on up in a form of a social ladder. With time, Anna could be able to obtain better positions. However, she also meant that students usually studied in order to be able to reach those good positions and jobs faster. Higher educational degrees became a mediate step in order to have a chance of getting the jobs which were socially recognized as good.

In Anna’s statement, she also brings up the topic of the students’ motivations for getting a higher educational degree. To be able to obtain the jobs my informants perceived to be good, such as being a lawyer, being an engineer or an architect you would need the education for this. Sophia, for example, said she knew she wanted to become a lawyer since she was eleven years old, after she had been fascinated by seeing a lawyer speaking on the TV. Now, 22 years of age, she was halfway through completing a degree in law. This education would be a step on her way to achieve her goal of becoming a lawyer or a judge.

Among my informants there were a perception of some educations or institutions being better or more prestigious than others, although students still expressed that they chose out of personal interests. In Greece, this could be seen and measured through the rife competition it was to get

admitted into a program or institution. Scores from the *panellinies* would need to be higher in order to get admission into the more popular and prestigious programs or institutions. Giorgos, who got admitted into a technical education at the Aristotle University, remembered the period leading up to the *panellinies*. During the time leading up to the exams, “I would work day and night”, he said. He did not see his friends for a month, and emphasized how hard of a work it was to obtain a good score from the *panellinies*. In addition, his family had supported him by getting him the extracurricular private schooling which he saw as an absolute necessity in order for him to be able to study what he wanted. In the end, he finished with the best results in his village, a feat that got him a stipend from the Greek bank Eurobank of a 1000 Euros. This stipend was similarly given to students who had achieved the same thing as Giorgos at secondary level education institutions across the country. Talking to students who studied at the Aristotle University, many also emphasized that the institution was a really good one, and this was a motivation for many to move to Thessaloniki to study as well.

A question that needs to be answered is why informants sought, from their perspective, a good and prestigious education. Part of that answer is that they wanted better qualifications which would lead to better opportunities in the future. There was for example a conversation I had with Lisa in which she explained what the ideal education would be for her. In this conversation, she explained that she ideally would like to attain a degree in architecture from a university abroad. And in this explanation, she was quite specific about wanting to attain a degree from a university located either in the UK, or in the west or the north of the Europe. As I came from a northern country, she said this about how educations in the northern parts of Europe were perceived in Greece: “You are known for having great educations... Well, at least here you are viewed as some sort of educational gods”. For Lisa then, an education from a university abroad would be better than an education in Greece. She believed that a degree from a foreign university would become more valuable in the future if she were to apply for work in Greece. As she expressed it, applicants with a degree from a foreign university had a better chance of getting a job in Greece than the ones with a degree from a Greek university. Yet, Lisa was at the time not able to go to a university abroad, although she really wanted to, as the cost of attending a foreign university was too high.

The prestige aspect of education, or the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1994) of educations, also became apparent in resentments against politicians as well. At one occasion, Yannis, a friend of Lisa, brought up the case of a politician who had paid for his son’s expenses in order to get him into the best private schools in the country. Those who were seated around the table when Yannis brought up the topic viewed it as a despicable act. On the one hand, the politicians in Greece were

already targeted and much despised, and were characterized by many as corrupt, as liars, and as the reason Greece had ended up in the economic crisis in the first place. Resenting a politician for paying to enroll his son into prestigious educations, therefore, could serve as a means of distancing themselves from the politicians. On the other hand, the despise they expressed also revealed the obvious aspect of prestige between different kinds of education. In this case between private and public educations.

The aspect of prestige and symbolic capital in education in Greece is also visible in other ethnographic works. Such as in Dimitrios Gkintidis' (2016) recent ethnographic work on Greek EU specialist and technocrats. In his article, Gkintidis elaborates on his informants' wealthy and elitist backgrounds. Here, he elaborates that these informants "bore increased cultural and educational capital" (ibid.:481) as they had received and obtained education and degrees from private secondary education, prestigious universities and foreign doctorates.

Chapter six:

Geographical mobility, and spatialization, of students: Moving, housing and living

Introduction

Since university students in Greece were, for the most part, reliant on financial support from parents while they attained higher educational degrees, the students' economic backgrounds, i.e. their parents level of income, were important factors for how students could move to attain such degrees. In Thessaloniki, there were some measures which had been put in place to alleviate the costs of attending university in the city for students with a low-income background, such as *Leski*, free student housing, free books and reduced costs in transportation. However, the economic crisis, which had affected the economic circumstances of students' families, also affected the students who could not be covered by for example the free housing initiative. As well as this, a previous study shows that the impact that the economic crisis had on family economies had affected how students chose institutions as they would choose to attend institutions located closer to their families whereabouts (Koulouris et al., 2014).

In this section I will present cases that aim to show how crisis had impacted how students could geographically move to attain higher education. These cases also aim to show how crisis had impacted the ways in which students accommodated themselves, as well how they, inspired by political movements, found new ways in which they could accommodate themselves.

Moving to study

The students of Thessaloniki could be divided into two groups, one comprised of students who had moved to the city and away from their families. The other comprised of students who could live with their families in Thessaloniki. Some estimates given by informants estimated that half of all the students in Thessaloniki had moved from other places in Greece. It was not an unusual thing to move to study, and choices of moving regarded how good a certain education was perceived to be and how good scores you had out of *Panellinies*. However, crisis had impacted the ways in which students could geographically move which for some had rendered moving to study impossible.

Lisa had for instance been impacted this way. She was set to move from her home city of Thessaloniki to *Neapoli*² after graduating from *Geniko Lykeio*. However, after settling in *Neapoli*

² *Pseudonym used with the purpose of preserving the informants' anonymity*

where she had been enrolled at the university, she quickly found out that she wasn't able to live away from home. Her family could not support her stay financially, and she would need to find an additional job to manage the costs of living away from home. What the situation resolved in was that Lisa applied for a school transfer back to Thessaloniki, which she legally could do, due to economic and familial reasons. Vangelis, 20, had done the same. After moving away from Thessaloniki, he too found it economically difficult and then applied for, and was granted, a transfer back home since his father had recently been forced to close two shops that he had managed.

Though Lisa spoke of the education at Aristotle University as a good one, the inability to move away to study was one that she was unhappy about. It was her wish to move away from home in the first place. She spoke of how moving from her home would make her feel free. The fact that the economic crisis had left her family in a tight financial spot had hindered her in what it was she wanted to do. Lisa, although she had settled in Thessaloniki, still saw future possibilities of how she could achieve her goal of moving away from her family, such as moving into a flat with her sister. This had, though, implications for her family and for her. The family would meet consequences in the form of costs, and she would in case need to find work in order to finance this move.

Indeed, the economic crisis had affected how many students who had moved to Thessaloniki chose to accommodate themselves in general. When Angelika was looking back at the eight past years that she had lived in the city, she now saw more students, like herself, than before who decided to share flats, i.e. they moved together into apartments. This way, students who moved away from their families could share much of the costs of living, such as rents and heating.

Students of low-income backgrounds, and who had moved to Thessaloniki from other parts of the country, could also be housed for free in student condos. These were high-rise department located at different places in the city. However, you would need to be have low-income background in order to benefit from this initiative. According to informants these student condos had in the later years also been meeting a higher demand than before. Angelika had also applied for accommodation in the student condos. Yet, her family's income was higher than what was permitted to have access to this accommodation.

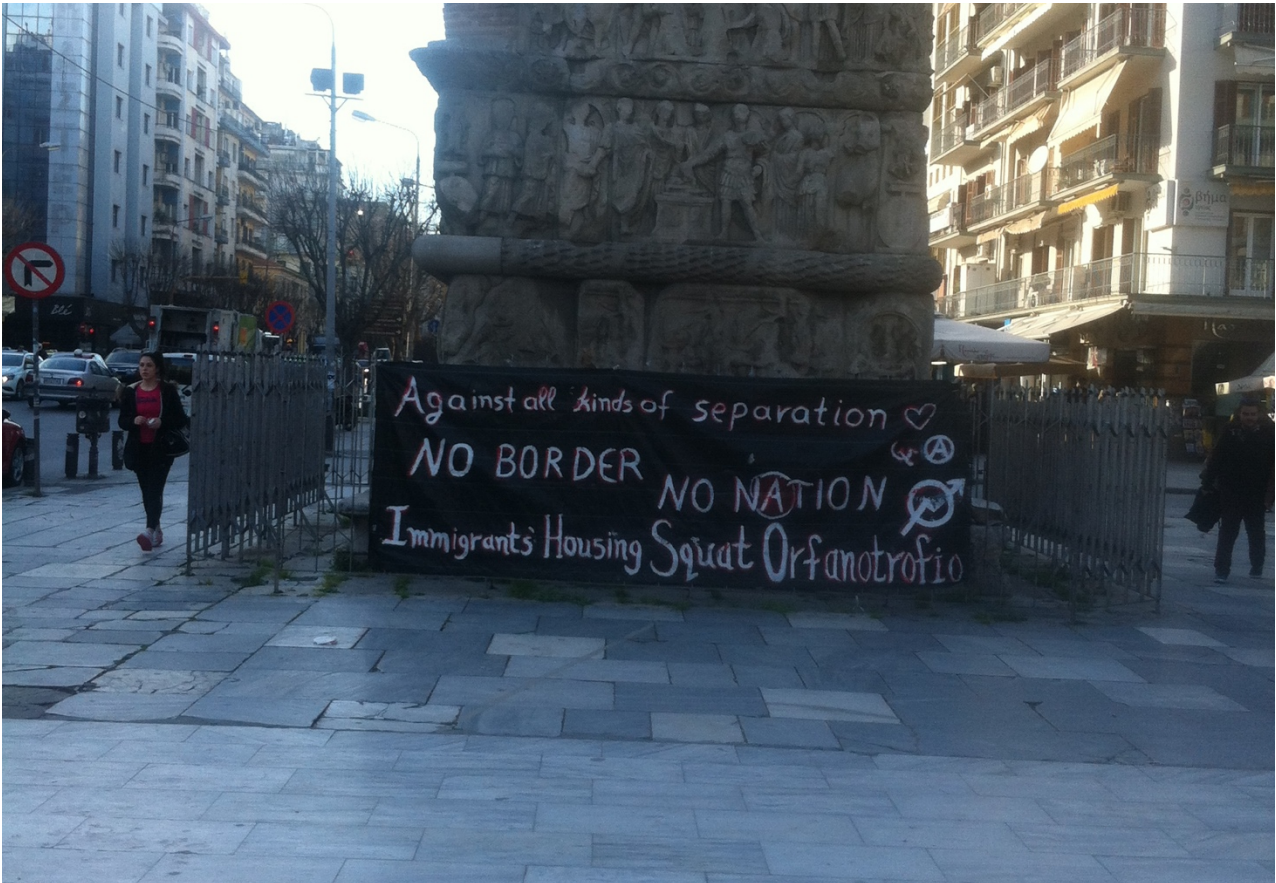
Katalypsi; a case of informal housing

Angelika sometimes spoke about how the crisis, in a way, had its "bright sides". What she was referring to was that crisis had led many, including herself and other students, to become more interested in informal housing initiatives, i.e. abandoned buildings that had been squatted and

repurposed to be social centers or homes. In Greek, these buildings were called *katalypsi*, and there were a range of these across the city. What these initiatives did was on the one hand to organize and operate spaces of socialization, with bars and scenes that could be used to stage theatrical pieces or concerts, but they also hosted activities such as workshops or classes. On the other hand, some were used to house people, homeless, and migrants, with the latter practice being center of much attention as Greece at the time faced a refugee crisis. These places, the places of socialization at least, were run on a principle they called *autoorganosis*, which can be translated into “self-organized” or “organizing themselves”. The organizational form somewhat resembles what Ko Kuwabara (2005) modeled in his *Bazaar*-form of organization. There was in principle nobody in particular who were in charge of operating the spaces. Instead they had open assemblies every week where everyone could meet and decide in plenum what activities they should host.

These activities, squatting and operating a *katalypsi* social space, were very politically motivated actions. This was for example communicated in the justifications for why specific buildings were squatted in the first place. One of these justifications, for example, was that one of the abandoned buildings was owned by the orthodox church. Angelika expressed that she therefore was very supportive of the action of squatting the building, as she expressed that she did not support how the church often rented buildings back to the state. The activities that were hosted were also free to participate in and held voluntarily. This way nobody profited monetarily from the activities. Angelika, and some friends of hers, supported this idea. When they socialized in the town they also practiced this idea spending as little money as possible on entrance fees, often going solely to the spaces which were run in this “free” way, as she conceptualized it, as in free to do as you pleased. This was seen also as means of being the opposite of the commercially run places, where you were not “free”, but rather expected to buy something if you visited.

Angelika, who already had moved away from her family to study in Thessaloniki, also decided to move into a *katalypsis*. This was a way to set this idealism to a practice in housing. She and the rest of the occupants squatted a building illegally, and did not pay rents, or other expenses, such as electricity. Before she moved in, Angelika explained that she had stayed at similar *katalypsi* houses for shorter periods before, such as in vacations when she had stayed in a different town to work. She knew what she was heading into, and she thought optimistically about living in one. However, as these houses did not necessarily attract only the idealists like herself, they also provided shelter, for homeless, drug addicts or undocumented immigrants. After a while she moved out as she did not feel safe, and she explained that she could not connect with the other occupants. However, she had



A banner in the Kamara-square advertising a katalypsi initiative housing migrants. Private photography.

plans of doing the same again another time in future. Although, this time it would have to be with friends of hers, people that she could trust.

For Angelika, the choice of moving into a *katalypsi* was in one way a “tactical” one in terms of rationality. Before she moved in she explained that:

“We don’t pay for the rent, water or the electricity. It’s a tactic that more and more people, young people, are thinking about. Because we don’t have a family to support, we are alone now, and we can manage even if it’s not the best situation, even if it’s not the clear environment... We can stand out and endure things done differently than what we’re used to.”

Katalypsi houses offered an opportunity of accommodation in which young people like Angelika, without obligations such as of a family, could live cheap, or even free. Before moving into this *katalypsi* house she had lived in a shared flat with other students. One that she had recently moved

to in order to save costs. However, this flat was still costing her 120 euros a month, and she did not feel content living at this space. She complained about the noise of traffic as this flat was located in the city center. She also complained about the old wooden doors in the flat which faced the street and could barely keep the wind out. Seeing a move in terms of economic rationality might therefore be in its place. There are however risks to take when living in an illegally occupied space, which is mainly due to the danger of eviction. However, this did not seem to bother Angelika's choice of living there. Neither were the occupants who operated the social spaces, although incidents of eviction occurred. For example, in the immediate aftermath of my stay in the city, a *katalypsi* building which housed migrants was cleared out by law-enforcement.

The move to the *katalypsi*, and the participations in the *katalypsi* socialization spaces can also be seen as deliberate political actions. These actions were in a way that seeking to change or oppose the "system" or the "hegemony" (Ortner 1984:155). The occupants' actions are opposing forms of commercialism by trying to establish a system where services are not valued in terms of money, but rather by acts of voluntarism. Rather than charging for services, participation in cultural, artistic, or educational activities were free.

Trough Angelika's actions, and the actions of the squatters, of informality they also refused to be subjects of the state. Firstly, by disobeying the law, in terms of occupying houses that did not, by right, belong to them. They also refused to be legally attached to the houses they squatted, as well as to participate in the state, by for example paying taxes.

Chapter seven:

Possibilities, certainty and uncertainty in employment, and the imagined future of work

Introduction: sentiments on unemployment and employment

To my informants, the large unemployment that was caused by the economic crisis was a huge factor in their experience of the economic crisis. The unemployment numbers, which were updated monthly and presented through the newspaper or other media, were often read as a parameter of which way the crisis was heading. Therefore, as my informants contemplated the statistics which showed rising unemployment numbers, they would say that the crisis was becoming worse. Indeed, unemployment was for many one of the worst facets of the economic crisis. According to the official statistics of ELSTAT (2016), in the timespan of five years, from 2008, the year before Greece's was hit by the economic crisis, to 2013, the total unemployment rate had grown four times larger. This, maybe more than anything else, defined the period they now lived in.

To students, factors such as unemployment and possibilities of work were important in different ways. Though they were full-time students, and they therefore spent most time and focus on studying, jobs and possibilities of work were important to them not only in the future, but also in the present. To some students, work was a way of financing their lives as students, or to contribute to financing their student lives. To others, work contributed to a way of attaining money they could spend on their spare time, such as for hobbies or travelling. And as mentioned another reason why the factor of work mattered to students was in terms of the future. After the studies were over, the majority expressed the need to get a job to make a living, and this was in some way why they were getting an education.

Working besides studying, and reasons to do so

Similar to *Leski*, working as a way of financing lives of students, also mattered more to the ones who had moved away from their families than to the ones who then to those who could stay at their family's place. Another factor at play in this was also how the family of a student could support the student financially. Sokratis, who was active in a communist political group at the campus of Aristotle University presented the case that students had to work because of the crisis. He emphasized that the economic crisis had caused such a shortage of money that some students could

not afford being students without earning money from working part of the time, and this was particularly the case of students who had moved to Thessaloniki.

Some however, contradictory to what Sokratis had depicted, presented working while studying as a personal choice. Angelika was one of them. Previously, while being a student, she had been receiving money from her parents in order to study away from home. Yet, now she did not and that was a choice that she had made:

“I think they [the parents] support us because it’s very important to them that we don’t stress ourselves to manage it all with work and university. But now I don’t want to receive their help, at least if I don’t need it. But for my everyday needs, I can manage, even if the crisis is making things a little harder now. (...) I took the support, of course, the first years of the studies. But now I don’t want to. I have to ask for money sometimes though, because I have run out of money, and it’s not that easy to find work for one or two months. But after finishing school, and a little before that, I start working. They can still support me, but not like before when I did my first degree.”

Though combining work and studies was a quite common thing to do among my informants, it seems as if students would more often rather prefer to be supported financially by their parents. This was, however, dependent on if the students’ families could afford to do so or not. A different case was Lisa, who moved away from Thessaloniki in order to study, but eventually moved back to Thessaloniki because her family couldn’t afford her studying in a different city. In Angelika’s case, however, she was self-assertive in the way that if she could possibly manage on her own, then she would try to do so. Although I did not encounter anyone else who had done this the same way as Angelika, there were similar attitudes towards receiving support which was expressed by others. Giorgos admittedly received support from his parents, as in the form of cash, almost every day since his father had an occupation in Thessaloniki. Yet, Giorgos said that students like him would chip in to the cost of him being a student when they were able to do so. Likewise, he was looking forward to a day when he would be able to work, and not be “fed” by his father, as he expressed it. The two of them, Angelika and Giorgos seemed to create an ethos against being overly reliant on parents for support.

Besides studying, Angelika had a part-time job at a café in which she earned the money that would pay for the rents and costs of being a student. As well as this part-time job, she was also taking courses that would grant her a license to work as a lifeguard, something she intended to work as

during the summertime. This put Angelika under an intense workload. She often complained about having to compromise on her efforts in school, often leaving her with no other time to study other than during the weekends. In the end, she sacrificed the lifeguard courses to be able to devote more time on her studies.

Temporary jobs in the summer season, such as working in the large and expanded tourist sector, also provided an income that could help finance the education of many students. Angelika also had experience with this kind of work activities:

“Half of the students are working in cafés, bars, *pizzas*, and in beach bars, because the summers are longer here. You can find a job in the tourist sector, in a hotel or a beach bar for six months. I was offered a position in Crete, which lasted from March until November. It’s a long period. And then you can pass the winter with this money. It’s not impossible.”

Working during the holidays, and benefitting from the booming tourist industry, could in this way be a strategic move students took in order to finance their life as students. Albeit, working during the summer only contributed to financing part of their expenses as students. To be able to manage on her own, Angelika therefore also worked part-time during the semester in a café.

Giorgos too took on jobs besides his studies to become an engineer. He had a keen interest in photography, something he at times expressed a slight interest of expanding into a profession. He was therefore taking on gigs from time to time where he took photos or filmed. One of these gigs he had got was to film a dance workshop and in return he would get paid a sum of money. However, this sum was a small one, according to him. For several weeks, he had to work on the material in the film, which he experienced as quite a large amount of work and not really worth its valor, though he expressed that in one way, it paid off: “All this work for 50 euros is almost nonsense. I wanted the experience, however, so I’d put the same amount of work in it, even if it was for free”.

This interest in gaining experience within a field can, as I see it, be elaborated in two ways. One is in the way that it enhanced Giorgos understanding of what working in this particular field, i.e. photography and film, was like, and that he gain more experience. Secondly, there might be the case that gaining experience would grant him more opportunities, because of reputation, in working in the field. This way the experience could also give him access to either larger, more profitable or more prestigious gigs. This aspect of experience might also help in analyzing how students coped with an uncertain future jobs market.

Narratives of informality and overworking

In stories and narratives of the present job market, the factor of illegalities, informalities or irregularities, was noticeable. Many informants expressed how the crisis was leading them to a job market where there existed, to a much larger degree than before, a large amount of “black”, or informal or “unofficial”, labor market. This was also combined with a fear of how the economic crisis had led to much more exploitation in the jobs market. Iordanis gave examples of which forms these processes could take. He expressed that more often than before, job seekers would be hired “unofficially”. By this he implied that officially, there was a law that required companies to pay securities, like medical insurance, when hiring. However, in hiring people “unofficially”, this law would be circumvented to save costs. Similar to these cases, there were also cases of applicants who would cover the fact that they were educated, Iordanis told me. This would, for the companies who hired, mean that they could valorize the work of these applicants less. For the applicants, this was a means of being “easier to hire”.

Konstantina, 20, who was studying to become a chef, shared a story from a summer job she had the previous summer. This was a case that illustrated the informalities at play. She had a job working in a kitchen on an island which was largely visited by tourist. In one incident, she had an accident with one of the knives which left her with a cut in her hand. The seriousness of this injury, meant that she needed medical attention. Her manager’s response to this was to pay for the immediate treatment out of his own pocket. Konstantina was in this case not hired formally, in which case she would be covered by insurance. However, when Konstantina shared this story with me, Vangelis and Anna she did not seem too worry about the fact that she was without this insurance when she had the accident. The others around the table did not bother too much about the work illegality either.

In a similar conversation I had with Sophia, who was a law-student, she also frowned upon situations such as illegal hiring, and so did Iordanis. Yet, Sophia indicated that these applicants lacked choices. “They do not really have the choice,” she said. In this view, the circumstances had left the ones who sought means to make a living, with few choices but to be exploited. However, there is a case to be made as to how job seekers could seek experience through undesirable work conditions.

On a similar topic of exploitation, or irregularities, was the cases of being overworked and of unpaid internships. This did not evoke the same victimized notions. Konstantina, for example, had gotten an internship at a kitchen in Thessaloniki, as she was schooled to become a cook. The

“abnormal” in Konstantina’s specific case was however that her internship was paid. She knew plenty of others who would need to go out in unpaid internships. What worried her was that she might become overworked, as the working hours were long. Yet, after having complained about the impending workload, she assured herself and us, me, Vangelis, Anna, and Anna’s mother, who sat in the car with her that it’s was ok, “it’s a good thing to have a job. It’s an honorable thing to do, to work”.

Sophia too, who was about to enter her last year of law education, also imagined that she would have to do an unpaid practice or internship after graduating. During this practice, she told me, she would need to find some other work as well. She explained that in similar cases it was usual to work part time in bars or restaurants as waitresses, kitchen staff, bartenders or the likes on the side.

In these cases it might be argued that experience was considered a form of value, i.e. it could give a return in the future. As harsh as the conditions might be, informants seemed to have found it valuable to attain experience as it would bolster their résumé and justifying the working conditions they would have to endure. However, this can easily be interpreted the other way around since it produced and reproduced an acceptance of the bad working conditions.

Wise, and unwise, choices of education

One evening at a café in central Thessaloniki I met a group of female students. Most of the women studied law at the Aristotle University. Eager to find out why they had settled for the education in law, I asked one of the women. The answer she came up with was that it was a “practical” choice. This woman had also taken interest in my field of social anthropology, and followed up shortly: “I would have liked to study a social science, or the likes... But law was a bit more practical. I thought it might be easier to find work afterwards”.

It was obvious that some students carried a perception of what types of education would yield a better result in the aftermath, when students would need to apply for work. Scarcity of work, had also impacted the ways in which this abovementioned “practicality”, or usefulness, of an education became important. In turn this impacted the way in which students had chosen what to study or get a degree in. This can be seen as a way of imagining the future (Cañas Bottos, 2008). In this way constructing abstract idea of future structures, such as a future jobs market, became an impact on the students’ choices of education.

Giorgos too had based his choice of education in a similar way. He was now in his fourth year of his five year long education. Giorgos stated two reasons for why he had chosen to study the field of engineering that he studied. One was that the choice reflected his interest in math. The other was that he, through an engineering education, would be taught a range of technical fields, such as telecommunications, computer science and energy. “It will look good on the papers”, Giorgos said. This range of proficiencies, he reckoned, would increase his chances of getting a job after graduating.

In the highly scarce and uncertain job market, it had also been highlighted which choices of education that would be unwise, or unpractical, in terms of the future. These choices of educations were singled out as the ones that were too specified in their curriculum and with too few fields to which it could be applicable. This was also a consideration Giorgos had in terms of his education. His could be applicable in many fields, and therefore the range of possible future job options was perceived to be larger.

Greece or abroad: on migrating for work

Due to the scarcity of workplaces, many had migrated to work in other European countries as this provided a possibility of making a living. Like the mother in *chapter one*, who had experienced her children moving as a direct consequence of the job shortage, so to had other informants also seen friends and family departing.

Iordanis was one of them. He had seen the departure of his friend from university days. His friend held a degree in economics, yet he was unable to find work in Greece. Now, he had moved to Budapest and held an occupation as a stockbroker. The salary of this job, according to Iordanis, was “ok”. It matched others in Hungary, but he would have had a higher salary had he found a similar position in Greece. Yet, the shortage of opportunities at home led him to seek opportunity elsewhere.

For students however, leaving the country to work, was not a part of their imagination of the future. Although they imagined a scarcity of job opportunities in the future, that did not impact their plans in terms of mobility. For Sophia, the case was that she saw no options outside of Greece. As she studied law in Greece, she would be trained in Greek laws. These would not be of any use if she tried to find work as a lawyer, or the likes, abroad, she said. “Anyway”, she put it, she would “try to make it in Greece” and, ideally, “become a judge”. Yet, crisis had affected the work for lawyers the past years. She explained how due to the costs to visit a lawyer, legal services had become lesser

attractive and a very last resort for many. Unions, through which lawyers worked and got paid, had also been dissolved in the later years. Hence, many lawyers had lost their workplaces. However, she believed that most of the Greek students opposed the idea of migrating for work. In any case this would be a last resort.

Of the few who had plans on migrating was Dimitrios. He told me that he would during the next weeks have a job interview in England. Dimitrios had graduated from Aristotle University with a Masters Degree in Agricultural Studies a few years ago. However, when I asked him why he was moving to England to work, he simply answered that he did so “because of the obligatory military service in Greece”. He was moving to evade the conscription to the Greek armed forces, which was mandatory for Greek men.

Similarly, Lisa also had plans on someday to live abroad. But, what was pulling her towards this was not better opportunities for work, or that she imagined it as being scarce of work in Greece in the future. Rather, it was the thought of living abroad in itself pulled her towards foreign countries. She was tired of living in the environment in Greece and Thessaloniki, of the heat, and of the people, she said. She imagined that she would have a more pleasant experience living abroad than back home.

As Dimitrios and Lisa are examples of, there are various reasons for wanting to leave which can be other than scarcity of work. These two in particular illustrated a reservation against the state of affairs in Greece. Dimitrios on the one hand wanted to escape the conscription which was required by law. Thus, it was certain legal circumstances which became the push factor. Lisa on the other hand blamed the physical and social environment of Greece as a push factor.

Chapter eight:

The physical embodiment of the crisis

“Why are we talking about the crisis? Can’t we talk about something nicer?”

- Konstantina

Introduction: the economic crisis as manifested in the body

The economic crisis in Greece also has a way of impacting bodies. Feelings of empathy, anger or depression were expressed as being important factors as to how informants experienced crisis. There have been ethnographic studies linking the economic crisis to the prevalence of depression and suicides in Greece, (such as Knight, 2013) and statistics have also shown a significant increase in suicides during the crisis (Rodgers & Stylianou, 2015). Similarly, among my informants, the economic crisis was to blame as for why people had troubles with addiction, depression, stress or changes in mood in general.

One of the first things Angelika said about the crisis was that it had caused friends of hers to turn to destructive drugs. She said they had become reliable on sleeping pills and anti-depressants. During the time of my fieldwork Angelika was also, for a while, frequently visiting the hospital where a friend of hers had received treatment after an overdose on anti-depressants. This must have emerged out of the crisis, she meant. She reckoned the crisis had created a more stressing situation that people were unable to cope with.

Iordanis had also observed how former students who had recently been graduated from their studies took on a certain mood. They were nervous and edgy, he said. If Iordanis tried to pull a joke on them they did not take lightly to it, but rather snapped back, he explained. This was part of what he explained as the experience of not being a student anymore. They would now have to make a living on their own. They experienced that the state did not care about them anymore. Yet, it was also an experience of the crisis. The economic crisis had made it harder for people to attune from being a student to becoming a member of civic society and who needed to work.

In these ways, informants saw how the circumstances in which they lived had an impact on the bodies and minds of the people that surrounded them. Talks of crisis evoked an array of feelings in my informants, from apathy to anger. The economic crisis had in many ways become embodied in

my informants in a way that it had shaped how they felt about certain issues, such as employment, homelessness or politics, and how they perceived the environment around them, as well as what they saw in other human beings.

Crisis as expressed through temporal perspectives

One time I asked Giorgos if he could recall it being different living “before” the economic crisis struck. The way he described it sounded, to me, as if they had been relatively freer in economic ways. He said: “Before, when I got my first guitar, my dad bought it to me as a gift... The same thing when I got my first camera... If we wanted to, we took a trip to Athens. It’s not like that anymore”. To this he also added the aspect of future in relations to his little sister: “I could get support to learn German. My sister, who’s seven years younger than me, that won’t happen to her.”

Similar sentiments referenced how the present was distinguishable from before. This was, for example, part of the explanation on how students, and their families, experienced to be more economically pressured than before, or experiences such as Lisa’s on how attaining private schooling had become harder. Often the sentiments of experiences of crisis dealt with what informants could not do now but that they could do before. Thus it highlighted, to follow Narotzky and Besnier’s (2014) conceptualization, the break between what was possible in periods of stability and how the same was made harder to follow through, at times impossible, in times of crisis.

However, sentiments about the economic crisis also had temporal orientations into the future. For example, through sentiments of hope, and a hope of change. And this hope had for many been invested in the politics. In 2015, the year before my fieldwork, there had been a historical change in the terms of the political governance of Greece. For the last 40 years, government had in general taken turns between having PASOK, *The Panhellenic Socialist Movement*, or Nea Dimokratia, a liberal-conservative political party, in office. These had in the previous forty years been the two historically largest political parties. In 2015, a new political party SYRIZA, *The Coalition of the Radical Left*, were elected into the office. SYRIZA had been characterized as being anti-austerity in a sense that they wanted an end to the austerity measures. In the summer of 2015, the government, with SYRIZA in office, held a referendum where people could vote simply either “yes” or “no” to the terms of a proposed third bailout loan from the EU and the IMF. The result was a victory of “no”. However, the loan deal still went through with terms that were popularly considered to be worse than what had been originally proposed.

Lisa experienced that this whole process had intensified the notion of crisis among students:

Rune: Do students talk about the economic crisis?

Lisa: They used to talk more about it, like last year. Now it's not that big of a deal. We do talk about it but it's more like we are used to it.

Rune: What was different last year?

Lisa: There was the change from right wing to left wing in government. There was a lot of hope. We thought the left wing would make a difference. I don't know if it made a difference or if it's the same thing, but we are disappointed, and we are used to being disappointed so we don't expect too much now.

The answer seems to indicate that crisis had become somewhat mundane. Instead of being a factor of exception, the economic crisis had become a part of their expectation, both in life and in how things were supposed to be. This form of impact had also influenced the future expectations of Sophia and Giorgos. They did not expect the conditions or economic circumstances in Greece to become better over time, rather they imagined that it would get worse. Regarding the statistics and implications that the crisis had produced, they expected that poverty would be widespread, that social inequality would become larger, and that workers would be more exploited. Thus, they had also, as Vigh (2008) conceptualizes chronic crisis, normalized the notion of being in a crisis, and that the crisis they experienced would last.

The impact on mood, and blaming in the crisis

Many informants seemed to see the many homeless and beggars on the streets as a symbol of Greece in crisis. None of my informants in the research were so deeply affected by the crisis that it had left them on the streets begging. Yet, my informants felt affected by the sight and prevalence of homeless people in the streets of Thessaloniki. Upon these sights, many informants felt impacted emotionally. Angelika, for instance expressed it this way:

Rune: Have you personally felt or been affected by the crisis?

Angelika: Yes, of course. Everyone is affected. Also me. It's psychological. Even if you don't feel the despair of a person who doesn't have anywhere to sleep, you still get affected. There is this thing we call empathy. If you go out and see people stressed out and not knowing what to do, people like a father or mother of a family who is in charge to feed their children... There is an effect when you go out in the street.

Another student, Sophia, made a similar remark. She said that the economic crisis was “asphyxiating”. She gave an example saying: “you can sit in a café and enjoy yourself, but then suddenly, someone who has not eaten for three days comes by and asks for a bit of money. It’s really sad”. Another, Lisa, also once mentioned that she felt the constraints of economic crisis made her less able to give money to homeless and beggars in the streets than she wanted. She expressed that in the past, she would have given more to the beggars in the street.

These sentiments communicated how sights informants connected to economic crisis impacted the way they felt. Sights in the informants’ environment of homelessness and destitution created reactions of empathy, sadness and depression. In this way crisis impacted emotionally and evoked bodily reactions. As well as the emotional reactions of empathy, sadness and depression, anger was another evident emotional reaction which could be experienced in the field.

At one point I was listening to Maria, an unemployed woman in her fifties. She was immensely frustrated over having to pay the continuously increasing taxes and costs of living. Taxes and costs which were already at a level way beyond what she could financially manage. Her anger was towards the present SYRIZA government. There were many who in recent time had been angered by the new government. Dimitrios said: “They told us they would be socialist. They’re not.” Similarly, Maria blamed the government for the frustrating situation she was in. She told how friends of her felt the same way. A friend of hers had turned off the television which screened a political debate angered by the lies he heard them telling. Maria, said that politicians were like that, “they’re a bunch of liars!” she implied. However, she continued: “They have always been liars, but these ones [SYRIZA] are the worst!”.

These sentiments revealed a sense of history. Many informants viewed the crisis as a result of Greek politicians’ inability to govern properly throughout the modern history of Greece. Narratives often highlighted how politicians were morally bankrupt human beings, often highlighted by my informants through expressions of corruption and lies. Therefore, politicians became central targets of blame for what informants now experienced. Politicians throughout history was also blamed in these expressions. This was also evident in a conversation I had with the butcher at the local super market. On the topic of politicians, the butcher said, “it’s all a mess! The last six years are only the cherry on top of the cake. This has been going on for forty years!” Thereby he both explained the crisis as a result of a forty-year long history, a period starting with the birth of modern democracy in Greece, and he also denoted how politicians had never changed. Politicians were just as bad now as they had ever been.

The same kind of sentiments had also been adopted by the informants of mine who were students. Students had also internalized a view of politicians as morally corrupt human beings and people who could not be trusted on their word. Sophia, for example, explained how she viewed the politics as cycles where the people had high hopes, yet the politicians ended up with scandals. “It has been this way for forty years”, she too added.

This resentment, anger with and blaming of politicians throughout history helps to explain what Lisa said about how people were used to being disappointed. She added thereby to a sense of a “normalization” of the crisis (Vigh, 2008). This normalization and internalization might also help explain how students expressed their views on politicians in the case of the politicians at the campus.

Students and politics

Walking up to one of the faculty buildings of the Aristotle University, one will immediately notice banners overarching the entrance, and large windows partially covered on the inside with posters. The banners and posters read, in large, bold Greek letters, texts of political opinions or protest. These banners and posters belonged to political groups of the campus. They were groups of politically engaged students who were active in the student unions of the University. These were politically engaged students who were voted in in the student unions and who advocated the views of his or her political groups.

These political groups mirrored the already established political parties, which could be found for example in the Greek parliament. Therefore, they had the same core values as the established parties they mirrored and they also advocated for the same kind of politics as the established parties. This was part of the problem with the political group as Lisa, Angelika and Sophia expressed it, and reasons for why they did not want to become an active part in supporting or participating with these political groups.

At one point, Sophia expressed that when she spoke to members of these political groups, she didn't know if she was talking to a person or a politician. Therefore, she was uncertain whether that person really was talking to her as a person or because the member wanted her vote or not. On a similar note, Angelika expressed that she had strong reservations against attending a music festival that was hosted by a student political group. She was afraid that by paying the entrance fee to this festival she might end up supporting their political activities.

Considering how the students had internalized a very critical view of politics, the acts of not wanting to participate or support these groups, might be an expression of this internalized view. This is a similar process what Bourdieu (1977) defines in his concept of habitus, i.e. how structures become embodied and internalized by human beings. Likewise, my student informants had embodied an environment of the economic crisis. The way in which students have internalized a perception of politicians as not worthy of their trust, or of their support, can be seen as what influences their choices of action. This way crisis, blaming politicians for the crisis and the political circumstances can be seen to shape the actions students carry out, such as reacting negatively to politicians at the campus. These particular actions could help them distance themselves from the student politicians, who belonged to groups who mirrored groups that had become the central targets of blame for the situation in Greece.

Chapter nine:

Towards an understanding of the impact

The experience: temporality in the economic crisis

In the previous four chapters I have elaborated how the crisis in Greece was experienced and expressed among my informants. Bearing in mind these experiences, how can the crisis they experienced be understood? In my theoretical overview, I referenced a range of understandings of the concept of crisis and economic crisis that have been used in historical (Koselleck, 2006 [1972-97]) and anthropological (Harvey, 2011; Narotzky & Besnier, 2014; Vigh, 2008) perspectives. These perspectives are helpful in reaching towards an understanding of crisis in the context of students in Thessaloniki.

For the students, as well as for other informants, the experience of crisis was expressed in terms of temporality as it was expressed that there was a period before, and a period in the crisis. Thus, it became a breach in time where the period before 2009, or 2010, represented wholly different conditions, environments and circumstances, as well as it represented a different way of life than the period after. In the period after the breach, the accustomed way of doing things had become difficult to follow through with because of different economic circumstances. An impact that since the crisis began had increased in pressure. This is for example expressed in the sentiments of students on what they or their families could do in the past, before the crisis, which they now could not or met serious friction. In the example of Giorgos, his family could take trips to Athens whenever they wanted to, and Giorgos could take German lessons at the expense of his parents in the period before the crisis. For his younger sister, who were at the same point in life as Giorgos was then, yet who now was living in the time of crisis, circumstances had changed. Because of the economic pressure that Giorgos' family now was experiencing, his sister would not be able to experience the same things he did when he was her age. Lisa also expressed that she would be able to give more money to the beggars if it had not been for the economic crisis.

Informants see the difference between these two periods in their physical environment. Now, more than before, Angelika saw friends succumb to instances of drug reliance. She also saw more students now dining at *Leski* than what was the case before, as well as she saw a difference in how students housed themselves. Iordanis saw the students graduate and be visibly stressed in a way

which had not been the case before. Informants also saw how the crisis had led to more homeless people and increase in cases of informal or illegal working conditions.

Finally, they experienced the impacts in processes such as moving to study, or in becoming admitted into higher education. Because of the economic pressure caused by economic crisis, more families found it difficult to support their children in moving away to study. Students who moved therefore had to finance their studies and would need to take on jobs. Similarly, more families found it difficult to pay for the private education their children needed in order to achieve a good score out of the *panellinies*.

Following the conceptualization of crisis of Narotzky and Besnier (2014), the informants experienced a period of crisis as it contrasted a period of stability. The structural features of the period of stability, i.e. economic growth, more possibilities in work, stable incomes, lower taxes and lower costs, had enabled a way of life and of doing things that informants remembered. In the period of crisis these structural features had changed, this had posed difficulties on this way of life and of doing things.

According to informants, this change had come about because of *governance*. This in a sense that the government actively imposed measures to handle the level of public debt, and to stabilize the circumstances in the crisis, but also governance in the sense that informants blamed political rulers throughout time of the crisis that governments, since 2010, now was trying to stabilize. Despite the efforts of stabilizing, informants did not see effects that made circumstances any better for them or for the community at a whole. Rather, many saw the measures as making matters worse. Projecting into the future, crisis had become what was expected. Thus, following Vigh's (2008) concept of chronic crisis, the condition of instability had been normalized to students.

The impacts on practices

In researching the impacts of the economic crisis of Greece among students, what apparently becomes the most apparent factor is how it was the crisis that had impacted the students' practices, i.e. the new economic conditions which had come about in the economic crisis impacted how the students felt and acted. Considering practice-theory, and following Ortner's (1984) concepts, this is a process where the system in a way that it had an impact on how practices could be carried out. This process can in my case be seen in two ways: (1) the economic crisis, Greece's level of public debt, and the austerity measures that the government in Greece had implemented to stabilize this level of debt, had created a new set of economic circumstances. This new set of economic

circumstances is for example in the form of tax hikes, slashed incomes or of the opportunities of work and income that had vanished. These economic circumstances had in turn impacted the economies of the families of many students. This impact had in turn impacted the lives of students and affected the way they could achieve admission into higher educational institutions, the way they could finance their lives as they attained higher educational degrees, and the way they could geographically move to achieve higher educations. (2) The economic crisis, the level of public debt, and the austerity measures, had also created a new form of environment that my informants could perceive. In this environment, my informants perceived an increase of homeless, of financially destitute, of individuals coping with stress and pressure. As well as this, my informants also saw increases in unemployment, as well as in informal and illegal employment. This environment had produced emotions of anger, depression and blame. Students internalized and embodied this environment as part of their *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977).

Considering how the economic crisis had impacted the practices of attaining higher educational degrees, i.e. getting a good score to higher education, in financing their lives as students, and in moving geographically to attain a higher education, the crisis had in many ways had an impact on practices that the students had been accustomed to. One of those practices was the extracurricular private schooling that students expressed was necessary in order to be able to achieve the best score possible out of the *panellinies* and have a better shot at being admitted to the educational program they wanted. Likewise, moving from the family to study, if the educational institution was located in a different city as well as being financially supported by parents while studying. However, the economic crisis had made these practices harder, in some cases impossible, to carry out, or at least seriously affected how these practices could be carried out. The free-of-charge student condos being a case of the latter description. If students were without the economic means necessary to be housed privately, the university would provide you with accommodation. However, in the times of crisis there was reportedly a much larger demand of this type of accommodation than what the case had been in previous years. Yet, it was still obvious that it was these usual ways of doing things which still were being carried out. To follow Ortner (1984), this system could largely be reproduced, although the economic circumstances had made this reproduction harder. In some cases however, the new economic circumstances in the economic crisis, had been of such a degree that they had seriously impacted the way students could move geographically. Economic circumstances had for example impacted Lisa in this way. She could not move from her family to attain a degree as it costed her family too much. As a result she applied to be transferred to the university of her home town. Although it should be mentioned that the legal mechanisms were already in place to allow such a transfer.

In the way that my informants and my student informants had internalized and embodied an environment of crisis, i.e. the sights, feelings and the change in economic circumstance and opportunities in employment, in their *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977), this process reveal a set of impacts which is effective in different areas. One of these areas is the labor market. The impact that the economic crisis had on the labor market was for more than a few what, more or less, defined how Greece was in a crisis. This impact was notable as it had increased the level unemployment to become up to four times higher in the years of crisis. This was in some of my informants' experiences detrimental as it pushed friends and family to move abroad for work opportunities. It had caused losses of income and many into uncertainty. The loss of work opportunities had in some ways also created an acceptance to irregularities in the employment processes, i.e. how job applicants accepted a lower valorization of their work than what they potentially could be offered or how they accepted losing privileges such as medical insurance. In this impact on job markets and employment, there can be a case of both structures, especially the structures in a crisis, shaping on practices, and *vice versa*, practices that are shaping structures.

Through the years of economic crisis, there has undoubtedly been massive changes in the structures regarding the job market and employment in Greece. One of these is of course in the aim of the austerity measures in slimming the public sector, which to many in this sector meant that they would lose work and income opportunities. The other is the impact the economic crisis had on the private sector. The impacts that the economic crisis had caused in the private sector was by my informants blamed on austerity measures such as tax hikes. The narrative here was that companies who was seeking cuts in their expenses hired employees "unofficially", in doing so they escaped paying "securities", such as medical insurances, which they were obliged by law to do. The companies who did this created job opportunities, albeit illegally, and the applicants were in this sense victims. This could in turn explain Sophia's comment on this issue: "They don't really have a choice". The ones who sought work had to take these opportunities. But this can also be seen as a process that goes the other way. In this way of seeing this process the job seekers accepted the loss of medical insurance, or they hid educational degrees when they had one to make themselves "easier to hire" as these jobs present opportunities to them. In these ways, the job seekers can produce and reproduce a general acceptance of irregular working conditions.

My student informants also emphasized other forms of irregular conditions regarding work, such as long working hours, overworking, small wages as well unpaid internships. Yet, those students also chose to apply and work in these conditions. These work opportunities could offer other forms of

value than money to the students, such as experience. This experience could in turn be valuable for the future.

The past, the present, and the future

As Vigh (2008) has pointed out, people construct narratives that give a meaningful relationship between their past and their present. In my case, this is seen on a personal level in the narrative of Giorgos who expressed that he worked “day and night” to achieve a good score out of *panellinies*, and to achieve being admitted into his favored university program where he now was. As well as these personal experiences, these narratives are also seen on in how people blamed past events for the situation they were in. Specifically, my informants blamed the governments of the past. The acts of moral corruption of the past was, to my informants, the reason why their friends and family was moving abroad for work, why they now experienced homelessness in the streets, as well as why friends and colleagues experienced stress and depression.

These narratives point to the future as well. My student informants had internalized both a view of politicians throughout modern Greek history as morally corrupt human beings, but also a view that the politicians of today were no better than what they had been in the past. Lisa explained how students in her environment had invested a lot of hope in SYRIZA the year before. These students hoped that things would change, that things would get better. But in the end, Lisa and her fellow students struggled to find any changes this shift in governance had produced. Hence, they were disappointed, as Lisa expressed, but by now they were used to being disappointed and didn’t “expect too much”. This internalized view of politicians doesn’t only produce antipathy towards politicians, be it professional or student politicians, and actions of disengagement. This internalized view also affects the way students see the development of the crisis and how they imagine what the future will look like in terms of employment as well.

Both Sophia and Giorgos expected that the economic crisis would lead to a situation that was worse than what it was now. In this imagined situation, there would still be widespread economic inequalities and poverty, and exploitation would be rife. However, both Sophia and Giorgos had intentions of staying in Greece and find work within their fields of education, law and engineering. For Sophia, this meant that she would have to go into an unpaid internship after she had attained her degree. While being in this internship she explained how she probably would need to have another job at the side as well. Others who were in this situation often took part-time jobs at restaurants and bars as waitresses, bartenders, or they could work in a kitchen, she explained. Another one of my informants, Konstantina, who were about to finish her studies to become a chef was also about to go

into an internship. Although Konstantina got paid in this internship, she was displeasingly looking forward to the long working hours of this internship. She also explained that her situation was somewhat exceptional, she knew many others who were in the same situation as hers who would need to go into unpaid internship. Lastly, Giorgos part-time and low-monetary-return business in photography and film was not necessarily connected to what he was going through higher education to become, i.e. an engineer. But this activity was also a way of gaining experience in his hobby, and this experience could also give him opportunities in working with photography and film in larger and more interesting projects.

All these actions have, to follow Narotzky and Besnier (2014), temporal orientations into the future. The actions of Sophia, Konstantina and Giorgos, i.e. their internships or business with photography on the side, had motives in the outcomes that those actions could have for them in the future, be it working professionally as a lawyer or chef, or to participate in larger and more interesting projects. These types of practices can also have a connection to the scarcity of work that some of my student informants imagined there would be in the future. Internships, although unpaid or containing harsh conditions, could prove valuable for their opportunities of work in the future.

This imagination of the future (Cañas Bottos, 2008), i.e. of a future where the work opportunities were scarce, had for some also proved as a motive for what they wanted to be educated in and why some of my student informants had chosen to study the things they did. In these cases, these students evaluated what the need for the profession they were choosing an education to become, or the proficiencies they were thought, would be in the future after they had attained a degree. As such, they also constructed an image of what their future opportunities of work would be. To follow Vigh (2008), the students acted towards that imagined future. The economic crisis was to my student informants part of this imagined future, for example in the case of Giorgos. When he explained why he chose the educational program he did, he emphasized the traits of this education that would be an advantage in a scarce jobs market.

Similar to how future, or an imagination of the future, was important factors in how students sought experience in work and chose their educational programs, the future is also an important factor in education in itself. As Anna pointed out, university degrees led to better jobs and “top positions”, and explained this as a motivational factor for young people to take higher educational degrees. In this way, higher educational degrees could lead to bright or prosperous futures. As they did so, there was an element of acting towards an imagination of the future by taking higher educational degrees in itself. However, if the competition in getting a good and prosperous job was rife, there was a

certain factor that my student informants meant could come into play. This factor was how prestigious an education was perceived to be.

The way in which the prestige, or symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1994), in education in Greece was expressed was, for example, through Yiannis and Lisa's resentments against the politician who could afford to send his son to a prestigious private school. When Yiannis and Lisa expressed this resentment, they also made it apparent that they perceived a difference in prestige between private and public schools. Lisa, who reckoned that she would have better opportunities of getting a job in Greece if she attained a foreign degree, also made it apparent that foreign degrees were perceived as more prestigious than domestic degrees. When my student informants expressed that the Aristotle University was a good one, and that this was one of the motivational factors for why they chose to move to the city to attend this university, this also made it apparent that there was a difference in prestige between university degrees in Greece as well. Though the latter was also made apparent through the university admittance system in Greece.

The university admittance system in Greece effectively ranked the prestige of different educational programs. To be admitted into the most popular and prestigious educational programs, the aspiring students needed to have good scores out of the *panellinies*. This was the reason why students like Giorgos and Lisa needed extracurricular private schooling in first place. The parents of the students are in some way investing in the futures of their children when they are paying for the extracurricular private schooling. With this private schooling, they could have a better shot at getting admitted into the prestigious educations, and in this way, have a better opportunity of being employed at some point in the future. Considering the fact that families, such as Lisa's, had economic issues in providing their children with extracurricular private schooling, this could become an issue for the future as well.

The parents of students also invested in the futures of their children as they often supported them financially as they moved to study. The economy of a student's family could be crucial to how well students could settle in their new places as they studied. In Thessaloniki, the costs of living as a student could be saved through the university services of free meals and free housing, although both had reportedly met a demand which was much higher than before. Student informants of mine also shared the narrative that many fellow students who had moved from their families needed to work besides studying. Angelika chose to work besides her studies, but this often compromised her ability to study. Lisa initially moved from her parents, but found herself unable to live and study in a different city because of the economic circumstances of her family. As such, the family

economies were crucial as to how students could geographically move. This could prove to be an issue for the future of the students as well, for example if students were unable to move to the institution which held the higher prestige.

Chapter ten:

Conclusion of the thesis

Regarding the ambiguity of the crisis

In the introduction of this thesis I referred to the case of the Polish girl who was unable to see how the economic crisis had any impact on the city. And so, she highlighted a form of ambiguity that the economic crisis had. The effects of the economic crisis were often vocally expressed, either in conversations or in protest marches. Yet often, the city could also seem largely unfazed. There was another moment of my fieldwork when this ambiguity was made apparent in real time. This was a sunny day one spring weekend. I was seated with Giorgos and some of his friends on the grass in one of the parks along the promenade of Nea Paraglia. The previous two hours I had observed a large protest march through the city center. This particular march was protesting the government selling natural lands to foreign industrial goldmining companies, an industry the protesters, including Giorgos, perceived as endangering to the environment. Giorgos explained that SYRIZA had promised to put an end to industrial gold mining in the area before they took office. But now that they were in office, SYRIZA had not kept this promise.

After having interviewed Giorgos and his friends about the economic crisis there was this moment where we moved ourselves from one part of the patch of grass to another. It was in this moment Giorgos caught a glimpse of the people who filled the promenade. These were young people, old people and families with children, they were all performing the *volta*, the activity of leisurely strolling back and forth. The Nea Paraglia on a sunny day presented a perfect opportunity to do this particular activity. Giorgos was at that moment standing and watching the people passing by. "Look at these people", he said and continued: "they don't care about these things". Giorgos was referring to the conversation we had recently had about the economic crisis, how he imagined the future would be worse than what it was now. To me, Giorgos seemed displeased with the apathy the moment could seem to display.

On sunny afternoons such as this one, it was quite usual for people to go to the Nea Paraglia and take a leisurely slow paced walk. Young people and students would often gather in the parks, and around the artistic installations along the Nea Paraglia, either with books so they could study outside, but also to relax and enjoy themselves in the company of friends. Nea Paraglia could in these moments display the quite opposite of immediate need and economic crisis. This could to the



The Nea Paraglia on a sunny afternoon. Private photography.

outside observer seem strange considering the talks of further austerity measures imposing on the lives of Greek citizens which already experienced being compromised. The talks I had with informants about being angered by failing government promises, or about their friends who dealt with stress, could seem a bit contradictory to the view of Nea Paraglia. However, as one informant put it: “Although we may be in a crisis, we still like to have a good time and enjoy ourselves”.

Angelika once had a comment on how she experienced the emergence of the economic crisis back in 2009. Back then there was an extreme focus on the crisis in school and amongst friends. Now it was not that big of a focus. This was also reflected in Lisa’s statement about how students talked about the economic crisis, that it was something they had become more used to. That it in a sense had become normalized. All this can also point back to the sights at the Nea Paraglia, that although the economic crisis had taken its toll on the lives of people in Greece, they still wanted to move on.

Economic crisis and its impact

The economic crisis had clearly had its impact on the lives of many in Greece. With its emergence in the closing years of 2000’s, after the Greek state’s level of sovereign was revealed, Greece

experienced a substantial increase in unemployment, reaching a quarter of the country's workforce, from which it in the time of writing has not managed to recover. This dire state of Greece's national economy over the years led Greece to receive three bailout-loans, though with these loans came the governmental agreements of the famous austerity measures. The austerity measures have led to large changes in the statuses of many workplaces through its drive towards privatization of state-owned businesses, increased the costs of living and taxation, and shrunken the Greek public sector.

Some of the results of these measures were expressed by my informants in Thessaloniki during my fieldwork in the city in the spring of 2016. The basic economic sides of cuts in public spending had over time decreased university students' satisfaction with the universities' facilitations and there occurred changes in the national policies regarding university students. The economies of the students' families had been impacted by the new economic conditions in the countries, in turn this had an impact on the ways students could geographically move to attain higher education. As they were studying there were also an uncertainty looming over the jobs market in Greece. This problem had already caused educated workers to leave the country to find work, and potential students to have second thoughts about their choice of education. The economies of families had also been impacted through the increases in costs and taxation. This in turn had impacted the students' mobility and access to the wanted level of education.

All these effects paint a picture of how life is in Greece during the crisis, and how lives had been changed for the worse as of its emergence in 2009. This is also what the crisis seems to mean in Greece. It is an era where the stability which people remember from the years before 2009 has been altered. As the crisis goes on, informants would place blame and responsibility on the politicians they meant had brought the crisis upon them.

Temporality, permanency and chronicity

Drawing on a classic, semiotic understanding of crisis, the concept of crisis is seen to have a certain temporal factor. In this view, a crisis is a deviance from the normality that is expected and intended to go into the normal again after a certain time. From Koselleck's (2006 [1972-97]) historical review of the concept, we can draw on a similar use of the concept's in medical terms where crisis becomes a critical condition that one has to recover from. This medical conceptualization of crisis is as well the basis for how crisis is understood in economics. In the economy, crises are in nature the unwanted deviancies that occur as shortages of supply, downturn in trade, loss of capital *et cetera*. There is, however, the belief in that the economy eventually will recover from these crises and that the situation will be normalized. Crises in this manner becomes the exceptional, in contrast to the

“normal”. Narotzky and Besnier (2014) conceptualizes this “normal” in terms of stability. Outside of crises, they write, there is a stability that enable people to go about and make a living the way they are used to. Crises then represent a breach in this stability which alters the way of life.

The economic crisis in Greece can be seen in a similar fashion. Informants remembered a time outside of the crisis which was abruptly changed after its emergence in 2009. The time before the crisis, I argue, represent the stability that Narotzky and Besnier (Narotzky & Besnier, 2014) defines as the antithesis to crisis. The stability that once was defining of life in Greece has now been replaced by an anti-structure that is how things are in the time of the economic crisis. The students in Thessaloniki consolidated this perception of an anti-structure through their comparison of time before and time during the crisis. The crisis impact on family economies was felt and experienced in this way by the students. In the time before the crisis, they felt as if they could be economically supported in a significantly larger way than they could in the crisis. In the life of students this was significant for the way in which students could fund their education, move from their families in order to get an education and have access to the level of education that they saw fit.

The situation of workplaces and the unemployment numbers, as well as the political situation, were also significant factors for how informants defined their lives in the crisis. As the crisis had seen a massive increase in the numbers of unemployed, the way in which the unemployment rates went was seen to represent how well Greece faired in the crisis, if there was a recovery from the crisis in sight or if it was worsening. Similarly the political situation in Greece seemed to stir up the notion of crisis time and again. As informants felt betrayed by policy changes and failures to deliver on hopes and resolutions, indignation with a political class grew and consolidated a view that Greece was in crisis.

However, the view that there would be a resolution to the crisis was faint. Informants contemplating the numbers of unemployed would on the contrary say that the crisis was worsening. Students asked how they imagined the future responded with the view that it would not get any better. Furthermore, after the initial shock, some responded as if they had become used to it.

This view of a crisis without a resolution problematizes the concept of crisis in terms of temporality and the nature of economic crisis. This is where the relevance of a concept such as chronicity (Vigh, 2008) comes to use. Since its emergence in 2009 there has still not come about a resolution to the crisis that is experienced in Greece. Rather than fulfilling the economy’s belief of recovery from the crisis, the state and notion of crisis seems to be normalized by the informants. This is to say that the

crisis has become the new “normal” and part of what is known as life in general. Furthermore, this problematizes the view of economic crisis as exceptional. Rather than reaching a recovery, the condition of economic crisis seems to be a chronic one.

The practices and the imagination of the future

The economic crisis had affected the economies of students’ families in a way that it impacted how students could take educational degrees. It had impacted how students could geographically move to attain higher education, as well as how they could finance their lives as students if they had moved from their families. As a result, the students were now housing themselves in a different way compared to the past, as well as some took on part-time jobs to finance their lives as students.

As well as this impact on the economic circumstances of their families, students had also embodied an experience of the crisis as a part of their *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977). Students’ experiences of the past, as opposed to how it was in the present, had to a large degree framed in what the experiences they embodied was. Comparing to the past my informants perceived a difference in visible homelessness, in working conditions, in the amount of job opportunities, as well as in how friends and colleagues coped with stress. Informants had constructed a narrative that the government of past were the ones to blame for why Greece was in the crisis. The politicians who throughout history had been morally corrupt, as informants experienced it, and who in the present continuously proved to be so. To follow Bourdieu (ibid.), this produced certain actions in the form of emotional reactions, such as anger, resentment or depression.

This experience of the past and the present also was an important factor as to how my student informants constructed imaginations of the future (Cañas Bottos, 2008) as well. As they had normalized their sense of being in the economic crisis, they were not expecting a resolution of the economic crisis. Hence, they imagined a scarcity of work also in the future. This had already had implications as to how Giorgos, along with others, had chosen their education. Yet, there was also another implication the future had in education. This was the notion of prestige which demarcated different types of education. This prestige was by my student informants recognized as it gave them forms of advantage in terms of better opportunities of work in the future. This was for example for Lisa a reason why she wanted an educational degree from a foreign university. But it was not just in the foreign degrees that this prestige was apparent.

The prestige of educations had already a cemented position in the educational system in Greece. To be admitted into a higher educational program in Greece, you would need a score out of the national

exams of the secondary education in Greece, the *panellinies*. If the educational program of choice was a particularly popular and prestigious one, you would need a particularly high score out of the *panellinies*. One problem in this process was that families had a practice of paying for extracurricular private schooling, besides the usual public secondary education, for their children in order for them to achieve a good score out of *panellinies*. In fact, my student informants saw this practice as an absolute necessity to achieve a good score. In the economic crisis, this practice had been made harder to carry out because of an increased economic pressure on the families of students. This practice of paying for the extracurricular private schooling, along with supporting the children who moved away to study can both be seen as ways of investing in the future. However, the case of Lisa show how families could have economic issues in having their children move for an education.

For the future

The experience of the economic crisis in Greece as normalized, i.e. in the sense of being chronic, can at times seem contradictory to the view of both state institutions of Greece, such as parliament and government, and multistate institutions such as the OECD. For example, in this thesis I have cited an economic survey on Greece which was authored by the OECD. In this survey there is a list of summary points of the situation in Greece which, among other things, states that the economy in Greece “is gradually recovering from a deep recession” (OECD Publishing, 2016:9). Similarly there is a description in the monography of Daniel Knight (2015a:165) of a situation from 2014 where his informants were watching a televised speech by the then prime minister Antonis Samaras who proclaimed that the crisis was over, there was growth again, Greece was able to borrow money again. These examples show a type of trajectory in the economic crisis which seems to reconfirm the view of crisis both as limited in time and as exceptional. The economic crisis was in some sense still exceptional for my informants in the sense that it was unwanted, and that it was a way of life which contrasted what they previously had been accustomed to. Yet they perceived economic crisis as something they now had grown accustomed to, which they envisioned would last, and so it was no longer an exceptionality. As such, the impressions of my informants contradict the trajectories of recovery which are expressed by the likes of the state in Greece or OECD.

This problem of exceptionalism is one that is reflected in recent anthropological accounts of Greece as well, for example by Rakopoulos who explains the economic crisis in Greece as not being exceptional, but as an example of capitalist debt management (Rakopoulos, 2016:143). There are however some points with the exceptionalism I would like to dwell on. One is how it came about that the economic crisis is no longer perceived to be exceptional by my informants, which is

somewhat different from the Marxistic portrayal of crisis as inherent of capitalism (Harvey, 2011; Koselleck, 2006 [1972-97]; Narotzky & Besnier, 2014). The normalization of the economic crisis amongst the students seem, in my case at least, to have ties to what my informants see as repetitively broken promises by politicians. Therefore, the reason why my informants expect the crisis to endure is not necessarily due to the nature of capitalist processes, although left-wing polemics colored how a few of my informants imagined the development of the crisis. Rather, they viewed the economic crisis as non-exceptional because of politicians who seem to be chronically unable to produce any positive change on behalf of the people, in terms of a more stable employment market and more livable economic conditions. Rather, in the eyes of my informants, the politicians seem to not care about the people. But this is also a form of a constructed narrative which is also apparent in Herzfeld's account as he notes that there was a shift from how politicians in Greece were praised for their actions when things went well to being characterized as morally corrupted when the same actions had led to the economic crisis (Herzfeld, 2011:23). As I see it then, the problem of exceptionalism regarding economic crisis is not just one that is tied to crisis as an inherent feature of capitalism. Perceptions of a non-exceptional crisis are also constructed along with narratives.

The other thing I would like to remark on this type of non-exceptionalism in economic crises is that these narratives have implications for how actors guide their actions towards a future. If the economic crisis is not exceptional, and thus not limited in time, their actions will have orientations into a future where an economic crisis persist, i.e. into a future of status quo. However, this might also explain why people turn to anti-hegemonic movements who present a different future (Rakopoulos, 2015), or even to political parties who promise to shake up the status quo, such as the case was with SYRIZA (Theodossopoulos, 2014). There is an evident motivation behind these types of action as they seek something better, or more dignifying. As I see it this is also something which can be entailed in what Vigh (2008) describes in his concept of the *social imaginary* as to how actors construct narratives of the future and act towards them.

This way of constructing narratives is also somehow linked with what Gkintidis (2016) writes about moral discourse of the economic crisis. The concept of moral discourse is one that can be attributed to cases of solidarity economy as well (Rakopoulos, 2015). Gkintidis (2016) shows in his article how a project which in fairness was based on expanding the EU common market, European integration in Greece, was permeated by moral motivations. Thus, the EU specialists took on the project of European integration as a moral act. This somehow adds to the abovementioned discrepancy between state and people regarding the economic crisis. It is noted by Herzfeld (2011)

how protesters in the early waves of reactions to economic crisis and austerity measures carried slogans which commented on responsibility and morality in terms of debt, i.e. “We don’t owe... We won’t pay” (ibid.:25). Similarly, many of my informants expressed that they were in the receiving end of the politicians’ historical mismanagement. Thus, the politicians were morally responsible for why they now lived in a time of economic crisis. This way of commenting on the responsibilities of the situation highlights the discrepancy between the state and the people in Greece.

Finally, my findings can also highlight an aspect of the economic crisis which is written about by Theodossopoulos (2014). Theodossopoulos noted how *Mnimonio*, the reified concept of the austerity measures represented a breakdown in the idea of modernism in Greece. As such, the idea that people, with each passing generation after the Second World War, would live increasingly more prosperous lives came to an abrupt halt in the economic crisis (ibid.:493). Theodossopoulos mentions in his article how this had affected the view and practices of obtaining educational degrees to get better jobs. I will argue that the findings of this thesis can highlight how this breakdown Theodossopoulos depicts is taking form. My findings show how the economic crisis, and the scarcity of work that came with it, affects how students can take educational degrees as well as how students construct ideas of the future which they subsequently act towards.

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