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nella Grecia contemporanea

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and Cultural Paths in Contemporary Greece

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Luca Gallarini, Dino Gavinelli, Thomas Maloutas, Mauro Novelli

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Education Inequalities and Political Behaviour of the Young in Greece in the 2010s*

Thomas Maloutas and Maro Pantelidou Malouta

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we briefly address two issues related to the living conditions of youth in Greece and the way these conditions have changed during the 2010s. The first is about the educational trajectories of young Greeks which are leading to less promising prospects in the labour market and become increasingly unequal and socially selective during the crisis. The second issue is the political response of young Greeks to the crisis. There is evidence that they have been actively mobilized against austerity measures and, at the same time, they have increased their participation in the political system, both in confrontational and institutional politics. Inequalities are increasing and social mobility prospects for the young people are deteriorating. Their political response, however, is an outcome depending on many other factors with the politics of parties attractive to youngsters' aspirations during the crisis being among the most important.

Keywords: economic crisis; education; inequalities; political behaviour; youth.

1. INTRODUCTION

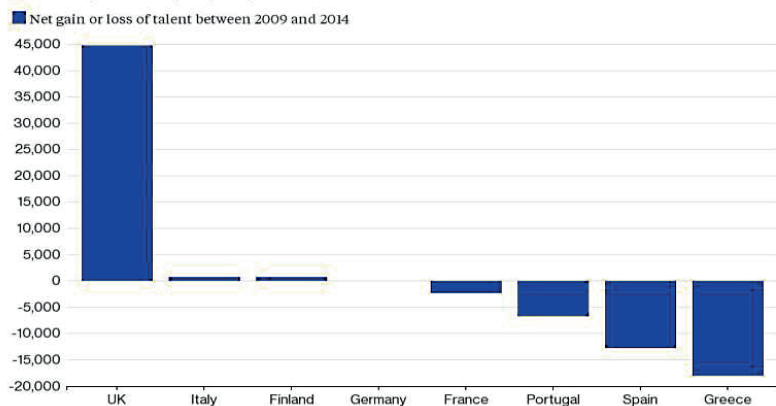
Greece has witnessed a severe economic crisis for almost 10 years, unprecedented in times of peace. During this period, more than 25% of the GDP was lost while unemployment was around 25% between

* A previous version of this paper was published in the Spanish review *Ábaco* (2015, vol. 83-84, issue 1-2, pp. 69-77) under the title “Las desigualdades educativas y la conducta política de los jóvenes durante la crisis en Grecia”.

2012 and 2015 (ELSTAT 2019, 40-41) and much higher (almost 60%) for very young people (15-24 years old) (ELSTAT 2019, 34-35). The outflow of young people seeking jobs in foreign labour markets was growing – as was the case in other Southern European countries as well. The difference with previous waves of emigration is that in the 2010s the most qualified part of younger generations was affected (*Fig. 1*), with the less qualified – who fare worse in the labour market – being left behind, since they cannot find opportunities abroad.

Brain Drain in the Crisis Years

Greeks depart on Odyssey for jobs



Source: Eurostat.

* The chart calculates the difference between professionals seeking to leave the country and professionals seeking to come into the country. A negative number indicates more people seeking to leave than those seeking entrance.

Bloomberg

Figure 1. – Balance of Inflow/Outflow of professionals in/from selected European countries¹.

The policies of strict austerity that have been followed up to 2018 have not redressed this dire situation but, on the contrary, prolonged it and made it worse. When the crisis started to retreat, the question was whether the government of the Left would be able to implement effective anti-crisis policies – aiming at the same time at boosting economic development and at socially distributing charges in more equitable ways – or if it would be replaced by traditional parties to pursue policies

¹ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-06-05/greece-is-hemorrhaging-its-most-talented-workers>.

favoured by the dominant European and local political and economic elites. Eventually, the political change after the elections of July 2019 followed the second scenario.

The task for the government of the Left was certainly not easy. For instance, in order to deploy successful policies based on research and innovation, it had to rely on EU structural funds which could only be used if conditionalities related to the European Research & Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) were fulfilled². This strategy seeks to boost European competitiveness by promoting competition among European regions for funds accorded to plans of regional specialisation that should increase their strong assets and their competitive edge. The map of innovation leaders and slow-moving regions (*Fig. 2*) shows that this investment strategy mainly favours countries of Western and Northern Europe with regions that already have a competitive edge. In particular, in terms of employment this strategy was expected to foster brain circulation - which is, in principle, a positive process. However, brain circulation is something that does not characterise regions in crisis or regions lagging in research and innovation, where brain circulation will probably end up meaning further brain drain. Such issues continue to represent a real and difficult challenge for every government in the slow-moving regions and in particular for governments of the Left.

In this paper we focus on two issues related to conditions, prospects and reactions of the younger generation during the crisis period. The first is related to social inequalities in education and to their aggravation in recent years as expressed by the increase of social exclusiveness in the access to higher education. Education is the mechanism that - among other things - gives young people the qualifications required by technological innovation to cope with the growing expectations of labour markets. However, educational systems do not provide these qualifications in a random way and, under the recent crisis in Greece, it seems that qualifications - and especially those more significant, provided by elite institutions - are reinforcing rather than countering social privilege.

The second is the mapping of changes in the younger generation's political attitudes and behaviour, as shown through their "return to politics" and the radicalisation of their voting. An important side-effect of the crisis has been indeed a noteworthy change in the younger generation's relation to politics, progressively marked since the late 1980s by

² <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/s3pguide>.

a severe decline in party alignment, ideological identification with the Left and a noteworthy distance from mainstream political participation.

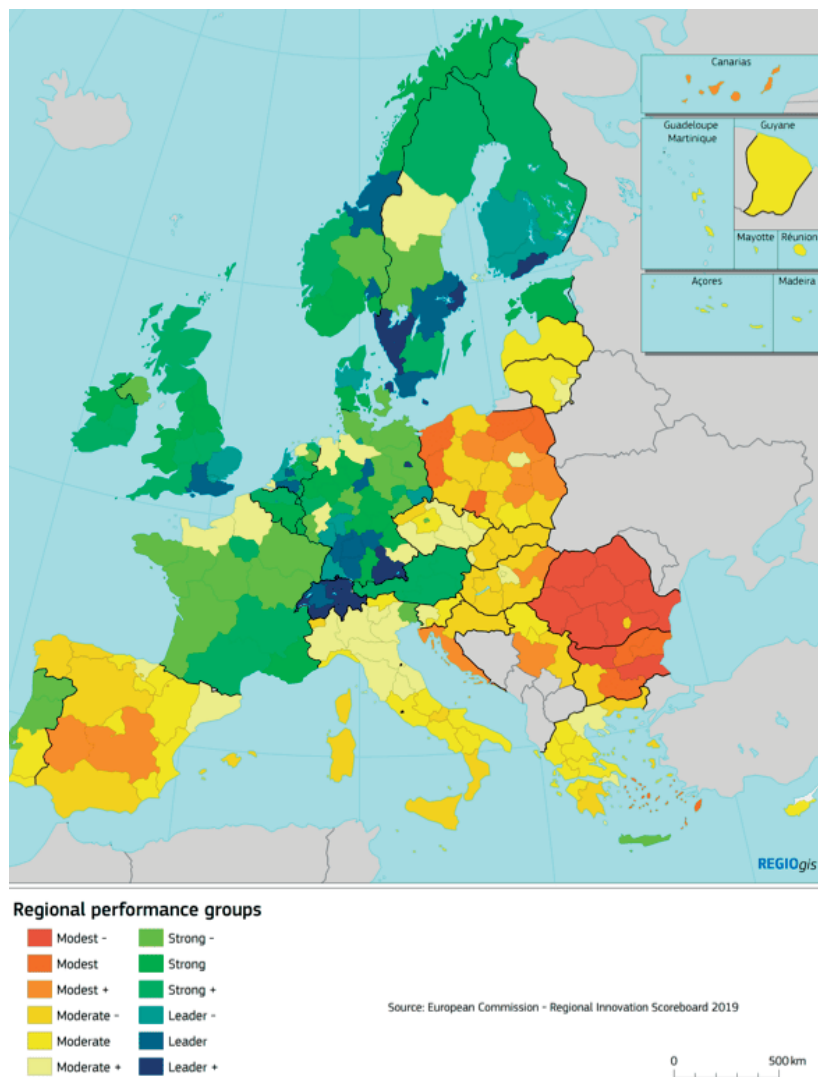


Figure 2. – European Regions in terms of innovation capacity³.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/innovation/regional_en.

2. EDUCATION AND INEQUALITY DURING THE CRISIS

The question whether social inequality is perceived as an issue of social justice depends on the power and firmness of class hegemony. When the dominated accept their socially subordinate position, they usually perceive this arrangement as the natural order of things or, if not as socially just, at least as fair.

The liberal and neoliberal ideas, which have become dominant during the last four decades, do not consider social inequality as a problem (except 'modern liberalism' that is more sensitive to this issue) (Ryan 2012). Considering individuals as inherently unequal, the unequal conditions under which they end up living appear as a normal outcome. Accepting inequality as a normal situation is compatible with the view that social progress results from individual progress and that the latter is the product of competition among free individuals. This subsequently leads to the belief that common interest is best served by society's support to the strongest players (students, businesspersons, athletes ...), whose individual progress is supposed to have a trickle-down effect to the benefit of society as a whole.

Policies inspired by such ideas and followed in most parts of the world during the last decades led to the spectacular growth of inequalities. This brought inequalities back to center stage as an issue of social justice, but also as an element that prevents economic growth. Following the analysis of inequality trends in the *longue durée* by Picketty (2013) we realise that we are on a rising slope that leads back to high levels of inequality without precedent since the *Belle Époque*. The new rise of inequalities since the 1970s-1980s is, however, much more related to income from salaries than from patrimony/fortune, even though the latter's importance has also increased in recent years. Education and the way educational systems and mechanisms socially spread – or put barriers to the social diffusion of – aptitudes and specialisation required by an increasingly technologically demanding labour market become crucial for the reproduction of social inequalities.

Income inequality has grown in Greece during the crisis. Between 2010 and 2013 the index 80/20⁴ (i.e. the ratio of the income of those in the higher 20% of the income scale in respect to that of the lowest

⁴ http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGEthemes?p_param=A0802&cr_param=SFA10&cy_param=2013_00&mytabs=0.

20%) increased from 5,6 to 6,6 times and the Gini index of unequal distribution increased from 32,9 to 34,4.

The trend of inequalities in education is much less visible. The issues present on the social and political agenda are mainly related to sensitivities of middle-class households who remain hopeful that a proper educational trajectory will enable their children to, at least, retain their parents' social position. The most visible problem is related to the difficulties of higher education degree holders – even those holding degrees from the most valued and exclusive Schools and Departments – in finding jobs in a run-down labour market. So, the brain drain problem is placed very high on the agenda not only due to its undeniable role for undermining potential growth, but also due to the social profile of those who are mainly affected by this trend. When lower social strata started losing precipitously, in the early 1990s, the access that higher education provided them to (mainly public) employment the problem received little attention in the social and political debate, although it was an important step in the decline of the anaemic and delayed welfare state.

The little resonance of the growing social inequality in accessing higher education leads today to preventing it from becoming part the list of urgent problems. To some extent, the visibility of educational inequality in Greece is context-related; educational itineraries have been socially differentiated rather late in comparison to other countries – like Germany – where they are enforced at a very early stage. The outcome, however, in terms of selectivity in the social reproduction process is not different from that of more overtly socially selective educational systems (Maloutas and Ramos Lobato 2015).

In Greece, the flagrantly privileged educational trajectories refer to a rather small percentage of students in elite private schools and in a few selected prominent public schools and, further, to the even smaller number of those pursuing studies in the internationally renowned universities of a small group of countries. On the opposite side, the most disadvantaged trajectories are either interrupted very early (school drop-outs) or are extremely ineffective and lead to functional illiteracy; their specific weight is also quite small and usually concerns socially excluded groups, like the Roma.

The large majority of secondary school students (about 90%) attends ordinary public schools in the first three years of the secondary (Gymnasio). Most of them (70%) follow the general lyceum option in the second part of the secondary (Geniko Lykeio), which gives

“direct” access to higher education. This access is mainly determined by the performance of candidates in a common entrance examination. Performance determines whether a candidate is accepted to his/her first, second or additional choice of university School/Department or if he/she will be rejected. The participation to a common examination all over the country creates the impression of a process offering equal chances to the large majority of candidates, if one does not take into account the socially unequal resources available for getting prepared for the examination through collective or private courses that have formed a small industry over the years (Sianou-Kyrgiou 2008). Social inequalities in the access to higher education are of course deep-rooted and related to more fundamental structures and processes; the unequal resources for preparation during the last two or three years before the entrance examinations are just one of their most obvious manifestations.

For several decades, the crucial process in educational trajectories in Greece has been the transition between secondary and higher education. This transition is regulated by a panhellenic examination established in the 1960s where every secondary school graduate can be a candidate. Although many governments have subsequently changed the content or the way these examinations are performed, it has never been on the agenda to radically modify or abolish them (Maloutas 2020). The panhellenic examination is a well-respected institution, central in transforming and legitimating a process of social selection into one of individual competition where everyone is compensated according to invested personal effort and merit.

If equal chances for different social groups in the access to higher education really existed, the social profile of students’ parents in all university Schools and Departments should not be very dissimilar to the social profile of the same broad age group (40 to 75) in the general population. However, this is not happening. On the contrary, using the data concerning the education level and the occupational category of students’ parents in all university Departments published by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)⁵, we can easily conclude that social origin is playing a very important role in accessing higher education, and that this role has become even more relevant during the crisis.

Figure 3 shows that candidates with parents having completed higher education are twice as likely to study at some university com-

⁵ http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGEthemes?p_param=A1403&cr_param=SED34&cy_param=2010_00&mytabs=0.

pared to the average candidate, and that their chances have increased from 1,9 to 2,3 times from 2010 to 2013⁶. The gap between these privileged candidates and the average candidate is considerably larger when the issue is access to the country's elite Schools and Departments: in this case, the privileged candidates in terms of family educational capital had, in 2010, 3,1 times the chances of the average candidate to be admitted in elite Schools and Departments and this rate increased to 3,6 times in 2013 (Fig. 4). Inequality becomes huge when we compare the chances of these privileged candidates with those from disadvantaged families in terms of educational capital (i.e. with parents having completed the 9-year compulsory education at the most): 5 times higher, in 2010, to be admitted to any university School or Department which increased to 7,6 times in 2013; and 17,7 times higher for admission to elite Schools and Departments, in 2010, which increased to 28 times in 2013.

Education is not simply a training process for younger generations. It also differentiates their members according to their performance and creates hierarchies that become important for their prospective social mobility. These hierarchies reproduce, to a large extent, the class hierarchies and discriminations in previous generations following the social reproduction thesis.

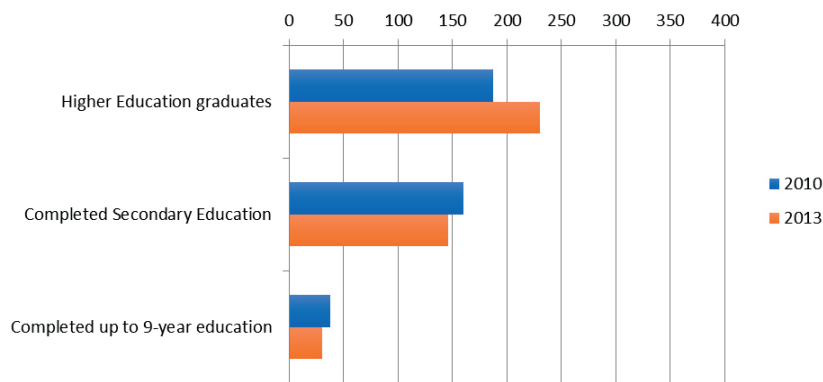


Figure 3. – Candidates' chances to access higher education by the education level of their parents (average candidate's chances = 100).

⁶ Unfortunately, data after 2014 are not yet available to control this trend in the second part of the 2010s: [https://www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SED34/\[09/03/2021\]](https://www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SED34/[09/03/2021]).

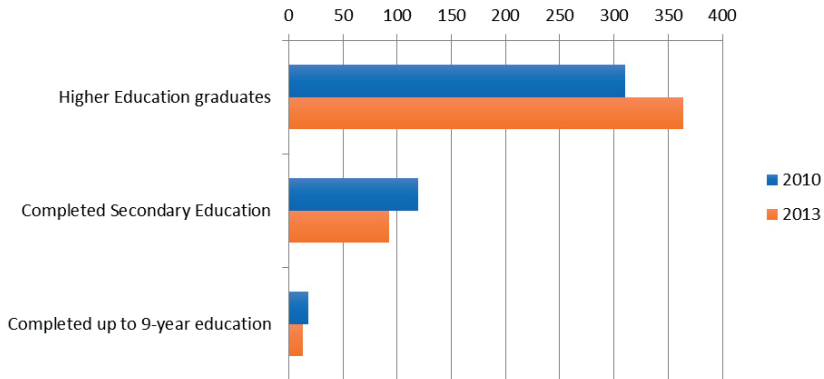


Figure 4. – Candidates' chances to access an elite higher education School/Department by the education level of their parents (average candidate's chances = 100)⁷.

An important task of schools in so-called meritocratic societies is to narrow the gaps by reducing the importance of social origin for educational performance; this role, however, has been increasingly marginalised by neoliberal ideas and policies. The US have witnessed in the last 30 years a stability in the production of university graduates which is held responsible for the increase of inequality in salary incomes (Goldin and Katz 2010; Piketty, 2013). In Greece, the number of graduates has stabilised since the early 2000s and the access to higher education has become increasingly unequal during the crisis and the austerity policies followed ever since.

The crisis has exacerbated inequalities in education, but education policies had already paved the way. In the beginning of the 2000s, a minimum performance in the panhellenic examination was introduced

⁷ We considered indicatively 20 University Departments (out of a total of 262) as 'elite' Schools, where the education level of students' parents was the highest in 2013 (the changes were insignificant when we used the 2010 data). These Departments have also, as a rule, the highest requirements for performance in the admission examinations. They are the following: University of Athens (Law, Medicine, Dental School, Pharmaceutical); Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Architecture, Medicine, Veterinary, Dental School, Pharmaceutical, Civil Engineering); University of Thessaly (Architecture); Democritus University of Thrace (Medicine); University of Ioannina (Medicine); University of Crete (Medicine); University of Patras (Medicine, Pharmaceutical, Architecture, Electrical/Mechanical Computer Engineering); National Technical University of Athens (Mechanical Engineering, Electrical/Mechanical Computer Engineering, Shipbuilding Engineering).

as a prerequisite for admission to any field of studies of higher education. This contradicted the nature of the exams which were supposed to assign the available positions in higher education to candidates who performed better than others. All candidates were *a priori* eligible for higher education having successfully completed secondary education. The minimum required performance in the examination abolished the *a priori* eligibility of candidates and, eventually, reduced the number of students admitted. This measure disproportionately reduced candidates from lower social strata and particularly affected higher vocational education. Some years later this measure was eliminated and admissions to universities regained their previous level, but higher vocational education never recovered. The new conservative government reintroduced the same measure in February 2021 and it is expected that the number of students in higher education will be reduced by 23% (Angelopoulos *et al.* 2021). The expected reduction will be again particularly detrimental for candidates from lower social strata.

The growing social inequality in educational trajectories is a major issue for social justice, and although its visibility is reduced, it should be faced along with many other problems that have been accumulated at all education levels and have seriously worsened during the crisis.

3. RECENT CHANGES IN GREEK YOUTH'S POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

The basic trends in young people's political outlook and behaviour, noted in every research project since the early '90s, referred to the increasing distance of the younger generation from politics, their individualistic attitudes and lifestyle politics. This trend, in harmony with what was happening throughout Europe, was evidenced in comparison with young generations of past periods, within the Greek political culture, as well as with their contemporary elders. This "demobilisation" took place in spite of the fact that there is an important legacy of a combative youth, within the Greek political culture, that goes back to the Resistance during the 2nd World War, the struggle against the authoritarian governments after the Civil War (1946-49) and against the 1967-74 dictatorial regime. During the 1990s, important pupils' mobilizations took place, proving the fact that "feeling personally concerned" about specific policy measures was the main incentive for political participation through dynamic demands for younger Greeks of that period.

Bigger issues and grand narratives did not seem to mobilise them any longer. Two research projects based on representative samples of young Greeks, undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research (1988) and the University of Athens in 2006, showed that the 18-29-year-olds in Greece were turning away from the Left (37,1% in 1988 declared adherence to the Left, against 9,8% in 2006); were becoming more cynical (49% in 1988 agreed with “whoever comes to power does it only for self-interest” against 70,6% in 2006); and totally disinterested in politics (39,5% in 2006 against 15,9% in 1988) (Pantelidou Malouta 2012). Thus, the pre-crisis climate was one of lack of or lukewarm political interest, cynicism and mainly right-wing world views for young people. The internet and its more and more widespread use reinforced needs of immediate self-expression and a form of individualised political participation.

However, the crisis – by itself, an important re-socialization factor – functioned as a catalyst, changing fundamental characteristics of the young as political actors. Already in the 2008 “December events”, adolescents and students as well as young unemployed and young immigrants protested spontaneously, massively and even violently, after the killing of a 15-year-old by a policeman. These events are often characterized as revolt or riot, in which social actors, whose interests are never heard and never represented, “demanded the right to resist” (Douzinas 2013); the “December events” offered a preview of the change that had already started within the political culture of the Greek youth, especially since the young people from the middle classes were involved. A fact that was perceived as a surprise⁸. Important milestones of this change, concerning thereafter the relation of the young Greeks with politics, were the protest events of 2011 and the participation of the young in the elections of 2012 and 2015.

During the massive protest events of 2011 against the austerity imposed as a remedy to the crisis, autonomous and spontaneous popular assemblies in squares as well as the *aganabtsimeni* (indignados) were very actively protesting in Athens and other cities. The presence of the young people was very important and dynamic during these events. Indeed, it seems that when distance from politics is due to mistrust, as in the Greek case according to many data, and not to “political apathy”, there is a participatory potential ready to irrupt in dynamic ways if the

⁸ For the “December events” of 2008 in Athens see also Karamichas 2009; Kalyvas 2010; Vradis and Dalakoglou 2011.

conditions allow it. Low political trust and a tendency towards political cynicism plus the belief in poor institutional performance support alternative ways of participation (Kaase 1999).

A research project by the National Centre for Social Research during the first semester of 2012 showed that 42% of the 18-24 years old Athenians participated in popular assemblies at Syntagma square or in other squares of the wider Athens area during the protest events of 2011, while 50% had participated in *aganahitsmeni* protests; the average of the whole sample (all age groups) being respectively 35% and 41%. Still a very important percentage, highlighting the way austerity measures were perceived by Greek citizens. In the case of the younger generations, it is indeed established that in 2011 the young people, with large percentages of young women among them, demonstrated an increased wish to participate in politics and effectively increased massively their participation in a variety of ways, that usually went beyond mainstream politics (Kakepaki 2013). It must also be underlined that, while feminism in Greece is in fact still a hot issue, regardless of the lack of dynamic and coordinated feminist demands, the massive presence of young women among the protesters of the 2011 events forms a feminist statement by itself (Pantelidou Malouta 2015).

The demand for new ways of participation in politics by the younger generations is a well-known trend in European politics, in some cases as early as 1970 (Kaase and Newton 1998). In the Greek case, it seems that a distinction between the rejection of the existing political system, on which the young people turned their backs due to mistrust, and a rejection of politics in general took long to be accomplished. Even if the political goals, as well as the ideological identity of the young protesters of the 2011 events, were not always clear (and neither were the demands addressed to the political establishment), the spontaneous events of 2011 helped the formation of a political “we” that later facilitated the electoral victory of SYRIZA. The specific character of this identification was maybe not very structured, but it referred however to a “we” including a strong anti-austerity stance, the rejection of a bleak future for a young generation victim to unemployment and poverty. A young cohort strongly characterised by relatively high educational level and middle-class origin. Thus, whilst “the return of the young people” in politics was initially achieved on the basis of their spontaneous, dynamic and autonomous participation in the grass-root politics of the 2011 confrontational events, it was later completed through their role in electoral politics, by increasingly voting in favour of the Left.

Indeed, the high levels of abstentionism among the young people, as well as their distance from the Left, seemed to be partially cancelled at the May and June 2012 elections, characterised as “a double electoral earthquake” (Voulgaris and Nicolacopoulos 2014) due to their importance as a disruption within the Greek political – and specifically bipolar party – system. An important novelty of the double elections of 2012 (May and June) was the appearance of an age gap, with younger cohorts massively voting in favour of SYRIZA and older ones in favour of Nea Dimokratia (ND), the traditional party of the Right which, in the post-dictatorship era in Greece, formed one of the two poles of the established two-party system. The latter was completely annihilated by the growth of SYRIZA. It is also important to note that during the 2012 elections SYRIZA was the party that gained the biggest percentage among the young first-time voters (Stathopoulos 2014).

Speaking of younger and older cohorts, the bibliography uses a break either at 54 (i.e. dividing the 18-54-year-olds from the 55+) (Voulgaris and Nicolacopoulos 2014) or at 45 (Stathopoulos 2014). However, these divisions do not provide a clear image of the very young people. If we divide the exit poll samples of the 2012 and 2015 elections in three age groups, we see that it is always the middle age group of 35-54-year-olds that voted more in favour of SYRIZA. Nevertheless, the younger ones also voted in high percentages in favour of SYRIZA, which was a novelty that modified the consolidated image of an apolitical youth, who had turned Right after the 1980s. The opposite is clear as far as ND is concerned, with the older cohorts voting more in favour of it. However, according to the exit poll for the 2012 elections, the party identification of the young people was lower than that of their elders, while their rejection of the Left-Right axis was greater. In fact, concerning the 2012 “turning-point” elections, it is important to note that the young people proved to be back in electoral politics, with the generation of 18-25-year-olds, or even the 18-34, showing a reluctant re-integration in party politics and in the game of electoral democracy, after being active in confrontational politics.

If we study the vote of the January 2015 elections based on a more detailed age divide, it is interesting to note that among the youngsters, it is the less young (25-34) who are more radicalized, in the sense of voting for SYRIZA. However, the most striking data refer to the way that gender works. In almost all age groups, women voted for SYRIZA more than men, with the very young women (18-24) being ahead by 6,5 percentage points. This confirms the hypothesis that SYRIZA has

always been a woman-friendly party. In a nutshell, the young people massively voted for SYRIZA in the September 2015 elections and this time it was the younger cohort (18-24) that provided the biggest percentage in favour of SYRIZA (43,3%, with those 65+ providing the lowest, 28,6%). Young women, 18-24 years old, provided the highest percentage of all groups: 54,2% in the Athens metropolitan area. On the other hand, the predominantly young-male image of the extreme Right Golden Dawn party was also confirmed.

As for class politics and the young, it is difficult to formulate some strong conclusions based on exit polls' data, since the absolute numbers per category are very small. There is, however, evidence that in 2007 the young people from higher social strata (identified on the basis of their place of residence) voted less for SYRIZA than the average of their residential areas. On the contrary, both in June 2012 and in 2015, the young women and men from higher status residential areas voted in favour of SYRIZA clearly more than their elders. A political radicalization of the young belonging to the middle and upper-middle social strata that we deduced on the basis of their participation in confrontational events, for which electoral data provided corroborating evidence. In the poorer areas of the city, age differences in the vote for SYRIZA were much smaller.

In conclusion, we should add that in the 2015 referendum the vote of the young people was extremely high in favour of "ohi" (no) to the austerity measures proposed, approaching 80% for the 18-24-year-olds and 70% for the 25-34, compared to the national average of 61,3%. These high percentages attest that the young people, already initiated to the dynamics of direct democracy at popular assemblies and meetings, felt concerned about the referendum and the choices of the party that caused it. They felt that, for the first time, accountable representatives were asking for their opinion. Such politics seems to affect a wide spectrum of the youth in Greek political culture, while alongside a democratic, participatory and egalitarian world view of the Left, aspects of a nationalist narrative could also be detected among the young voters of "ohi". To make things even more complex, the Yes/No divide in the 2015 referendum was also strongly class-related: the vote for "Yes" reached 85% in the most exclusive suburbs of Athens, while "No" was close to 80% in several working-class suburbs. The class and age dimensions are obviously quite independent.

In any case, the attitude of the young people during the 2015 referendum proved that in order to keep the young people – a generation

who recently returned to politics – within the political system, politics has to be overtly democratic, systematically proving this and proving that what the young think and feel matters. It seems that the young voters at the 2019 elections, which put an end to SYRIZA's government and restored the power of the Right, did not feel that these conditions were fulfilled. SYRIZA lost 18 points within the younger cohort vote, more than in any other age group, proving that if the young people had returned to politics via the Left, they did not necessarily belong to it. During the 2010s they constantly showed very low levels of party identification, anyway.

The 2010s showed that the young people matter a lot to politics in Greece and not only because, by definition, they represent the future. While younger age commonly leads to an electoral decision made closer to the voting booth, more than 54% of the young Greeks decided what to vote “a few days before” the 2012 May election (Stathopoulos 2014, 76). And it is the undecided ones that usually decide the electoral outcome.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have briefly addressed two issues related to the living conditions of youth in Greece and the way these conditions have changed during the 2010s. The first is about the educational trajectories of young Greeks which are leading to less promising prospects in the labour market and become increasingly unequal and socially selective. Access to higher education has become more unequal in the early 2010s, especially concerning the most appreciated university departments. However, the crisis has not been the origin of this deepening inequality trend in education. Policies that paved the way in this direction were adopted well before the crisis and have recently been restored. The second issue addressed in this paper is the political response of young Greeks to the crisis. On the one hand, there is evidence that this age group has been actively mobilized against austerity measures during the early years of the crisis. At the same time, youngsters have increased their participation in the political system, both in confrontational and institutional politics, as witnessed by their electoral behaviour mainly supporting the resurgence of the Left, which plays a key role in disrupting the traditional bipartisan system. Eventually, policies of the Left

government under austerity conditions have not continued to attract the young voters and the conservative party of the Right returned to power in 2019. While retaining their participatory/confrontational potential, the young seem to be reversing to a status of “standby citizens” (Amna and Ekman 2014).

Inequalities are increasing and social mobility prospects for the young people are deteriorating. Their political response, however, is an outcome depending on many other factors, with the politics of parties attractive to youngsters’ aspirations during the crisis being among the most important.

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