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The social power dynamics of post-truth politics: How the Greek youth perceives the "powerful" foreigners and constructs the image of the European partners

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Persefoni Zeri[*], **Charalambos Tsekeris**[†] **and Theodore Tsekeris**[‡]

ABSTRACT

The present study starts from the premise that, for human communities, it is difficult to penetrate each other, so that even the globally diffused communication infrastructure is not enough to create an effective common life. This grounds our assumptions about the way the Greek young interviewees, aged between 18 and 32, belonging to main political orientations (centre right, centre left, radical left, and extreme right), are perceiving themselves and their transnational sociopolitical environment, especially Europe and the powerful foreign institutions in the era of financial crisis. We first focus on the question of collective identity, on how the sense of we-ness (the self-perception of the Greek citizens as a human group) is represented in the consciousness and attitudes of the young interviewees of different ideological orientations. A theoretical starting point pertains to the assumption that the collective identity does involve imagining or representing things; but the imaginary it involves is an instituting social imaginary in the sense of an implicit cognitive infrastructure of the Greek society, which originates in the past and shapes the image Greeks have about the world, their values, their common reality. The main research objective is to make intelligible how the young interviewees perceive the diverse facets of their collective identity, how the Greek instituting social imaginary and the imaginary significations it produces (values, ideas, habits, and so on) are expressed in their individual imaginary, what it means for them as responsible citizens, how they frame religion and the ancient Greek past, whether they feel represented by the representatives they have supported, how they perceive the powerful foreign institutions, the European Union and their relationship to the Greek society.

Keywords: Greek Crisis, Youth, Social Media, Collective Identity, Social Imaginary

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1. Introduction: On Greek collective identity and the instituting imaginary

The events of 11/09, according to Pierre Manent (2006: 43), "have revealed the existence of another wall, the reciprocal impermeability of the human communities despite the prodigious and growing communication networks which are not enough to unite the people as liberal public opinion hoped since the 18th century". This is arguably in line to Cornelius Castoriadis's (1992: 12) perceptive observation that "communication on its own does not produce community". All the above point out that for the human communities, each with its own perspectives, it is difficult to penetrate each other so that even the globally diffused communication infrastructure is not enough to create an effective common life (Manent 2006: 42). It is upon these thoughts that we ground our assumptions about the way the Greek young interviewees, all university graduates (except the two affiliated to the extreme right), belonging to main political orientations (centre right, centre left, radical left, and extreme right), are perceiving themselves and their transnational social and political environment, especially Europe and the powerful foreign institutions in the era of financial crisis.

Such categorisation of the ideological orientation of the four interviewees groups took place according to the programmatic statements of the four main political parties of the centre right (New Democracy), centre left (KINAL), radical left (SYRIZA), and extreme right (Golden Dawn) during the research period, in reference to the relevant literature. The centre right orientation refers to liberal ideas, market economy and welfare state (Alexakis 2001: 128-129).[4] The centre left conceptualises the problem of unequal wealth distribution, social justice and solidarity, public institutions reform, protection of rights and social liberalism, arguing for a more democratic Europe and a European social integration process (Simitis 2016: 227ff).[5] Concerning the radical left, the term "radical" pertains to a commitment for fundamental change of the political system (March & Mudde 2005: 24). However, the term "radical" in reference to SYRIZA has a rather euphemistic character, not only because the party's manifesto was "cleaned up" from the former radical elements,[6] but also due to the lack of "left" politics by the governing SYRIZA (Simitis 2016: 131ff, 235ff). The fourth interviewees group was affiliated to the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party and followed its ideology.

For the insecure younger generation, the major changes that have occurred in the world are connected with their personal history, but it is also the protracted crisis (as a major event) that can trigger an upheaval in the fabric of the self and the mechanics of the individual identity (Kaufmann 2012: 222). We therefore attempt to elaborate on these assumptions and to comprehend the intellectual structures, value system and operative categories of the young interviewees.

As mentioned above, two types of the interviewees, adherents of each party, were distinguished: the pro-Europeans and the Eurosceptics. In specific, the conception of pro-European attitude relates to the support of an active engagement to the EU, and the consideration of the Greek membership in the European project as beneficial, as well as to a positive stance towards the process of European integration (Schnapper 2015). On the

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[4] See https://nd.gr/ekloges-2019
[5] See https://kinimaallagis.gr/programma/
[6] See https://www.iefimerida.gr/news/276937/o-syriza-apokiryssei-parelthon-toy-ti-diegrapsan-apo-katastatiko-toy-kommatos-pdf

contrary, Euroscepticism refers to "the unsettled and principally contested character of the European Union as a political entity: its basic purpose and rationale, its institutional design and its future trajectory" (Trenz & de Wilde 2012). The present study heavily draws from the social surveys conducted by Dianeosis, a Greek research centre working within the framework of the EU Cupesse project, since 2016. These studies refer to the beliefs and attitudes of Greeks and especially of the Greek youngsters. In addition, other relevant national and international social surveys will be used within the framework of the relevant theory.

We will first focus on the question of the collective identity (who are we?), on how this "We", in the sense of the Greek citizens as a human group, is represented in the consciousness of the young interviewees that see themselves as the subject of their own history (Descombes 2016: 157, 196). We will then explore how they perceive the political entity in which all the elements of their social life are assembled, become meaningful and are held together (Manent 2006: 10). As a theoretical starting point, we draw from the assumption that collective identity (the sense of we-ness) is not conferred on a society only through the constituent power that determines the conditions for membership in the political body (political identity) (see Descombes 2016: 194). The most important role in the building of a collective identity is played by social practices, habits of mind, moral standards, collective ways of doing things (cultural identity) that are produced and reproduced by the "instituting power" (Descombes 2016: 193).

This power precedes every political exercise of public authority, is fundamental in a society, implicit and pertains to the instituting social imaginary that is language, ideas, freedom, truth, customs, habits, traditions, moral and political strands etc. Everybody participates in the production and evolution of the instituting social imaginary (Castoriadis 1991: 168). It is the prerequisite of every learning process in a society to have a ground of an implicit cognitive infrastructure of social conventions and rules that supports the understanding of common reality and the development of expectations. This "pre-political" social infrastructure is the always present and continuously self-changing "primary material" of a political community that comes from the past is transmitted from generation to generation through centuries and is an integral element of the self-instituting political community "texture" (Waldenfels 1985: 48).

The reference to a social imaginary by Castoriadis (not to ideology as Dumont does in Dumont 1986) alludes to the fact that participation in a historical tradition requires imagination as the faculty of invention and conception (Descombes 2016: 195). This means that the reception by a human group of its tradition, language, customs, and so on, presupposes the restitution and recreation of them, their alteration and transformation. In this sense, when we speak about the collective identity of a human group, we refer to its diachronic identity and historical self-transformation, as well as its self-consciousness (Descombes 2016: 195). The perception by Greeks of their collective identity proves to be true when they say things like "We are the Greeks who long ago defeated the Turks".

Therefore "collective identity belongs to the realm of the imaginary" (Descombes 2016: 196). For the Greek collective imaginary, what is very important is the distinction made by Descombes in reference to Castoriadis between the unreal or mystifying imaginary and the instituting imaginary (Descombes 2016: 197). The unreal or mystifying imaginary represents in its absence something that is not present where we are, but it is present elsewhere, or it was in a former time or it could be. The high self-image of Greeks and their understanding

of their country as a small-big cultural power, based on the deep entrenched byzantine and ancient Greece texture (Moschonas 2016: 5), belong to the mystifying imaginary, because it refers to a mere reproductive or imitative imagination. On the contrary, the instituting imaginary does not involve an unreal imaginary, it involves an implicit social infrastructure that forms the image people have about the world, their values, and so on. We therefore try to make intelligible what image the interviewees have about themselves and their society, about their values, about the "We-ness" in their consciousness and their relationship with Europe and the strong foreigners (Moschonas 2016: 5).

We will further attempt to interpret their sayings conceived as indices of the implicit Greek cognitive infrastructure and thereby try to decipher how these self-alternating cultural patterns of the Greek society find expression in youngsters'' beliefs and cultural values concerning their social and political community, Europe and the strong foreign institutions.

But given that the Greek youngsters have been socialised in the era of the network society and new media, where reality is mediatised by new techniques of simulation and virtualisation, it was undertaken a further methodological step; that is, a network analysis, on the base of which the relationship between the young social media users' political orientations and their political attitudes towards EU and the strong "Others" is explored. The applied online method aims to cast more light on how the Greek youth actually use the social media, showing the dynamic structure of online interactions and opinion formation from a quantitative perspective. Moreover, network metrics aims to identify the fragmented structure of social media according to distinct political attitudes and perceptions about the "We", the powerful "Others", and Europe. In addition, the epistemological mixture between quality and quantity brings to the fore the relational character of the phenomena under study.

2. Methodological issues

This study can be seen as an effort to understand how the young interviewees of all the prevailing political orientations perceive their social and political community, Europe and the strong foreign institutions. Seventeen qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted, respectively five with young adults, aged 18-32, of the centre right, the centre left and the radical left (all graduates) and two of the extreme right. What must be noted here is the difficulty to find adherents of Golden Dawn, the extreme neo-fascist party. Despite the small number of the interviewees, their statements could give an adequate image of the extreme right way of thinking that corresponds to the ideological arsenal of Golden Dawn (Georgiadou 2018).

The selection of the interviewees was random and done in order to gain qualitative data and decipher their cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, reflections, dilemmas, and so on, concerning their collective identity, Europe and the strong foreigners. The questions posed to the interviewees were in accordance with their ability to understand them, their everyday language and their knowledge and experience in Greek society. The creation of a questionnaire as our own thinking guide preceded the interviews (Heidenreich 2014). It was based on three thematic units and the questions formulated on the ground of theoretically substantiated reasons, strategies and reflections concerning concrete topics. The first unit referred to the perception by the young interviewees of the diverse facets of their collective

identity. The same procedure was followed for the other two units, namely the interviewees' perception of the European Union and of the strong Others.

The end phase of the research is a processing and analysis of the interviews' qualitative material. In this context, we have created two types of interviewees of all the political orientations, the pro-Europeans and the Eurosceptics, as a result of abstracting generalisations of individual features that were found during the analysis. This analysis was guided by the set of thoughts, theories, hypothesis, correlations as tools of inquiry (Dewey 1927: 202), expressed during the theoretical underpinning of the questions. It was focused on the connection of the abstract scientific discourse with the discourse of the interviewees. Our work was a permanent dialectic interaction between their sayings and the interpretation frames. We also attempted not only to empathise with the interviewees, but to understand this indigenous way of thinking (Kaufmann 2014: 15).

The research is based on the assumption that collective identity does involve imagining or representing things, but the imaginary it involves is an instituting social imaginary in the sense of a rich symbolic source of the institutions of the Greek society that organise the life of people, as well as a potential source for the creation of social imaginary significations that determine its values, what is true or false, just or unjust (Castoriadis 1997: 263). The question is whether this instituting subterranean imaginary is combined with the greatest possible reflectiveness in the public instituting activity and in the exercise of politics (Castoriadis 1991: 172). As every individual incorporates fragments of the social (ideas, images, models, expressions) and keeps them in a raw state by collecting these fragments, we observe directly the social in an active process (Kaufmann 2014: 96). The "more an idea is incorporated in the implicit and largely socialised cognitive infrastructure of a society, the greater is its power of social structuration (Kaufmann 2014: 98). Therefore, it will be attempted to show if in the sayings of the interviewees come to the fore the instituted modern dimensions of social constraints, a sense of the common interest of their society and an effective collective reflectiveness concerning their social and political community, Europe and the strong foreign institutions.

3. The Greek youth and the perception of the "We"

3.1. Who are "We"?

In order to understand how the young interviewees of all the prevailing political orientations perceive the diverse facets of their collective identity, we will try to make intelligible how they think about the complex way in which the same and the different are woven in the Greek society, how they perceive civic responsibility, how they frame religion and the ancient Greek past, what it means for them to be politically represented and if they feel represented by the representatives they have supported, how the Greek instituting social imaginary and the imaginary significations it produces (values, habits, ideas, truth, moral and political strands, etc.) are expressed in their individual imaginary. Castoriadis emphasises that we cannot escape the anonymous power of the social historical field insofar it constrains what we can do (Castoriadis 1991: 150).

In order to make intelligible how the political collectivity is represented in the consciousness of the interviewees and makes them feel that they are Greek citizens we have asked them what they think about the Greek citizens of foreign origin (Turks, Germans, Pakistanis etc.). The theoretical starting point concerning the perception of the nation-political collective

body by the interviewees refers to the showing of the connection between the political democratic form and the values of the society that finds its collective identity within this political form. Following the sociological definition of the nation, we consider the nation as "a materially and morally integrated society with a stable and permanent central power, with fixed borders and a relative moral, mental and cultural unity of its inhabitants who consciously adhere to the State and its laws" (Descombes 2016: 165; see Mauss 1969: 584).

The interviewees of all political orientations, the adherents of Golden Dawn included, consider themselves as same and equal with the Greek citizens of other national origin. In "Le sentiment du semblable ", the feeling about the other citizens as those like oneself or equal to oneself, Tocqueville has seen as the central affect of the man of democracies (Manent 2006: 14), the active core and intimate reason of all the transformations that characterise the democratic life (Manent 2006: 24). To this stance of the young interviewees towards Greek citizens of foreign origin do correspond the results of the Dianeosis 2017 survey (Dianeosis 2017a), concerning the attitudes of young people ages 17-24 on migration issues, where they appear more progressive in percentages up to double the rate of the general population. For example, 54,8% react positively to the word "Muslim" (36,3% of the general population), 63% to word "Jews" (44,4% of the general population), 76,3% agree that the children of immigrants born in Greece should be immediately granted Greek citizenship, they would hire individuals of Albanian origin, 66,1% agree that building mosques in Greece would not bother them. Concerning their identity perception, it is very important the finding that 61,8% believe that they "become Greeks", they are not born Greeks.

3.1.1. "We" and the sense of responsibility

Given the bankruptcy of the Greek state in 2010 and the following series of EU/IMF bailouts, linked to the implementation of reforms and harsh austerity measures (Featherstone 2011; Mitsopoulos & Pelagidis 2011; Pappas 2013), the interviewees were asked to respond to the question whether they think this condition makes them responsible as Greek citizens towards the Greek political community, the Greek state and the lenders, as well as what they think the Greek state has to do regarding the acceptance of the three bailouts that rescued Greece from sovereign default and covered its financial needs.

Castoriadis points out that democracy is connected with self-limitation, but this self-limitation depends on the formation of individuals who have internalised the necessity of law and are capable of interrogation, self-control, self-discipline and reflection on the implicit cognitive infrastructure of the society (Castoriadis 1991: 173-174). It is the classical liberal conception of autonomy connected with the self- determined imposition of rules that constrain freedom and is based on implicit conventions and common expectations (Ladeur 2007: 408; Descombes 2004: 434). In the era of the network society, the self-transformation processes are accelerating so much that the openness for the new diversity of options plays down the obligation to self-constraint and self-discipline.

Under conditions of high existential uncertainty, as well as of the re-organisation of the world of experience and the invisibility of the social context, a new type of person, the "identitarian person" (Ladeur 2007: 397), clearly prevails. The identitarian person actively negates the internalisation of social constraints. The modern form of responsibility for the consequences of one's own acting, linked to a previously justified community or common thing (Ladeur 2007: 405), decreases and an eroding of responsibility emerges, which ignores

the constraints of sociality. The decreasing sense of civic responsibility nowadays involves expressing opinion about everything without serious knowledge of the social rules and the objective constraints (Frankfurt 2005: 65).

Responsibility in the new era is not assumed through the acceptance of rules, conventions, common presumptions or stocks of knowledge; it results from the factual failure to impose responsibility through norms accepted by all (Ladeur 2007: 407). In addition, responsibility involves a moderate behaviour and the necessity to act (within society) with constraints and with commitments that enable the linking of chains of action and the building of networks of action (Ladeur 2007: 411). In this sense, responsibility is mediated by rule ethics that accept the anonymous sovereignty of the social self-organisation and operates with the inherent constraints and possibilities (Ladeur 2007: 412). However, what should be taken into serious consideration in the Greek case is that the practice of responsible doing does not belong to the self-instituting political community "texture" of the society, where deeply rooted cultural patterns of the pro-modern era can be found (Demertzis 1997: 109). Despite the process of economic and social restructuring that took place in the '50s, '60s and the post-junta era, the cultural patterns based on the Greek family (and its informal and formal social networks) have not changed; the crisis has even more forged the family bonds (Dianeosis 2017a; Tsekeris 2018; Tsekeris et al. 2017).

The Greek individual somehow reflects the economic and social prescriptions as well as the moral perceptions of their family strategy embedded in wider networks of interest groups (Pelagidis 2009). In contrast to the Western societies, liberal structures have not been developed in Greece, that is, structures centred on the individual and its virtues (ethic of responsibility, autonomy, and moderation), and practiced on the basis of individual self-discipline and self-limitation. This means that, in the Greek society, there is a transition to the postmodern era of permissiveness and consumerism with a deeply rooted lack of the instituted modern dimensions of civic culture, as well as of the educational training in self-confidence (Lipowatz 2014: 108).

Based on these thoughts about the contemporary meaning of responsibility, we proceed to examine the ways in which the interviewees perceive and reflect on their civic responsibility towards their political community, as well as on their commitment to the common interest and the public good, given the fact that Greece largely depends on the European institutions and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to reclaim an independent financial life and to enter a normality in the world financial system (that is, an essential precondition for a normal social life).

The only pro-European SYRIZA adherent said: "*I am feeling responsible in the sense that after all what was done and that we have responded to the help we have received and come to this result, we must respect the spirit of the reforms in order to go ahead and for a better future perspective* ". It must be said that this pertains to a responsible stance towards the common good, as well as to a spirit of compromise, over against the toxifying anti-memoranda position. In the next answer about the memoranda, she is very critical to the lenders. She recognizes that she does not know many things about the memoranda, but as long as her party was not in power, she was against them: *"In the past, I did understand the logic of the memoranda, but I liked all this rising against the memoranda and the bad strong Europeans who wanted to punish us. But not only Greece is responsible for the memoranda. It has to do with economic circles on world level. And surely responsible were the former governments and the people that voted for them".* The interviewee seemed to have a

diffuse understanding of the general interest, the roots of the crisis, and the responsibility of the Greek political actors. Notwithstanding the fact that the lenders of Greece have a large responsibility for the failures in planning and application mostly of the first memorandum (Simitis 2016: 35ff), it is however known that the Greek governments (including the SYRIZA government) and the opposition parties have let the lenders alone to find political solutions. They have never presented their own proposals justified with concrete measures or accepted the ownership of the reforms (Simitis 2016: 20ff, 26, 40-45). And they presented themselves as victims of blackmail by the lenders, in order to enhance their self-preservation and maintain the trust of their voters. Despite the alleged end of the memoranda, the Greek economy continues to seriously suffer from many structural problems (Pagoulatos 2018).

Another Eurosceptic interviewee, adherent of SYRIZA, said: "*I haven't any responsibility toward the state … I consider responsible for the bailouts the state, the lenders, the people, the corrupt politics equally … It would be better if a bankruptcy occurred…*". His sayings, in combination with the sayings of the other three adherents, were limited to their own thinking and personal world, without any reference to the social ensemble.

Let's briefly summarise three findings. First, the statements of the interviewees belonging to the centre right (three of them are pro-Europeans) were differentiated concerning their sense of responsibility. One of them explained that: "*The memoranda had to be accepted mainly as a subject of respect towards myself, as it was shown in a bitter way after 2015, there was not an alternative".* A real sense of responsibility and self-respect. Two others said: "*Well done with the memoranda, but they had to be better implemented … The Memoranda were necessary for the Greek state in order to do deep reforms"*. In contrast, a fourth one, who was Eurosceptic, characteristically said*: "I think that some European countries had to pay without to oblige us to do reforms".*

Second, the centre left adherents are pro-European. One of them said:

> "*As a responsible citizen, I have to understand the reforms… and to have information about the memoranda and what is really needed so that my country can change to better".*

This participant showed to be fully aware of his civil tasks. Two others explained that:

> "*The memoranda had to have taken place years before, they foresee things that were self-evident for the companies and, in general, everywhere … since you are a citizen, you must accept and comply with memoranda and the new economic obligations, so that the state will not be disintegrated"*.

Actually, all of them had full consciousness of their responsibilities as citizens.

Third, the two interviewees adherents of *Golden Dawn* were Eurosceptics. The first explained that:

> "*Greece had to go bankrupt and not sign memoranda. We had made a formal bankruptcy and everything was OK, incredible as it seems. But the bankers didn't want that".*

His thinking was captive in his extreme right world (Georgiadou 2013: 75 ff.), incapable to transcend his direct interests. The second said:

"A responsibility towards my state is to pay taxes and comply with my obligations. But I'm against the memoranda". It is a very confused perception of responsibility that misses any sense of public interest.

These findings, referring to the acceptance of the memoranda by the interviewees of the centre right and the centre left, are only partly in accordance with the statements of the most recent survey of Dianeosis (2018), which concludes that 6 of 10 Greeks believe that "the memoranda were a necessary bad thing because of the unfavorable position of the country"; and 7 of 10 believe that "the memoranda were an invention of the Europeans in order to exploit our country" (Dianeosis 2018: 27-28). In the same survey, it is found that the new generation (up to 39) are more ardent supporter of the drachma (Dianeosis 2018: 9). Concerning the self-understanding of responsibility, in the sense of a conscious acceptance of the general interest, the finding of this research is that, on a collective level, Greeks (73,3%) are mainly interested in their individual well-being, even at the expense of the collective good and the social whole (Dianeosis 2018: 52). As the Greek historian Maria Efthymiou (2017: 3) writes in the Dianeosis 2017 survey: "Our fixation on the family is certainly associated with the fact that, through it, we nestle into our tight cocoon and do not care about our society as a whole".

3.1.2. "We" and the crisis of political representativeness

In Marcel Gauchet's opinion, "the real politics is a reflection of the whole on the conditions of a society and the way to orient it towards the future" (Gauchet 2018: 9). As it results from the literature and the relevant surveys (not only in Greece, but also in all other EU countries) (e.g. Eurobarometer 2017, Trust in Institutions), this meaning of real politics is a desideratum. Greece (13 %) is after Slovenia (17 %) and Spain (18%) at the bottom of the scale of the EU members concerning the trust of its people to the national government. In the recent surveys of Dianeosis (2017 and 2018), a serious crisis of trust towards the political elites is observed.

In the Dianeosis survey of July 2017 (Dianeosis 2017b), focusing on youth unemployment, 61,3% of the respondents, aged between 18 and 35, do not trust the political parties. No doubt, this lack of confidence towards the political system as a whole also has to do with the outbreak of the unprecedented financial crisis that has triggered fundamental changes in the hitherto political system, considered as responsible for this vast economic and social disaster (Nikolakopoulos & Voulgaris 2014: 26, 94; Teperoglou & Tsatsanis 2014; 222-242; Vasilopoulou et al. 2014: 388-402).

Today, serious mutations occur in all Western representative democracies that have to do with globalisation and the way it is fracturing societies, the loss of touch between the popular electorate and the representatives, and the impact of the digital world combined with societal transformation (Urbinati 2015: 1ff). The complexity of the contemporary societies casts light into the consubstantial problem of the representative democracy, in the sense of the difference of views that the represented and the representatives have on the same subjects.

This problem is aggravated by the incapacity of our societies to define the problems that the representatives had to tackle; politics respond to requests that do not deal with the problems (Gauchet 2018; Müller 2018). In this spirit, two adherents of the centre right said:

> *"Most of them don't represent me, I think that the whole Parliament is on false basis…"*

> *"They don't represent me, the elected politicians are coming from the party apparatus, they don't express ideas, they are not personalities".*

An adherent of SYRIZA similarly argued:

> *"No, I don't think so… No, they don't represent me, they do nothing for their people… our parliamentarians are indifferent, in a je m'en fou phase, my representatives don't love their countries like politicians in other countries who love their people".*

What it can also be observed here is a disappointment of the SYRIZA adherents towards their governing party which has broken its electoral promises against the lenders and Europe (Dendrinou & Varvitsioti 2019: 111ff).

The two adherents of Golden Dawn said:

> *"Nobody does his job in a right way, but when you vote for a party, you don't agree with all the things it claims…"*

> *"They are all exactly the same!"*

Manent (2006: 54) also observes that unemployment and insecurity are not enough to explain the growing alienation of the citizens: "More important is undoubtedly the loss of the representative capacity of the political dispositive". In Greece, during the last ten years, many people doubt the quality level of the parliamentarians of all the represented parties. In this line, a very competent adherent of the centre right said:

> *"I don't feel that I'm represented by the staff of the National Parliament and the Greek Parliamentarians… From the other side, I do understand that they are a very representative sample of the so-called average Greek citizen… they don't represent me at all. They are inaccessible, so they don't know the problems of the people they represent".*

In the same sense, the adherents of the centre left responded:

> *"I think that nobody represents me to some degree…."*

> *"Not at all, I think that, as time goes by, our Parliament has reached an absolute low level…"*

A more self-critical adherent of *SYRIZA* has taken a similar position:

> *"Up to a point, they represent me ideologically, I can see it realistically, even if they don't identify with what I am thinking of… To some degree, not absolutely, I think the level of the political life and of the political debates is very low…"*

Nowadays, the modern society cannot find a national and social expression, although all its parts participated at the representative dispositive. There is not any excluded part, the exclusion is nowadays an individual issue (Manent 2006: 55). Concerning the governments, they find themselves incapable to implement the indispensable reforms (the stalemate in many European countries, such as Italy and France, as well as in Greece under continuous adjustment measures), a fact that leads to weak representative governments that do not represent and do not actually govern. It is thus embarrassing that democratic values, in the political sense, i.e. the government of the self, are not fully perceived.

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This political problem becomes all the more intractable, as it results from the growing incomprehension and inaccessibility of the implicit social norms and patterns of action in the European societies. In Greece, the long lasting economic and social crisis, in combination with the deeply rooted cultural patterns of the society, have made more evident the problem of "representativeness" and more difficult a rational management of the long lasting social and economic problems (Simitis 2016: 31ff; Zeri 2017: 4).

3.1.3. "We" and religion

In a Pew Research Center's survey (2017a) on religious belief and national belonging in Central and Eastern Europe, it was found that 39% of Greeks aged between 18 and 34, as well as 76% of the whole population, believe that being Orthodox is important to being truly Greek. In this context, Begzos (in Lakasas 2017) observes that Greeks participate in religious rituals, but they don't go to church often, their belief is personal, mystical, or experiential, and their relationship to Orthodoxy is ambivalent, rather than simple or naïve; the orthodox belief is a social glue.

In a recent survey conducted by Dianeosis, in March 2018, 84,7% of the Greeks declare that they believe in God and have close relationship with religion and church (48% are churchgoers). Against the Pew Research Center's (2017a) survey data of the same year, only 24,3 % believes that to be a Greek means to be a Christian Orthodox. The Greek Orthodox Church comes third on the scale concerning the trust to institutions. In contrast to the 84,7% of the whole population, 64,4% from the young people say that they believe in God. It is noteworthy that although 54% of Greeks are against the separation between the State and the Church;[7] however, 84% are for the taxation of the church property and 71% believe that priests should be paid from church resources and not by the Greek government, namely from their taxes.

The outcome of the assessment of the way Greeks think about religion and Orthodoxy is an apparent change in the way they reflect on what "Orthodoxy" means to them. Of course, this has to do with the hard reality of the current economic crisis. As a major event, the economic crisis can trigger an upheaval in the fabric of the self and the mechanics of the individual identity of all social members (Kaufmann 2011: 222). The long awaited and missing "Kulturarbeit" (Zaltzmann 2007: 65), in the sense of reflection and workings of the people on the Greek unconscious instituting social imaginary (its truths, customs, traditions, memories, and so on), is at least in a slow setting process. That's why the "Helleno-Christian" ideology, on which the ideological hegemony of the Greek Orthodox Church has been based over centuries (Christopoulos 1999), becomes more and more blurry.[8]

As Marantzidis concludes (Dianeosis 2017a: 31), the long-lasting economic crisis has deeply affected the Greek society and changed deeply-seated ideas and mentalities. Interestingly, only 17,2% believes that to be "Greek" is identical with the "Christian Orthodox", 48,3% agree that "you become Greek", and 47% opt for "you are born Greek". This is a relatively

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[7] See https://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/dimoskopisi-tvxs-diaxorismos-kratoys-%E2%80%93-ekklisias-nai-i-oxi
[8] There is a rich literature about the dominant role of the "Helleno-Christian" ideology in the Greek political culture, expressed in the Greek Constitution that enshrines Orthodoxy as dominant religion in Greece (Demertzis 1994: 41-75; Chrysoloras 2005: 40-61; Lipowatz 2014: 102ff).

big step, given that seventeen years ago 2,5 million Greeks have undersigned a petition against the fact that the religion of the Greek citizens per law was removed from the identity card. Concerning such a demand to the Church by the participants in the Dianeosis survey, it is noted: "this finding is healthy and hopeful, because to live requires embracing change. And something can live when it is adjusted to the needs of the society, while remaining its part, so that the one affects the other" (Efthymiou 2017: 3).

We now proceed to explore the way the interviewees perceive and reflect on the relation of the Greek state and religion. We first asked if they consider the fact that the Greek Constitution is written *In the Name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity* as an element of a democratic regime. And second, what they are thinking when they see a picture of the Orthodox Archbishop and other ecclesiastical ministers blessing the first plenary session of parliament of the year. The adherents of centre right said:

> "*This preamble of the Constitution is a product of past times that has not any substantial effect … It is built on the truths and myths of the new Greek state, it doesn't come to contradiction to the secular state … It is good, because it shows that there is a higher reason*".

> "*There is always a religious dimension in the democratic procedures, that democracy must first of all be based on religion, that first comes religion and then democracy. But in my view has no relation to religion … I cannot understand how the Constitution is related to religion*".

> "*I think that the Constitution is based on the religious values of the Greek state, of the Christianity on which is built the Greek state, the roots are deep and it is difficult to separate the one from the other*".

> "*It is the first time that I'm hearing of it and I would prefer that it doesn't exist … This correlation between the religion of Christianity and the state, I think it is a source of bad things concerning the function of the state and the mentality of people*".

From the sayings of the interviewees of the centre right, it becomes evident that the "exit of religion" (Gauchet 1998), which characterises the modernity movement, did never take place in Greece. This heavily rests on the structuring of the Greek state. The separation between state and church, the transition from the heteronymous structuration to the autonomous structuration of the society, could not be realised (Christopoulos 1999). Only three of the participants consider the Greek-Christian ideology as an inherent element of Greek democracy. The transfiguration of sovereignty and the perception of the democratic state as the work of people cannot be understood.

Religion is not considered as a private thing; the concept of the neutrality of the state as a ground principle of democracy escapes from their perception horizon, together with the freedom of religion as a democratic, worth-protecting good that differs from the democratic state institutions and is in distance to them. For the majority of the population (and our respondents), the abstract values order of a democratic state is not based on a mutual respect and autonomy, but on the subjecting of the democratic state to the Greek-Orthodox ideology. In the western European countries, religion is conceived as an outstanding individual thing that is enshrined in the personal world. It does not structure the state.

In this regard, the adherent of centre left declared: "*In my opinion, it is wrong that the preamble of the Constitution refers to the religion. Church and state have a different role in the society. I don't like, when the prime minister takes an oath before the priest.*", "*It does*

not bother me, but it was necessary, I think", "*It does not annoy me, because the majority of Greeks are Orthodox and we are a country with an official religion*", "*I think that means to have justice in the life*". Only one of the respondents has a democratic perception of the relation of a democratic state to religion. The others are ignorant of the subject.

The adherent of the radical left argued:

> "*I find it as hypocritical for both sides, the prime minister and the church. On the stage is the connection of the politician with the religious, so that the religious makes the politicians trustworthy … I don't like that it continues to exist this connection between state and church … Some things that come from centuries ago are difficult to change. This image is a third-world image … I think that the government must not have a close relationship with the church … In all this theatre, there's only something for being seen … I think that religious and political things have to be separated. Greeks don't discard easily the tradition, particularly the older people*".

The interviewees of the radical left were unanimously for a secular state and its separation from religion that was considered as belonging to the personal area. It has rather to do with the long-lasting anti-clerical and atheist position of the left and not with a liberal attitude of the interviewees (Halikiopoulou 2017). As Gauchet (2018) notes, the claimed atheism is only in appearance; in reality, it does not hinder the unconscious mobilisation of a religious foundation, because there is sometimes an abyss between what people believe and what they really think. From the two adherents of *Golden Dawn*, the first was against the church, characterised as a *"corrupt institution", "the worst clan by far"*.[9] The second said "*I'm a nationalist and I'm going every Sunday to the church. I don't accept a mosque; I don't accept the Muslim mentality. There are corrupt people in the church, but it has not to do with religion*". For the second interviewee, the freedom of religion and consciousness as a fundamental liberty does not exist.

3.1.4. "We" and the high self-perception

During the last decades, all surveys that refer to what Greeks believe about themselves illustrate a very high self-image. According to the survey of Kapa Research (2001), which took place in the era of high consumerism, almost 85% of the Greeks thought that Greece had to offer something important to the West. Seventeen years later, in the era of a deep economic crisis, the self-image has only slightly changed. The Dianeosis surveys of 2017a (71,3%) and 2018 (74,6%) confirm this high self-image, which is based on the ancient Greek and Byzantine past endowed with a diachronic identity. This past constitutes a deeply seated texture of the Greek self-image and a constant recourse to it takes place every time that Greeks feel vulnerable in relation to the outside world (Lipowatz 2014: 109). The rallies against the use of the ancient name of Macedonia by FYROM in 2018 were particularly focused on the figure of Alexander the Great, who lived 2,300 years ago.

As mentioned above, this perception of a continuity between the ancient Greek past and our present does not constitute an illusion concerning a feeling of pride by the Greeks who celebrate the glorious past as they could appropriate it, because they have nothing to do with it (Descombes 2016: 151). Contemporary Greek society is not a historical society defined by the transmission of institutions from the ancient past through time from one

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[9] Golden Dawn has an ambivalent stance toward the Church; it is for the Orthodox Christianity, but against the priesthood (Psarras 2012: 232).

generation to a generation that follows, so that it has been prepared for this role through education. Neither is able to attribute self-consciousness to itself by tracing back over the past the historical transformations of its group. The recourse to ancient Greek figures and the meaning they give to the images of the ancient Greeks are materialised by a mere reproductive or imitative imagination (Descombes 2016: 197).

In February 2018, when the Macedonia naming dispute was well underway, we carried out a quantitative research at Panteion University, in which 217 students (aged between 18 and 22) participated. Interestingly, 73% rejected the name "Democracy of Macedonia" for FYROM, 55% were against any reference to the term "Macedonia" as a part of a future solution, and 58% did not accept a composite name that could include the term "Macedonia". To sum up, a large majority of the students was against the use of the term "Macedonia" in the official name of FYROM. In another quantitative research carried out on Twitter during the so-called "Macedonia rallies" (Zeri et al. 2018), it was found that in most tweets the image of Alexander the Great was dominant. Within all discussions in Twitter, there was not any evidence that the participants had serious knowledge about the historical background of the Macedonian issue, or that they could elaborate on the past and the historical transformations of the people who lived over the centuries in this region. There was often a reference to Alexander the Great by a mere reproductive or imitative imagination. In the 2016 Dianeosis survey, Moschonas argues that "the texture of ancient Greece and Byzantium, the past, constitutes an active element of the contemporary Greek identity, it is considered always present and always strong and shapes the self-image of Greece that is constructed as a small, big cultural power" (Moschonas 2016: 4-5). This enduring high self-perception is shared by the citizens of all possible social and political groups (Panagiotopoulos 2004: 195).

We now try to investigate how the interviewees of all political orientations reflect on the ancient past and whether they share the same high self-perception of their country as a "small, big cultural power". According to the supporter of the centre right:

> "*Greece is the number one in the history of civilizations. Greeks are people with very wide horizons, they will contribute to the advance of Europe … Greek history is so great that I cannot put Greece in the same level with Europe".*

For the supporter of the radical left:

> *"In some issues against the Europeans we are right up front … The West is somewhere else. We have nothing common. Europeans do not accept that after the fall of Byzantium all the great architects of Byzantium came to Europe and have constructed all these beautiful buildings".*

Nobody from the interviewees of the centre left expressed feelings of pride about ancient Greece or Byzantium. The *Golden Dawn* adherents were very proud of their country and its ancient past:

> "*We have the best strategic place in the whole world, we unite three continents. Greece is very important because of its history. It has an enormous wealth in Gold and minerals … We are much-much superior to the Europeans, that's why they aim for our exploitation. We have created the history. They are jealous of us, because we have the more beautiful places, they aim to acquire some from our own places. They don't want that we are Greece, Greek men and women and Christianity".*

In this regard, Maria Efthymiou (in "Kathimerini" newspaper, 08.01.2018) says:

"We don't hear what is said to us, that we have to change ourselves and become serious. We like to live in the conspiracy theories, that all the foreigners covet our country, are jealous for our good climate, our mineral resources, and so on".

3.2 "We" and Europe

The European construction began as a peace, prosperity and common project of the old European nations, primarily France and Germany, based on the fundamental principles of democracy, freedoms and social market economy, in order to put an end to the devastating wars of the past and open a new future with visionary perspectives (Manent 2006: 50). The first "small Europe" has namely established a community around a common matter and signified an endless process that aimed at the unity of common good with freedom (Manent 2006: 97). It was a project of the national elites, but also a product of deliberation that has taken place in the societies of the six founding members and resulted in its acceptance. There was a response to the question "what have we to do" (Manent 2006: 61). However, once "small Europe" has been proved as a successful issue, the new candidates were not obliged to give a clear view and an intransigent sense on what they had in mind to do.

The extension of the EU and the accession of new members was rather a blind process; it was not the result of a wide civic deliberation, mobilising and synthesising complex arguments concerning the essential political challenges and the perspective for Europe to become one of the big actors of the world (Manent 2006: 65). That was obviously not without consequences concerning the consistency of the EU and the erosion phenomena of the last instance. The accession of Greece to the EEC did not precede a deliberation of what Europe means for the Greeks and the Others. Two years after the accession of Greece to the EEC, in 1981, a new political party, PASOK, came to power, with a triumphant rate of 48,07%. PASOK leader, the Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou, had as central slogan "EOK kai NATO to idio syndikato" (The EEC and NATO are the same syndicate) (Marantzidis 2017: 9; Vasilopoulou 2018: 5).

In the course of its deployment, Europe has deeply transformed its meaning. A deep change has occurred in the world, an implicit implosion that has disturbed the relations between the society and the political power, the link between the past, the present and the future (Gauchet2017a: 30). The "new world" (Gauchet 2017b) is the world of globalisation, where the same market rules apply everywhere, independently of the national framework. It has brought about the separation of the two dimensions of the fabric of being together, namely, the authority of the state (production of collective identity) and its incorporation in the nation (Gauchet 2017c). Everywhere in the world, the triumph of the nation-state is growing, because the people want to continue to live within the framework of the national borders. Today, the nation-states remain extremely powerful actors. The more disturbing phenomenon of this new world is the change of the role of the political, which does not order any more "from above" the rules for the collective organisation of the society, although it is present overall in our life, but it constitutes the infrastructure of the society that allows the opening of the societies between each other.

Another effect of globalisation is the deep divide it creates within the occidental societies between the people who benefit from it and those who lose, because their political communities have reduced their protective role and the assurance of the identity of its members. Here is the source of the populist protest and the discourse of post-truth, a

version of the oppositional culture developed in the social media (Gauchet 2017c: 20) and focused on the political in its symbolic dimension. This populist discourse concerns the political community which is exposed to the risks of globalisation and is considered by the vulnerable populations as being in danger. What has actually become the main contradiction in our political societies is the divergence of perspectives between the people of the *anywhere* (Goodhart 2017: 19), who desire to be everywhere, and the people of the *somewhere*, who desire to stay somewhere. In such context, it has to be noted that, in this new era, a differentiated notion of the individual rights that establishes the supremacy of the individual over the social structures inherited from the past emerges. This is important for the perception of the self in the globalised societies.

Since 2010, Greece is in a deep economic crisis, and received three international bailouts from the EU and the IMF, linked to major reforms and austerity measures that had a serious impact on the society. This triggered a fundamental change in the political system and brought to power left-and right-wing populist parties that make more difficult the management of the much-needed policies (Ioakeimidis 2018: 63). Unemployment, in general, and youth unemployment, in particular, are among the highest in the EU (Eurostat 2018; Tsekeris et al. 2015). However, Greece is an EU member and a part of the globalised society, participating in European and global networks that affect its economic, social and political status (and, conversely, it somehow affects the transnational economic, social and political processes). That's why it is important to explore how Greeks, young Greeks and the interviewees perceive themselves and Greece in relation to the European Union under the conditions of the serious economic crisis that has deeply changed their life.

Brexit has made evident the unique problem of the EU, that is, the "fragmented realities of different societies with their own multiple histories that are full of specific hidden intricacies of implicit social norms, patterns of behavior, forms of life, memories, which are characteristic for the 'instituted society' as opposed to the 'constituted society' of explicit (legal norms) (Descombes 2013)" (Ladeur 2016: 1). This heterogeneity of the member states of the EU and their unequal conditions of life make the successful implementation of the same European rules in the societies of the member states difficult, a fact that deepens the differences between the members (the European deadlock with the tackling of the immigration crisis is an example). The closed professional systems in Greece, for example, is a reality that breaks the free competition rules of EU and is difficult to deal with (Ioakeimidis 2018: 64). In general, during the last eight years, we witness the difficulty of the Greek state and the Greek society to accept and implement reform measures and adjustment programs that have been missed since the EU accession of Greece.

Greece has its own history and social-historical development that differs substantially from the corresponding historical past and present of the "small Europe" of the founding members (Kostis 2015). On the base of the social surveys of Dianeosis and other recent surveys that refer to the perception of the European Union by the Greeks and the Greek youth and the sayings of the young interviewees framed by the relevant theory, we will attempt to decipher the intricacies of the Greek social imaginary concerning our relation to Europe.

The relationship of the Greek society to the European Union is a very complex and ambivalent issue (see Herzfeld 1987; Knight 2018). In the recent surveys of Dianeosis, it can be seen a diminishing Euroscepticism (30,5% in January 2018, 53,5% in December 2016, 59,9% in November 2015, 69% in April 2015). During the last years, since the outbreak of

the ongoing crisis, the attitudes of Greeks towards Europe had more to do with the serious impact in their life from the memoranda and the austerity measures than with deeply seated attitudes concerning Europe, its values and cultural, social and political importance (Ioakeimidis 2018).

Nowadays, a feeling of tiredness and the good relations that the government has with the European lenders, together with the insecurity attitudes of Greeks because of a threatening geopolitical environment (see Karvounis 2017), increased the acceptance of the EU (68% consider as positive the participation of Greece in the EU, 31 % as negative, according to Dianeosis 2018). A closer look at the other parameters of the image the respondents have about Europe, leads to differentiated assessments. Seven out of ten Greeks believe that the "Memoranda were the invention of the Europeans in order to exploit our country", although 6 from 7 agree that the "memoranda were a necessary evil because of the unfavorable situation of the country" (Dianeosis 2018). Almost 58% believe that the Europeans have mainly profited from the participation of Greece in the EU, while almost the half (48,9%) believe that Greece was damaged by its participation in the EU (Dianeosis 2018: 6).

These attitudes show, among other factors, a lack of information (or misinformation) about the important financial contributions of the EU to all the public works in Greece (Karvounis 2017: 8), a fact that is also a finding of the Dianeosis surveys and is described as "economic illiteracy" (Hatzis 2017: 9). In addition, 7 out of 10 Greeks believe that "Greeks are a people with a great history that stands out with its intelligence and civilization" (Dianeosis 2018). The stance towards the EU has to do with a timely conditioned attitude that changes depending on the circumstances. In the 1990s and the 2000s, during the era of increased public sector debt and private consumption based on a high household borrowing and inflow of European funding resources, the acceptance of Europe was in very high levels (Eurobarometer 1995) and there was no reason of discontent with Europe (Verney 2011: 51-80).

In the Dianeosis report of 2017, when Anti-Europeanism was still on the rise, Marantzidis maintains that there is "a kind of return to the '70s and the beginning of the '80s, when the society seemed divided in two or three parts on the Europe issue" (Dianeosis 2017a: 11ff), In the '70s and '80s, popular anti-European values were high on the political agenda of the governing socialists and the left political spectrum. However, the pro-European stance has been adopted by the majority of the population in the last 35 years (Marantzidis 2017: 19). The cultural divide between pro-European and anti-European attitudes rather refers to the strong current of a radical anti-Western and anti-European resentments of the left in the 1950s, in the aftermath of the civil war (Stefanidis 2010; Kalyvas & Marantzidis 2015: 507), which was revived in the 1970s by Papandreou's socialist movement (PASOK), the communist left and the radicalised left youth inspired by the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The civil-war trauma is a constituting element of the Greek instituted social imaginary which, on a symbolic level, determines the reference systems of the society (Demertzis 2018).

In order to explore and understand how our participants perceive the EU and reflect about it, we have to take into consideration many aspects of their social life. Greek young people are fragments of the Greek society, in the sense that they embody the essential core of the institutions and social imaginary significations instituted by their society (Castoriadis 1997: 266); they live in the era of a heavy socioeconomic crisis that has a serious impact on their being (Tsekeris et al. 2015), in the age of globalisation and of the supremacy of the

individual over the social structures, but also in the time of the digital networks that changes the way they perceive the world.

According to the European Youth Study 2018, carried out by pollster YouGov on behalf of TUI Foundation, support for the EU is rising again among Europe's young adults aged 18 to 34, while scepticism towards the democratic European institutions remains strong as it is as well towards the national political institutions (Young Europe 2018). Greek young adults place the lowest level of trust in the political system of their country (52 % are for a radical change of the political system, while in Italy are 43 % and in Spain 35 %); they are as well more critical concerning the design of their democratic system (66% followed by Italians 51 %).

In order to find out if young people have a democratic consciousness in the sense that they are able to reflect on the reasons of their thoughts and the motives of their acts (Castoriadis 1991: 165), a multi-faceted research design and that is a very complex issue is required (Zeri 2017). Only indications are possible on the basis of a quantitative research. For example, Greek adults, aged between 18 and 34, according to a survey of the Pew Research Center in 2016 (Pew Research Center 2016) about Euroscepticism, are found on the last end of the scale concerning their favor towards EU (37%) – most pro-Europeans are the young Polish (79%), then the Hungarians (63%), the Dutch (62%), and the Germans (60%).

According to the 2017 survey of the Greek Network for Europe, regarding the attitudes of the Greek youth, aged 16-25, towards Europe, young people are skeptical about the EU; most of them feel excluded from the social life because of the economic crisis. They acknowledge some accomplishments of the EU in their country, but they don't have any deep knowledge of the fundamental changes the EU has carried out in Greece. Interestingly, 54% do not recognise the contribution of the EU to the welfare state. Also, 40% of the respondents believe that the participation of Greece in the EU does not help their everyday life, whereby it is known that the major part of all public works is financed by the EU (Karvounis 2017).

In addition, 85,3% consider the freedom of movement, work and studies as the most important activity of the EU, as well as all the measures against the youth unemployment (93,2%). Due to the economic crisis and the high rates of unemployment of the Greek youth (45%, according to Eurostat 2018), it is sensible that youngsters' main problem is unemployment. In general, Europeans are divided along ideological lines in their views of the EU. In some nations, Euroscepticism is a right-wing issue (Pew Research 2016), in others it is a left-wing issue, and in others cuts across ideological lines. Among the interviewees of the radical left, four are Eurosceptics and have given the following statements about the EU:

> *"With memoranda EU has helped the banks not the Greek society".*

> *"I'm feeling more secure under the Greek and not under the European umbrella".*

> *"I think that the economic factor is a reason, why we should not be in the EU?".*

> *"I'm not so enthusiastic that we are in the EU".*

> *"I would prefer not to be in the EU, to be autonomous".*

Furthermore, the interviewees of the *Golden Dawn* were explicitly against the EU:

> *"It is the same thing either we are in the EU or outside it".*

"Europe doesn't offer to us anything, I think that we have taken steps backwards, not forward".

"It's not possible suddenly to be all of us a family and to live near a Moslem".

All the interviewees of the centre left were pro-European. From the five centre-right interviewees, two were Eurosceptic:

"We want to be in a united Europe but under Greek conditions, otherwise I don't want to be in Europe".

"I think that it would be better, if we were outside Europe, because if we were alone, we would be stronger economically and more cautious in the management of public finances".

Both of them considered Greece as the most important state because of the ancient Greek past. In the Eurosceptic interviewees' perceptions of the EU, it is largely ignored not only the character of the Union as a common project based on the western values of democracy and social welfare, but also the multifaceted EU financial contribution to social and cultural issues and institutional reforms, something that is confirmed by Dianeosis (Hatzis 2017: 8ff). The following is a selection of the relevant statements of the interviewees of all ideological directions.

From the centre right:

"The European Union is for me an agreement between nation states, that the common things outweigh their differences and it is for the interest of all of us to go together",

"I think the Greek people go ahead and we can contribute to the progress of Europe",

"For me, the European Union is an economic union and nothing else … I think that so long we are in Europe, it is dangerous to lose our identity"

"In the EU we are unfortunately restricted to the economic sector, there is not a political unity, because there are enormous differences between the member states … There is not a common policy, but only a currency and trade community"

"The European Union is a very important project … I am feeling very familiar with other European states … I would easily live in a country of the EU, not outside it".

From the centre left:

"I'm for the EU because I'm geographically near to it, many things unite us, the other countries help our country to have a role on the world stage, economically and politically, but also apart from the solidarity, important is the innovation and many advantages"

"The European Union is an important institution with important values, gives us security, freedom of movement, the sense that the one member state helps the other at any time". "It is much better to be many states united, than to be alone"

"The EU is very important because our country is so small and weak and has so dangerous neighbors and a difficult geopolitical situation, that we must belong somewhere".

From the radical left:

> *"The European Union is a very important institution, because it gives us security on many levels, on economic and on military level, there is a cooperation spirit"*
>
> *"I think that the European Union is not a Union that helps, but a Union that creates problems"*
>
> *"I think that we had to solve our problems alone, because I believe that when other states interfere, that does not help to the solving of problems"*
>
> *"The European Union is a Union and you ask yourself why it exists … The only thing for which it is useful, is that you can travel in Europe with your identity card. EU is useful only, because of its open borders, for nothing else, I don't see some other sense of existence"*
>
> *"I would prefer to be outside Europe and to be alone"*.

From the Golden Dawn:

> *"It is not the same in the North of Europe and in Greece … We have summer, we are fine, in North Europe everyday night is falling"*
>
> *"The European Union isn't something important … I think that we haven't something positive through the European Union"*.

3.3. "We" and the strong Others

In all recent surveys conducted by Dianeosis, a high degree of collective self-knowledge about the causes of the financial crisis is observed. The majority of Greeks (77,1%) believe that the causes of the current crisis pertain to their weaknesses, the borrowing for more consumption without production, and the incompetent and corrupt governments. However, according to the 2017 Dianeosis report (Dianeosis 2017a), eight out of ten Greeks believe that there are secret organisations, working behind the scenes and pulling strings. Another noteworthy point in the conspiracy world is that 26.5% of the participants believe that the trails left by airplanes in the sky is "spray gas", which allegedly serve to make people passive and submissive (Hatzis 2017: 20, 24). The percentage of the Greek youth that believe to conspiracies by "foreign powers" are high (Hatzis 2017: 25).

In a survey conducted by the University of Macedonia in April 2016, young Greeks, aged 18-34, believe that Greece is guided by strong foreigners and their desires. According to Marantzidis (Dianeosis 2017a), since the outbreak of the financial crisis, the underlying anti-German attitudes have been revived. These attitudes emerge every time Greece is in a difficult position and Germany, as the more powerful EU state, plays a leading role in the management of the Greek bankruptcy. Before the anti-memorandum parties SYRIZA and ANEL came to power in 2015, the foreign occupation scheme prevailed in the public online and offline discourse (Lialiouti & Bithymitris 2016: 7), whereby Germany denoted Nazism and Hitler and was seen as the most obnoxious nation (Ioakeimidis 2018: 99ff.). For many decades, every time that Greece was dependent on a European decision, the issue of the German war reparations because of German atrocities in the WW2 came to the fore, something that fueled an enormous hate against the Germans.

In addition, anti-Germanism finds expression in the relevant international polls. In the poll of the Pew Research Center (2017b) about Global Attitudes and Trends (26 June 2017), although Trump finds little support around the world, with Merkel inspiring more

confidence, Greece with 16% (after Turkey 14 %) is the second country that does not have confidence in Merkel to do the right thing in international affairs, but has more confidence in Trump (19%). This long-lasting negative attitude of the Greeks against Germany reflects a deeply inscribed sentiment in the *affective register* (Illouz 2015) of the Greek society (across all political orientations from the right to the left equally) that is produced and reproduced by stories, media images, international relations, memory practices, cultural traumata, perceptions of enmity and victimhood, pre-existing stereotypes, and so on (Lialiouti & Bithymitris 2016: 4).

In this anti-German discourse, elements of conspiracy theories become incorporated as they are coming to the fore in Nikos Kotzias's book, published in 2013 and entitled "Debt Colony" (Skoulariki 2018: 97). In specific, Kotzias (2013: 24), who was Minister for Foreign Affairs in SYRIZA government, writes: "*Germany is showing a neo-colonial imperial attitude towards Greece … Greece has all the characteristics that have given the possibility to be exploited as a guinea pig by the new politics of Germany in the EU*". As an opposition leader, the current PM Tsipras made a wide use of the "debt colony" narrative against the austerity policy imposed by the Troika. When he was in the opposition, the leader of the far-right party ANEL (Georgiadou 2015), which co-governed with SYRIZA until the middle of January 2019, employed a polemical discourse against the "strong foreign powers" that allegedly conspire against the country and aim at the expropriation of the energy resources of Greece. A similar rhetoric has been used by the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn (Lialiouti & Bithymitris 2015). The Golden Dawn interviewees said:

> "*Greece is important because of its energy resources … We have gold, hydrocarbons … Greece has a big wealth … They [Troika] lend us money because they want to have our mineral resources*".

> "*They envy us because we have the most beautiful places and they want to have some of them, so that we will not be Greece, with Greek men and women and Christianity*".

> "*One can be suspicious for all the things, e.g. that they have sold an island, a rocky islet…*".

> "*I prefer Trump over Merkel … I am with Putin; I am with Russia*".

Also, respondents from the radical left used a similar conspiracist rhetoric against Germany and the IMF, a strong part of the Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and the IMF).

Two interviewees of the radical left said:

> "*I think that this financial crisis has to do with some economic circles at a world level, outside from us*".

> "*I think that Germany has profits from the Greek crisis … I'm against the IMF, because it charges excessively and consciously the countries and then it rescues them*".

A conspiracist scheme is also followed by two centre right interviewees:

> "*I think that the IMF attempted to implement in Greece an austerity program which is not allowed by us … Merkel is responsible for that … I think that Trump tackles better the Greek crisis*".

"I think, that all that happened with the crisis was in advanced arranged from others, not from the Greek government … For the crisis, Europe is responsible, because behind all that is America, which is a big power and basically Europe and all the rest are marionettes of America".

In general, the interviewees from the centre-left had a positive view about the role of EU and the IMF in the Greek crisis.

In the recent Dianeosis surveys, there is an obvious "Russophilia" phenomenon (Dianeosis 2017a: 10 ff.). In the Dianeosis survey of April 2015, in response to the question whether Greece's interests would be better through an alliance with another country, 30% have chosen Putin's Russia. In particular, the same percentage among young people, aged 18-24, was the majority response. In the Dianeosis survey of December 2016, an increase in the number of Greeks who would opt for an alliance with Russia was found and even one in three would prefer to ally with Russia rather than to continue to participate in the Eurozone. Eight out of ten Greeks believe that the word "Russians" is something positive, in contrast to "Germans" (36,4%).

In the survey of Dianeosis 2018, an evident change in the public opinion is observed. The majority of Greeks continue to think that Russians represent something good (66,9%), followed by the Americans (43,6%), whereby Germans represent something bad (59,9%) and Putin is seen as the ideal political leader (30%). However, an increasing pro-European trend is observed. The majority of Greeks (43,3%) believe that their interests are better secured in the Eurozone. This ambivalent attitude of the Greeks regarding their preferences alludes to a confused perception on the complex economic and social environment, as well as on the image of the future (Dianeosis 2018: 29). Their opinion has changed in issues that have to do with their direct experiences, e.g. the majority is against the intervention of the state in the private economy.

Nevertheless, young people, aged 17- 24, are for a stronger presence of the state (Dianeosis 2018: 39); they are also the more ardent supporter of the Drachma (Dianeosis 2018: 9). Their attitudes are arguably linked with their frustration (Simitis 2016: 145) rather than with a perception of the real economic, social and supranational environment. But the Greek voters in general decide on the basis of their direct personal interest, clientelist mentality and individual aspirations (Simitis 2016: 147ff). Neither the Greek society was aware of the dramatic problems of the country during the crisis, nor the governing parties have informed the people for the risks of their programs and the costs in case of its failure; on the contrary, they were stirring up the negation. Importantly, the informed citizen is the most significant element of democracy, as Marcel Gauchet (2006) rightly argues. The Greeks, in general, do not read newspapers and are informed more from the social media and less from TV (Greece is one of the 3 countries out of 37 where social media news use is higher than TV). The youth is informed, if at all, only by the internet and social media (Reuters Institute 2018: 82). Economic illiteracy and political ignorance are central characteristics of the Greek youth (Hatzis 2017: 26; Dianeosis 2018: 39).

This is a distressful finding given that the main general feature of our time is the incomprehension of the life-world, our world of everyday experience and of the human action – that is, its elusiveness (Manent 2006: 59). Nowadays, public opinion is shaped not so much by "objective" facts, but by emotions and personal beliefs (post-truth). In addition, it is shaped within the realm of the social media, where post-truth is developed as a version of the oppositional culture (Gauchet 2017), and the access to well-founded and rational

objections is almost impossible. Irrationalities are on the public agenda in the most enlightened societies. The fact that the Greek society does not (fully) belong to the Western enlightened societies makes it more vulnerable to the effects of the post-truth era.

3.4 Network Analysis of Social Media Use

The abovediscussed problematic character of the Greek public sphere is also highlighted by the following online method, aiming to cast more light on how the Greek youth actually use the social media from a quantitative perspective. The quantitative data for doing this method were drawn from a recent online survey research (Tsekeris 2018). Network metrics allow identifying the fragmented structure of the social media according to distinct political attitudes and perceptions about the "We", the powerful "Others", and Europe. General-purpose popular social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are found to have the largest (potential) influence on the social media in Greece, encompassing a wide range of different user attributes (Kalogeropoulos 2018).[10] A citation network model is used, as it has already been implemented in numerous researches about collaboration among scholars, but also as a modelling framework in various other fields of complex network analysis. According to this model, if there is an out-edge starting from one node and reaching two other nodes, a generalised bibliographic coupling relationship between them occurs. According to the definition of adjacency matrix of directed network, if the node k has two out-edges pointing at node i and j, a_{ij}=1, otherwise a_{ij}=0, where ij is the i-th row and j-th column element of the adjacency matrix of citation network $A=\{a_{ij}\}$. In this network, the weights are defined as the number of co-occurrences (e.g. the number of events two individuals have co-attended, or the number of documents that two authors had collaborated on).

Figures 1 and 2 provide network representations of the social media used by young people in Greece, according to their attitude towards the cooperation with EU and their political attitude, respectively. The influence of one social media to the others is calculated on the basis of two key centrality measures: the total degree centrality and the eigenvector centrality. First, the total degree centrality refers to the total degree (number of ingoing and outgoing connections) that an agent possesses in the network. Second, the eigenvector centrality is measured in terms of the principal eigenvector of the adjacency matrix A of the network. The defining relationship of an eigenvector is $\lambda v = A v$, or $(A - \lambda I)v = 0$, where I is the identity matrix, λ is a constant (the eigenvalue) and v is the eigenvector. An eigenvector is proportional to the row sums of a matrix formed by summing all powers of A matrix, weighted by the corresponding powers of the reciprocal of the eigenvalue.

This relationship suggests that the importance of an agent depends on the (normalised) sum of the importance of its neighbors, according to the original concept of Philip Bonacich (1972). Namely, from an eigenvector point of view, a social media is important for young people, i.e. it has a potentially leading or large influence on them, when it is linked to other important, highly connected social media, compared to those linked to lowly connected social media. Figure 3 indicates that general purpose (or wide-scope) social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are the most influential among young people in the Greek network of

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[10] Greece is one of just three countries (out of 37) where social media news use is higher than TV use for news among the population with an internet connection. While Facebook still dominates, we see a slow shift towards private messaging apps for reading, posting, and commenting on news, as in many other countries. In Greece, the most used messaging apps for news are Facebook Messenger (22%) and Viber (14%) (Kalogeropoulos 2018: 2).

social media. Some internet newspapers, such as Iefimerida, Dikaiologitika, Newsit, News247, Newsbomb, Zougla and Sugklonistiko, have also a major influential role in the Greek network of social media.

The statistical inference method of Newman's clustering (Clauset et al. 2004) is implemented for the accurate and efficient grouping of social media into a small number of groups. Such methods of social network analysis are considered as particularly useful and have been widely implemented for identifying emergent hierarchical patterns, groups and communities in (real-life and virtual, online) social networks (Katerelos et al. 2013; Koulouris et al. 2013) and economic networks (Tsekeris 2017). The method seeks to maximise the modularity Q, which is a metric of the quality of the grouping and it relies on the density of links inside communities as compared to links between communities. It is defined as $Q = (1/2m) \sum_{ij} \left[w_{ij} - \left(s_i s_j / 2m \right) \right] \delta(g_i, g_j)$, where w_{ij} represents the weight of the edge between social media agents i and j, $s_i = \sum_j w_{ij}$ and $s_j = \sum_i w_{ij}$ are the weight sums of the edges attached to agents i and j, respectively, g_i and g_j are the communities to which agents i and j are assigned, δ function is 1 if $g_i = g_j$ and 0 otherwise, and $m = (1/2) \sum_{ij} w_{ij}$.

Figure 4 illustrates the visualisation results of the cluster analysis of the social media groups in Greece. Figure 5 shows the characteristics of social media groups in Greece by the average scores of users' attitudes towards the benefit of cooperation between Greece and EU and the blame of Greek situation to EU, and the political attitude.

Fig. 1. Network representation of the social media use from young people in Greece by attitude towards the cooperation with EU.
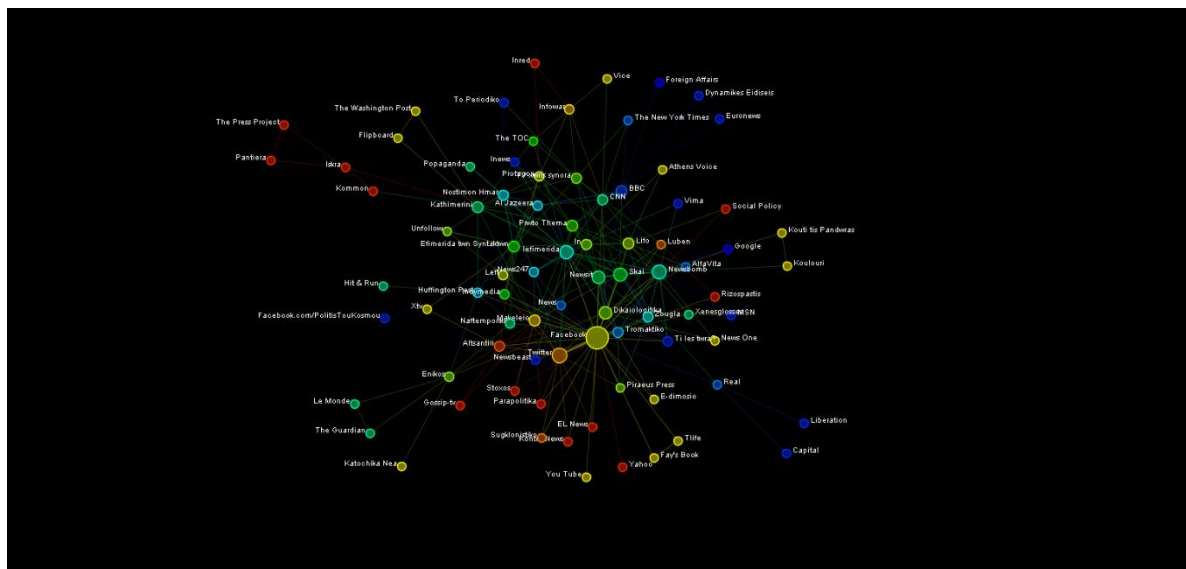

Notes: Red nodes denotes agents with a negative attitude towards the benefit of the cooperation of Greece with EU, while Deep Blue nodes denotes agents with a positive attitude towards the benefit of the cooperation of Greece with EU.

Fig. 2. Network representation of the social media use from young people in Greece by political attitude.
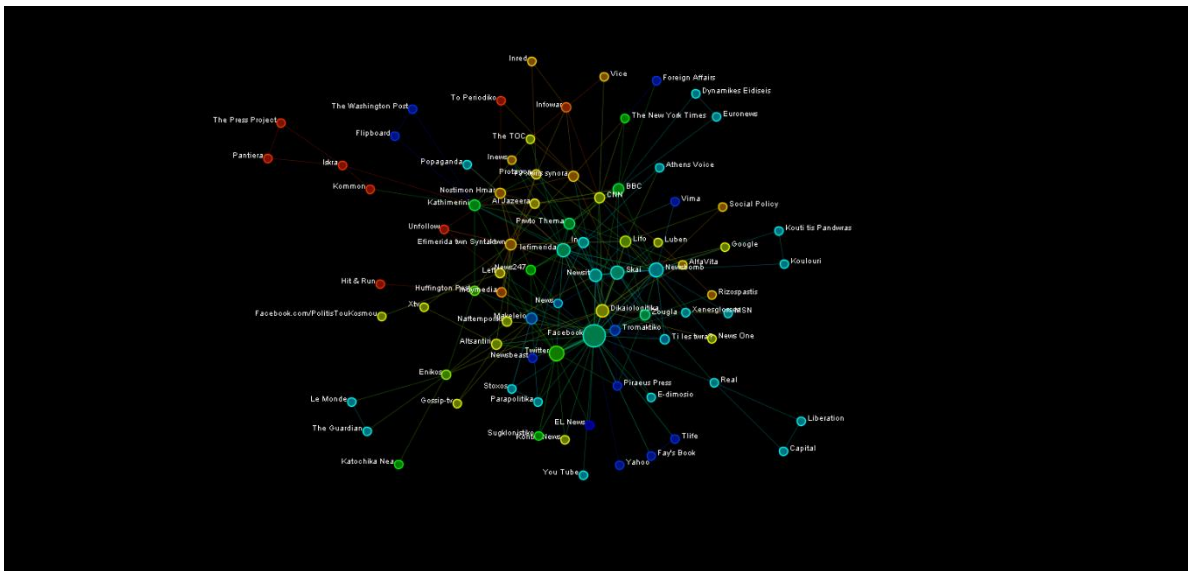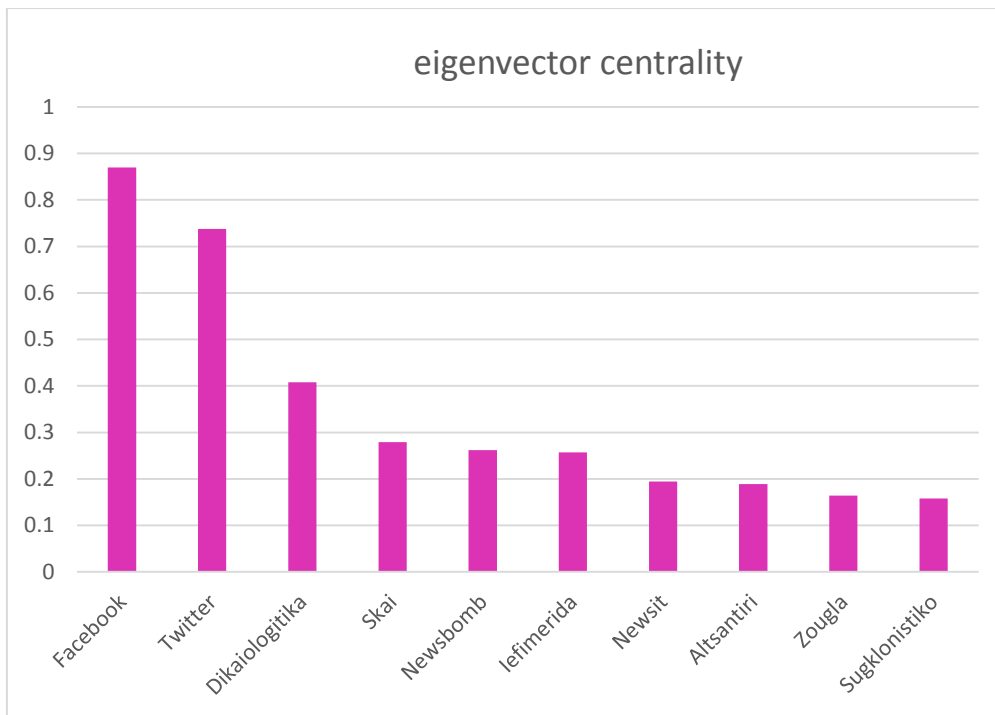
Notes: Red nodes denotes agents who are better represented by left political space, while Deep Blue nodes denotes agents who are better represented by right political space.

Fig. 3. The most central-influential social media in Greece based on total degree centrality and the eigenvector centrality.
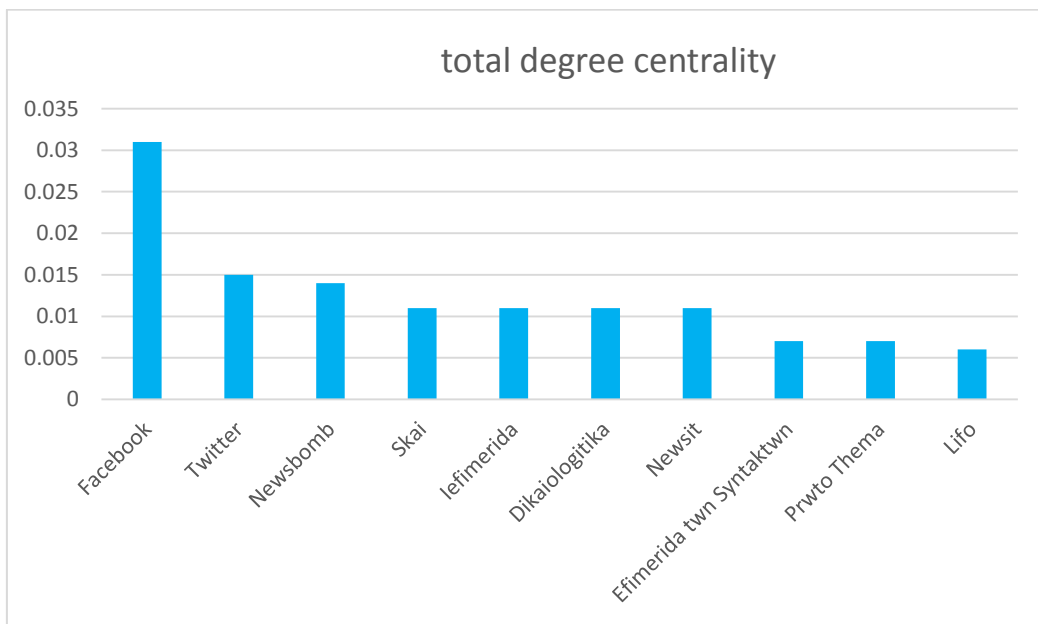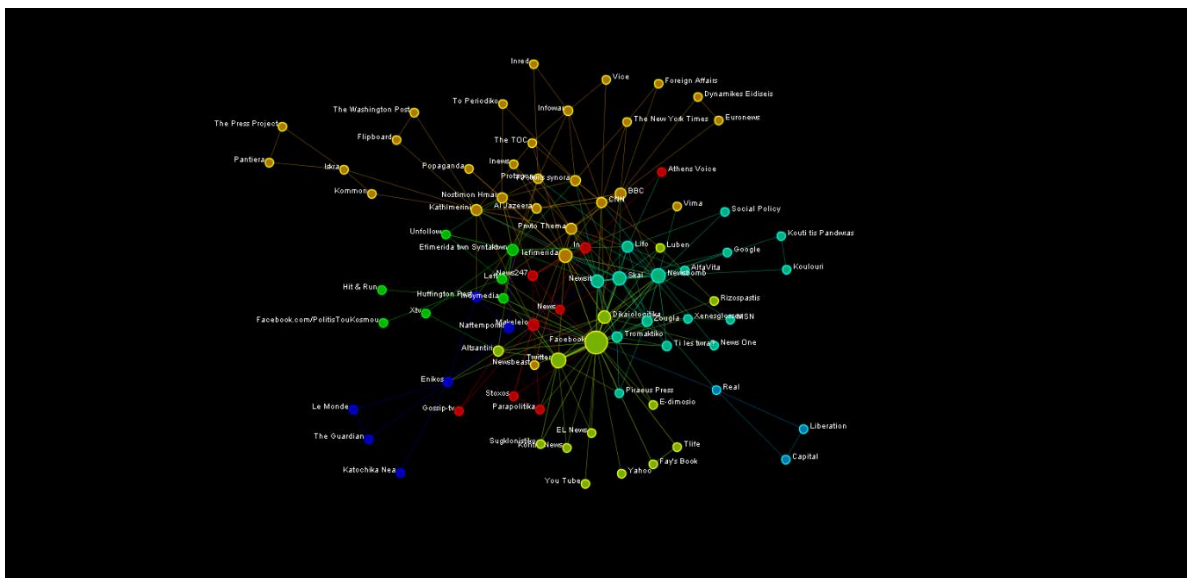

(a)

(b)

Fig. 4. Cluster analysis of the social media use from young people in Greece.

Notes: Nodes with the same colour denote agents who belong to the same group. *Group 1* (28 social media): Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN, Foreign Affairs, Iefimerida, Inews, Infowar, Iskra, Kommon, Newsbeast, Popaganda, Protagon, The New York Times, The TOC, The Washington Post, TV xwris synora, Vice, Dynamikes Eidiseis, Kathimerini, Nostimon Hmar, Pantiera, Prwto Thema, Vima, To Periodiko, Euronews, Flipboard, Inred, The Press Project, *Group 2* (16 social media): AlfaVita, Lifo, MSN, News One, Newsbomb, Newsit, Piraeus Press, Social Policy, Tromaktiko, Skai, Ti les twra?, Koulouri, Xenesglosses, Google, Zougla, Kouti tis Pandwras, *Group 3* (14 social media): Altsantiri, Dikaiologitika, E-dimosio, EL News, Facebook, Fay's Book, Kontra News, Luben,

Sugklonistiko, Tlife, Twitter, You Tube, Rizospastis, Yahoo, *Group 4* (8 socila media): Athens Voice, In, News, News247, Parapolitika, Makeleio, Stoxos, Gossip-tv, *Group 5* (7 socila media): Indymedia, Left, Unfollow, Efimerida twn Syntaktwn, Facebook.com/PolitisTouKosmou, Hit & Run, Xtv, *Group 6* (6 social media): Enikos, Huffington Post, Le Monde, The Guardian, Katochika Nea, Naftemporiki, *Group 7* (3 social media): Capital, Liberation, Real.

Fig. 5. The characteristics of social media groups in Greece by the average scores of users' attitudes towards the benefit of cooperation between Greece and EU and the blame of Greek situation to EU, and the political attitude.
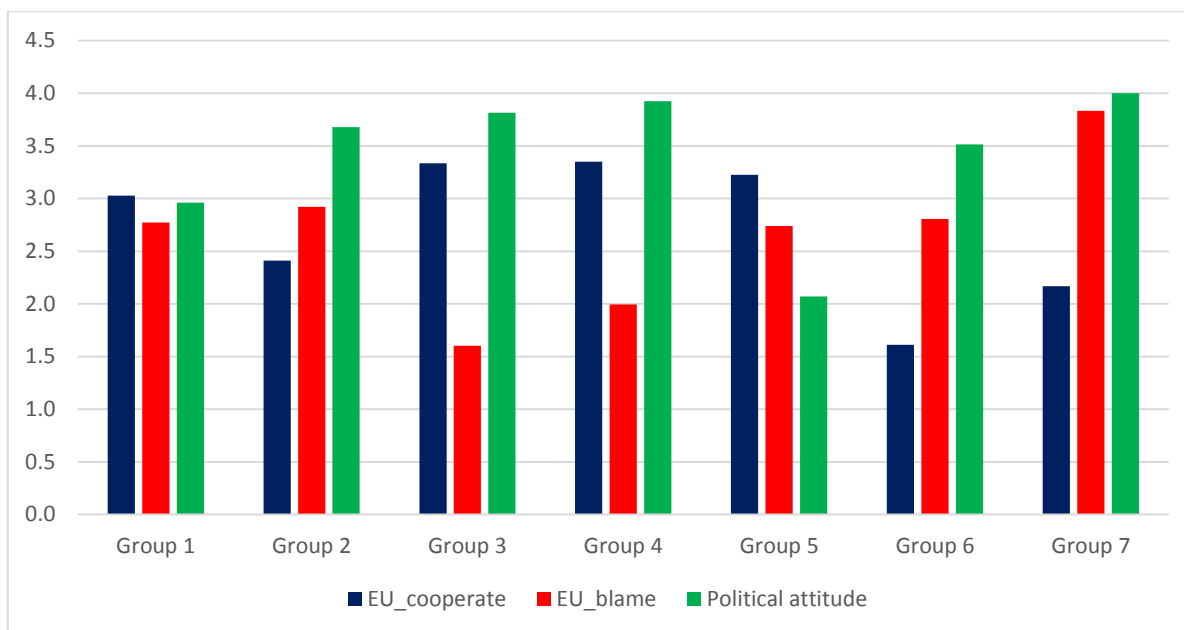
The results demonstrate that there are groups, such as the largest group 1, which are quite heterogeneous, in terms of the attitudes of their users towards EU and their political origin. It is clear that, for most groups, the more extreme the political space (either left or right) of the users of social media is, as shown by the lower and higher political attitude scores, the higher the score of political blame against EU. By and large, the (potential) influence or centrality of a social media (group) in the network is not directly connected with a certain political attitude or a particular attitude in favour of or against EU. This outcome is also supported by the very low (<5%) and statistically insignificant relationship between the (total degree and eigenvector) centrality measures and the scores of the users' attitude towards EU or a political space. Finally, in order to determine the significance of influence of one group on the other groups, the density of directional links among each pair of groups is compared with the total density of links in the whole social media network (McCulloh et al. 2013).

It is found that there are not significant interactions between social media groups, except for those of Group 3 with Groups 2, 4 and 5. This outcome further underlines the fragmentation of the opinions of young people not only at the level of each social media but also at the level of social media groups. Moreover, the actual youngsters' social media use and their selection of news websites of controversial organisations and limited validity profoundly highlight the dominating existence of an "underdog" demographics, in Nikiforos Diamandouros's terms (1994), which cuts across almost all political orientations.

4. Conclusions

The present work has attempted to follow the path that could help to understand how young Greeks, aged 18-32, belonging to the main political orientations, perceive their social and political community, Europe and the strong foreign institutions. The first part of the research was based on qualitative in-depth interviews with adherents of the centre right, centre left, radical left, and extreme right. The second part was based on network analysis and tried to identify the fragmented structure of social media according to distinct political attitudes and perceptions about self-identity (We-ness), the powerful "Others" and Europe.

The study was based on two theoretical strands. The first theoretical strand took into consideration the fact that Greek youngsters have grown up in the era of the network society, in which the knowledge system of the society, as well as the self-understanding of individuals, are undergoing a fundamental change. The self-transformation of the network society (Castells 2009) is connected with the decay of the everyday world of experience (Blumenberg 2010: 151), which was the common knowledge basis for the practical construction of the self and the world. This process, which makes invisible the experiences of the life-world and the world of impersonal constraints and rules, aggravates the problem of the self-observation of society and citizens, as well as of the observation of changes (Ladeur 2012: 6). This is followed by a self-perception of the individuals in unreflected form, beyond the constraints of reality and the symbolic order of society. The individuals of the contemporary fragmented society are focused on themselves and their "authentic" self-presentation away from the common reality. What prevails here is the supremacy of the individual over the social structures inherited from the past.[11]

In such context, one must seriously consider the decline of the historical and political (see section 3.2) as two of the three basic dimensions of the democratic dynamics (the third is the law in the form of the individual rights) (Gauchet 2007: 16). The historical dimension refers to the orientation that helps the collectivity to reproduce itself deliberately over time; it signifies the capability of the people to create and change the things on the basis of a perspective and the future (Gauchet 2007: 23). Although nowadays there is a deepening of the political and the historical, these become, nevertheless, invisible (Gauchet 2007: 34); the productive orientation towards the future makes it inaccessible and the past veiled over. In other words, the knowledge of the history, in the sense of the necessities of the concrete constitution of the self and its future, is absent. Given that for the new generation (represented by the young interviewees and the digital research groups) reality is mediated by the digital media and that youngsters do not use printed news media or their online form, but mainly popular social media news, if at all (Kalogeropoulos 2018), the process of youth's alienation from its own society and its future is an ongoing reality. Besides, the imbalance between the vast information and the knowledge deficit is getting worse (Gauchet 2018a).

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[11] As Marcel Gauchet (2016: 36) comprehensively argues: "The major fact of the last decade is the emergence of the private individual in the democratic public space. People think that its personal experience holds for the whole society. The language of Facebook and social media has become the discourse of reference. The real space of pluralism, of the contradictory confrontation on realities accepted on both sides is in decline".

The second theoretical strand alludes to the assumption that, in the process of the building of the Greek collective identity, the more important construction elements are social practices, habits of mind, language, ideas and moral standards, which are implicit and pertain to the Greek instituting social imaginary, according to the conception of social imaginary of V. Descombes (2016: 193). This conception of the instituting social imaginary refers to the social cognitive infrastructure of every society, which is in a flux and continuously self-changing, and occurs in a tacit, anonymous and collective manner over time (Castoriadis 2008: 226). But a prerequisite of the existence of a democratic regime and the functioning of democratic processes is the so-called "Kulturarbeit" (Zaltzmann2007: 65), in the sense of the greatest possible reflectiveness and workings of the people in every society on the unconscious instituting social imaginary, its truths, customs, traditions, memories, and so on.

In connection with these two theoretical starting points, let us briefly sum up our thoughts resulting from the analysis of the sayings of the young Greek interviewees of the abovediscussed four prevailing political orientations, as well as of the attitudes of the participants in the social networks towards the EU and the strong "Others". We have distinguished and examined two types of interviewees (pertaining to the four ideological orientations): the pro-Europeans and the Eurosceptics. In this undertaking, we heavily drew from the social surveys conducted by Greek and international research centres concerning the Greek youngsters' and the general Greek population's perceptions on self-identity (We-ness), the EU and the strong foreign institutions in the era of the Greek financial crisis.

Given the bankruptcy of the Greek state in 2010 and the financial dependency on the EU and IMF connected with the implementation of the necessary reforms and austerity measures the interviewees were asked what they think that makes up their responsibility toward the Greek political community, the Greek state and its foreign lenders. Responsibility is conceived as the consideration of the consequences of one's own actions, connected to the constraints of sociality and a previously justified community or common thing (Ladeur 2007: 205). With the exception of the adherents of centre left and three of the centre right, all other respondents in their sayings were limited to their own thinking and personal world without any reference to the social ensemble. According to the findings of the Dianeosis research of 2018 on a collective level Greeks (73,3%) are interested mainly in their individual well-being, even at the expense of collectivity and the social whole.

In all the Greek, European and international surveys an enormous lack of trust towards the political institutions and the political representatives is found. It has to do with the loss of the representative capacity of the political dispositive (Manent 2006; 54). All respondents, without exception, said that they do not feel represented by the representatives they have elected.

Concerning their opinion about the relationship of the Greek state and religion, with the exception of one extreme-right participant, all respondents had a more pragmatic stance. The interviewees of the radical left and one of the centre left opted for a clear state-church separation, three of the centre right consider the Greek-Christian ideology as an inherent element of the Greek democracy, and three of the centre left are ignorant of the subject. In any case, according to the findings of the Dianeosis survey 2018, 84,7% of the Greek population say that they believe in God compared to only 64,4 % of the young people. A high percent of Greeks believe that priests should be paid from church resources and not by the Greek state. This example among others is a sign of a slow setting on of a mind change.

In all surveys carried out during the last years, as well as in our interviews, a high self-image of the Greeks has been confirmed, which is based on the ancient Greek and Byzantine past endowed with a diachronic identity (cf. Moschonas 2016; Zeri et al. 2018). This high self-perception cuts across all social and political groups. From our young interviewees, two of the centre right, two of the radical left and the two of the extreme right have a high self-perception of their country as a "small, big cultural power".

The responses concerning the relationship of the Greek society to the European Union make evident the complexity and ambivalence of the issue, particularly under the conditions of the serious economic crisis. It also shows the fundamental role of the instituting social imaginary (implicit flow of values, habits and ideas over time) and its intricacies in the way Greeks and particularly the Greek youth are thinking and perceiving the world. For a long time in Greece, especially during the 1990s and the 2000s, there has been a high inflow of European financial resources. Then, the acceptance of Europe was in high levels (Eurobarometer 1995). But the financial crisis and the serious impact of the memoranda and the austerity measures on the life of the Greeks have brought to the fore a confused mixture of anti-European and pro-European voices, high self-perception attitudes, conspiracy thinking, and reflexive self-knowledge, together with blame allegations towards the strong "Others", accompanied by high economic illiteracy and political ignorance (Hatzis 2017). In 2018, there is a relatively high acceptance of the EU membership, which amounts to 68% (Dianeosis 2018). However, almost 70% believe that "the memoranda were the invention of the Europeans in order to exploit our country" (Dianeosis 2018).

Regarding the Greek young adults, there is a differentiated image concerning their perception of the EU in all the recent surveys, as well as in our interviews. With the exception of the lack of trust towards the European and national political institutions, which is on high levels among Europe's young adults (European Youth Study 2018), the Greek youth, according to a survey of the Pew Research Center (2016) is more reserved towards the EU (37%) in comparison to young Polish (79 %), Hungarians (63 %), Dutch (62%), and Germans (60%). In the survey of the Greek Network for Europe (2017) about the attitudes of Greek youth towards Europe, 54% of young Greeks does not recognize the contributions of the EU to the welfare state; only the freedom of movement, work and studies (85,3%), and the European measures against youth unemployment (93,2%) are accepted as contributions.

On the part of the young Greek interviewees, Euroscepticism is evident across ideological lines. Two of the centre right, four of the radical left and the two right extremists were against the EU, the centre-left interviewees were all pro-European. A feature common to all Eurosceptic interviewees was the inability to understand the most important risks for their society and personal life in the era of crisis. In any case, the EU was seen by the pro-European, as well as by the Eurosceptics, as a harbor of security rather than as a common project based on the fundamental principles of democracy, freedom and social market economy. As far as the four radical-left young interviewees are concerned, the only positive thing they found in Europe was free movement.

The image of the young interviewees towards EU becomes clearer in their answers concerning the "We-ness" and the strong Others (like Germans and the IMF), which have played a major role in the European management of the Greek financial crisis. In general, the Greek youth appears to be more vulnerable to unsupported claims and conspiracy theories. According to the findings of Dianeosis (2017a), the percentage of the Greek youth

that believe in conspiracy theories is high (Hatzis 2017: 25). The anti-German attitudes, a deeply inscribed sentiment in the affective register of the Greek society, were revived during the crisis and especially fueled by the radical left and extreme right political staff (Ioakeimidis 2018: 99ff; Simitis 2017: 134, 138). A part of the interviewees from the radical left and the centre right, as well as from the extreme right (two participants), used a conspiracist rhetoric against Germany and the IMF as pulling the strings behind the scenes (Dianeosis 2017a). This fits with the findings of a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2017b), according to which the German Chancellor Angela Merkel has the lowest level of popularity (16%) in Greece among the world leaders.

Moreover, we reached the same conclusion with the network analysis, which was strategically aimed to explore the relationship between the political orientations of the Greek youngsters, social media users and their political attitudes towards the EU and the strong "Others". It was found that the more the discussions on the internet (especially on the realm of online platforms) were moved from the centre right to the radical left and the extreme right social media, the more they have expressed ideological orientations towards Eurosceptic or anti-European stances.

We also found that in the sayings of the young interviewees of the four different ideological orientations, what actually comes to the fore is the implicit instituting social imaginary of the Greek society in its vast complexity, where modern ideas are interlaced with traditional cultural schemata (Demertzis 1997; Capelos, Katsanidou & Demertzis 2017) that point out a confused and unreflected stance toward self-identity, the political, the personal freedoms, responsibility and common interest – that is, core values of a democratic individual and society.[12] In the sayings of the biggest part of the interviewees (with the exception of the interviewees belonging to the centre left, who correspond to a small part of the society), a way of thinking characterised by the lack of self-interrogation on acquired situations and of reflectiveness concerning the public instituting activity, the exercise of politics and, ultimately, of the common good prevails. What becomes evident is an ethnocentric, nationalistic and narcissistic stance disclaimed from any responsibility, in the sense of the consciousness on the constraints of sociality. This means that knowledge of the prerequisites of a democratic process is missing. This is a very complex issue and one can only hope that the financial crisis will set on a slow process of self-reflection in the Greek society. As Ladeur perceptively argues: "The blind spot of democracy is the self-change of demos in unreflected form" (Ladeur 2012: 9).

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[12] Nicolas Demertzis (1997) rightly observes that the multifaceted cultural reality of Greece can be better grasped by the concept of "inverted syncretism" in order to reflect and analyse the articulation and mixture of tradition and modernity in the country.

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