

## Social Cohesion and Development

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Biannual Scientific Review,  
Autumn 2020, volume 15, issue 2

# Κοινωνική Συνοχή και Ανάπτυξη

30 Εξαμηνιαία Επιστημονική Επιθεώρηση,  
Φθινόπωρο 2020, τόμος 15ος, τεύχος 2

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## ΟΔΗΓΙΕΣ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΣΥΓΓΡΑΦΕΙΣ

Τα κείμενα υποβάλλονται στα ελληνικά ή στα αγγλικά. Οι συγγραφείς δεσμεύονται ότι δεν έχουν δημοσιεύσει ή υποβάλει προς κρίση τα άρθρα τους σε άλλο έντυπο. Σε περίπτωση δημοσίευσης παρόμοιου άρθρου, αυτό δηλώνεται από τον συγγραφέα. Υποβάλλονται τέσσερα ταυτόσημα κείμενα και ένα σε ηλεκτρονική μορφή στην επόμενη διεύθυνση του εκδότη.

### Θεόδωρος Σακελλαρόπουλος

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Τα άρθρα αξιολογούνται από δύο τουλάχιστον ανώνυμους κριτές. Το όνομα και τα άλλα στοιχεία του συγγραφέα, καθώς και ο τίτλος του άρθρου πρέπει να υποβάλλονται σε ξεχωριστή σελίδα από το κυρίως σώμα (τίτλος, κείμενο, βιβλιογραφικές αναφορές). Τα υποβαλλόμενα άρθρα πρέπει να συνοδεύονται από δύο περιλήψεις, όχι μεγαλύτερες των 100 λέξεων, και πέντε λέξεις-κλειδιά στα ελληνικά και τα αγγλικά. Η έκταση των άρθρων πρέπει να κυμαίνεται μεταξύ 6-8.000 λέξεων, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των περιλήψεων και αναφορών. Τα χειρόγραφα των άρθρων που απορρίπτονται δεν επιστρέφονται.

Για τις αναφορές χρησιμοποιείται το σύστημα Harvard. Οι αναφορές στο κείμενο περιλαμβάνουν το επώνυμο του συγγραφέα και το έτος έκδοσης της δημοσίευσης, π.χ. (Esping-Andersen, 1990, Kleinman and Piachaud, 1993). Οι άμεσες αναφορές πρέπει να δίνουν και τον αριθμό της σελίδας ή των σελίδων, π.χ. Ferrera et al., 2002: 230. Σε περίπτωση περισσότερων αναφορών του ίδιου συγγραφέα για το ίδιο έτος, πρέπει να χρησιμοποιείται η διάκριση με α, β, γ κ.λπ. για το έτος. Οι βιβλιογραφικές αναφορές (όχι βιβλιογραφία) καταχωρούνται αλφαβητικά στο τέλος του κειμένου. Παρακαλούνται οι συγγραφείς να επιμελούνται την ακριβή αντιστοίχιση των αναφορών του κειμένου με τον αλφαβητικό κατάλογο των βιβλιογραφικών αναφορών στο τέλος του κειμένου και το αντίστροφο. Η αναφορά σε βιβλία πρέπει να δίνει το όνομα του συγγραφέα, το έτος έκδοσης, τον τίτλο του βιβλίου, τον τόπο έκδοσης και την επωνυμία του εκδοτικού οίκου. Π.χ. Scharpf F., (1999), *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Η αναφορά άρθρων σε περιοδικά πρέπει να δίνει τόμο, τεύχος, σελίδες, καθώς και τον τίτλο του άρθρου σε απλά εισαγωγικά. Για παράδειγμα: Atkinson A.B., Marlier E. and Nolan B., (2004), "Indicators and Targets for Social Inclusion in the European Union", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 42: 47-75. Αναφορές σε κεφάλαια συλλογικών τόμων καταχωρούνται με τον τίτλο του κεφαλαίου σε απλά εισαγωγικά, ακολουθούμενο από τον συγγραφέα και τον τίτλο του συλλογικού τόμου. Π.χ. Leibfried, S. and Pierson, P. (1995) "Semisovereign Welfare States: Social Policy in a multitiered Europe", in: Leibfried S. and Pierson P., (eds), *European Social Policy: Between Fragmentation and Integration*, p.p. 43-77, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution. Οι τίτλοι των βιβλίων και περιοδικών γράφονται με πλάγια γράμματα. Συνιστάται οι επεξηγηματικές σημειώσεις να είναι οι ελάχιστες δυνατές. Εάν κρίνονται απαραίτητες, τότε πρέπει να αριθμούνται στο κείμενο και να παρατίθενται στο τέλος του άρθρου. Επίσης, στο τέλος παρατίθενται και οι τυχόν ευχαριστίες. Άρθρα που δεν συμβιβάζονται με τις παραπάνω οδηγίες επιστρέφονται στον συγγραφέα για την ανάλογη προσαρμογή.

Τα **προς κρίση-παρουσίαση βιβλία** αποστέλλονται στην Μαρίνα Αγγελάκη, στη διεύθυνση του εκδοτικού οίκου.

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και Ανάπτυξη**



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## ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ

Θεόδωρος Σακελλαρόπουλος, Χαράλαμπος Οικονόμου,  
Χριστόφορος Σκαμνάκης, Μαρίνα Αγγελάκη  
- επιμέλεια -



Θεόδωρος Σακελλαρόπουλος,  
Χαράλαμπος Οικονόμου,  
Χριστόφορος Σκαμνάκης,  
Μαρίνα Αγγελάκη  
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Η σημερινή οικονομική κρίση επαναφέρει επιτακτικά προς συζήτηση τα ζητήματα της κοινωνικής πολιτικής και του κοινωνικού κράτους. Ο παρών τόμος, αν και σχεδιάστηκε πρωτίστως ως διδακτικό εγχειρίδιο, αποτελεί μια κριτική και συνολική εισαγωγή στα θέματα αυτά. Πολυεπίπεδες προσεγγίσεις εξετάζουν τις κύριες έννοιες, το περιεχόμενο και την εξέλιξη του σύγχρονου κοινωνικού κράτους. Παρουσιάζονται οι επιμέρους κοινωνικές και δημόσιες πολιτικές, όπως η απασχόληση και οι εργασιακές σχέσεις, η κοινωνική ασφάλιση, η υγεία, η κοινωνική πρόνοια και ο κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός, οι πολιτικές για τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες, η εκπαιδευτική πολιτική. Κοινωνικοί κίνδυνοι, κοινωνική προστασία, κοινωνική αλληλεγγύη, κοινωνικά προβλήματα, κοινωνική συνοχή είναι οι άξονες γύρω από τους οποίους δομούνται αυτές οι πολιτικές. Οι οριζώντιου χαρακτήρα κοινωνικές πολιτικές επικεντρώνονται στο φύλο, στην τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση, σε υπερεθνικό και ευρωπαϊκό πεδίο, στην κοινωνική οικονομία και στην επιχειρηματικότητα. Τέλος, αναλύεται ο ρόλος των βασικών πυλώνων και εργαλείων άσκησης και εφαρμογής κοινωνικών πολιτικών, όπως αυτός της κυβέρνησης, των συνδικάτων, της κοινωνίας πολιτών και των επιχειρήσεων. Τα κεφάλαια του τόμου, γραμμένα απλά και κατανοητά από έμπειρους πανεπιστημιακούς και ειδικευμένους στο αντικείμενο ερευνητές, προσφέρουν μια συνολική και περιεκτική εικόνα των αντίστοιχων πολιτικών, της εξέλιξης και της εφαρμογής τους.

# Parenthood in the light of the attachment theory. New challenges for social welfare professionals

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Despoina Andreadou, *Democritus University of Thrace*

## Γονεϊκότητα υπό το πρίσμα της θεωρίας της προσκόλλησης. Νέες προκλήσεις για τους επαγγελματίες κοινωνικής πρόνοιας

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### ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on highlighting the challenges and difficulties with regard to parenthood of a group of parents. Initially, the concept of parenthood is outlined as well as the attachment theory principles. Focused group interviews have been applied based on qualitative research methodology that aimed at exploring the potential challenges and anxieties faced by the participants with respect to child raising and other issues. It is argued that there is a strong relationship between the theory of attachment and parenthood. Attachment research in the study of parenthood raises common concerns about the impact of parenthood on the development of children over time. The data analysis and the assessment of group dynamics conducted by the researchers are further presented and discussed. The research sheds valuable light for the social welfare professionals who work with parents, alongside with other disciplines working with this target group.

**KEY WORDS:** Parenthood, attachment theory, social welfare, qualitative research, focus group interviews.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο αυτό εστιάζει στην ανάδειξη των προκλήσεων και των δυσκολιών που αντιμετωπίζει μία ομάδα γονέων σχετικά με την γονεϊκότητα. Αρχικά, η έννοια της γονεϊκότητας καθώς και της θεωρίας της προσκόλλησης παρουσιάζονται διεξοδικά. Στην συνέχεια παρουσιάζεται η ποιοτική μεθοδολογική προσέγγιση που χρησιμοποιήθηκε με έμφαση στην μέθοδο συλλογής δεδομένων, την ομαδικά εστιασμένη συνέντευξη, η οποία ανέδειξε δεδομένα σχετικά με τα ζητήματα και τις αγωνίες που βίωσαν οι συμμετέχοντες αναφορικά με την ανατροφή των παιδιών τους και άλλα αντίστοιχα θέματα. Η ανάλυση δεδομένων έγινε με την μέθοδο της θεματικής ανάλυσης. Τονίστηκε ότι υπάρχει στενός δεσμός ανάμεσα στην θεωρία της προσκόλλησης και την γονεϊκότητα καθώς η τελευταία δέχεται έντονα τις επιδράσεις της πρώτης καθ' όλη την διαχρονική εξέλιξη της ανατροφής και διαπαιδαγώγησης των παιδιών από τους γονείς. Τα συμπεράσματα της έρευνας ενημερώνουν και διαφωτίζουν ιδιαίτερα την θεωρία και πράξη των επαγγελματιών κοινωνικής πρόνοιας που εργάζονται με γονείς, αλλά και άλλους επιστημονικούς κλάδους που εργάζονται με τον ίδιο πληθυσμό.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Γονεϊκότητα, θεωρία της προσκόλλησης, κοινωνική πρόνοια, ποιοτική έρευνα, ομαδικά εστιασμένη συνέντευξη.

## 1. Literature review

### 1.1 *The conceptualization of parenthood*

The concept of parenthood distinguishes itself on three axes: "the experience, which is the art of becoming a parent, the practice of referring to the daily roles of parents, and parental care and practice, which is referred to the mental process that establishes the subject within society based on kinship systems, including their legal dimensions"(Gutton, 2015, p. 129). Parenthood is well understood within the form of a list of functions such as: "birth, upbringing, education, social status, responsibility, exercising the rights of power and prohibiting sexual relations within its context" (Gutton, 2015, p. 130). It certainly is a complex process involving much more than a mother or father providing food, safety and affection to a child. Exercising parental roles requires bi-directional relationships between members of two (or more) generations and can be extended through all the main parts of the relevant life spans of these groups (Pappa, 2017b). It can also relate to all institutions within a culture (educational, economic, political and social) (Pappa, 2017b).

In addition, Belsky (1984, p. 85) "considers that it is useful to look at the kind of parenting that appears to promote optimal child's functioning and to speculate on the type of personality of the parent who is more likely to provide such developmental care". In particular, during childhood, succinct observational studies show that cognitive ability and healthy socioemotional development are promoted through warmth and, more generally, through the care that motivates a child and does not restrict it. As children grow older, the use of justification, discipline, and expression of warmth on the part of the parent have been found to be positively connected to self-esteem, emotional security, independence, social competence and spiritual achievements during school years (Belsky, 1984).

Yet, how could one define the term "parent"? According to Hourdaki, "parent" is the person who acquires, gives birth or becomes legally a mother or father of a child through the institution of adoption (Pappa, 2017b). If family in its natural core is said to constitute the foundation of society, then parents must be recognized as the first unique and irreplaceable pedagogues of children, especially considering the fact that for the first three to five years of life parents are the almost exclusive pedagogues of their children, who largely shape an individual's personality (Pappa, 2017b).

All things said, "the image of parenthood in the bibliography is variable" (Georgieva, 2011, p. 6). Relationships and conflicts between parents and children have now become recurring themes in the bibliography. Although some themes might not have been explicitly or purposefully developed, they are still present enabling us to explore the idea of parenthood through the centuries. "Usually society is gradually trying to define parenthood without making a direct reference to the word itself", thus creating many ambiguities around the subject, a fact which, however, provides a rich background for innovative academic research (Georgieva, 2011, p. 6).

### 1.2 *Theory of attachment*

The perception that early emotional ties between parents and children are important for development stems from the psychoanalytic theory of Freud, emerging nearly a century ago (Waters & Cummings, 2000). More specifically, Freud proposed a model in the context of a psychosexual theory of human development that should take into account the emotional ties formed between infants and their mothers. This first relationship was subsequently called "dependence"

by American scholars who sought to interpret psychoanalytic concepts as consistent with the theory of social learning. It is worth noting that Bowlby (1958) applied the term "attachment" to differentiate these early parent-child emotional ties from previous descriptions expressed by psychoanalytic and social learning theories.

Both Ainsworth's own pioneering work and that of his colleagues has shown that aspects of parent-child relationships are developed via specific parent-child interactions (Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth et al., 2015). There are four types of relationships that can be observed between parent and child, namely safe, avoidant, ambiguous, and disorganized relationships (Craig & Baucum, 2007). To elaborate on each, a safe bond is the desired form, and is characterized by the following; a child shows dissatisfaction when parted with her/his parent, rejoices when s/he returns and generally prefers her/his parents over other people. On the other hand, the avoidant bond entails absence of parental preference over foreigners. These children rarely seek their parents to comfort themselves. The ambiguous bond is described by discomfort when the child is separated from her/his parent, without the discomfort being diminished when the parent returns, and quite often with aggression towards the parent. Finally, the disorganized bond is characterized by a combination of avoidance and anxiety behaviors. The last three types of bonds shape together what we call an "insecure bond" (Craig, & Baucum, 2007).

Furthermore, an essential body of clinical research on the consequences of long-term separation, lack of care and loss has provided evidence on the importance of close parent-child relationships for the long-term adjustment of children as well as on the negative repercussions of absence, loss or deprivation in these first relationships. A conclusion to Bowlby's research is that the formation and maintenance of emotional ties between parents and children has promoted a healthy adaptation of children, despite dependence and the potential risk of dysfunctioning (Cummings & Cummings, 2002). Last but not least, Ainsworth (1967) has found that parents and children's relationships, in which parents respond to children's needs, are associated with desirable developmental outcomes, and that, on the contrary, the absence of such relationships or the existence of disorders, for that matter, are linked to developmental and communicative problems in children. Therefore, an individual's reassurance of the attachment figure's availability-as a "safe base"-is a key element for establishing secure attachment, which is considered normal, desirable and necessary throughout the individual's life (Waters & Cummings, 2000).

### ***1.3 Attachment as a perspective on parenthood***

Attachment refers to an emotional bond between parents and children. The idea is that children form emotional ties with parents who have been present over the years and with parents who maintain a mutual relationship with their children, respectively. In fact, the relation between attachment, children's performance and adult roles has been repeatedly commented (Ainsworth et al., 2015). Indeed, attachment theory is essential to the study of parenthood, providing for a constructive relationship between the two, a fact which deserves special attention.

What is more, many attachment characteristics can be found in other close relationships, including romantic and marital relationships, with implications for the psychological function of the individual (Crowell, Fraley & Shaver, 1999). Bowlby stressed that positive experiences in a companionship relationship may result in the reconstruction of an initially unsafe attachment model. For example, a companion or a therapist can provide a "safe basis" for exploring and addressing early attachment experiences (van IJzendoorn, & Bakerman-Kranenburg, 1997). According

to the theory of attachment, there is no direct link between the first experiences of parental attachment and parental behavior. Past attachment experiences are always filtered through the current mental representation of the attachment, thus influencing parental behavior and the formation of new attachment relationships (van IJzendoorn, & Bakerman-Kranenburg, 1997). Current attachment is formed not only on the basis of early attachment, but is also influenced by later relationships (Simpson, & Rholes, 2019). A good friend or spouse can provide a "safe basis" for exploring unfavorable childhood experiences (van IJzendoorn, & Bakerman-Kranenburg, 1997). Also, people with high levels of attachment allow their partners to be more cooperative and more sensitive and coordinated parents (Millings et al., 2013). Attachment theory offers the most appropriate framework for examining both parent-child and parent-parent relationships (Cummings & Cummings, 2002).

Ultimately, researchers have drawn a connection between the attachment which exists in the couple's relationships to that in the parenting of infants, toddlers and adolescents (Cowan, Cowan & Mehta, 2009). Studies show that attachment in the couple alludes to parental care, expectations, experiences, interactions and behaviors. Cowan, Cowan & Mehta (2009) have reported for partners that clinging to one's own parents as well as couple attachment itself could both stand as significant indicators of the couple's interaction, which, in turn, affects parenthood. In contrast, some studies have shown that adults with a secure attachment to their companions tend to be more affectionate, more sensitive and more interested in their children (Feney, 2002). In their research, Cowan et al. have also found that adults with a more secure attachment history have more positive parenting behavior (Millings et al., 2013). Moreover, partners with secure attachment are able to promote or foster a more secure attachment to their children and exhibit a more devoted parenting behavior. These studies indicate that the relationship between partners or spouses affects each individual's parenting (Millings et al., 2013).

## 2. Methodology of research

**I**n the present study attachment theory is being examined with the purpose to understand the ways through which parents interact with their own children. The aim of this study has been to investigate the challenges and anxieties with respect to parenthood. Research is based on qualitative methodology that acknowledges the value of evaluating personal or social experiences, attitudes, perceptions, ideas and behaviors in terms of parenthood, in the context of communal life. Also, it provides space for the participants' voice to be heard, while they openly share their experiences through real-life stories.

The method of data collection has been that of focus group interviews (Poulopoulos, 2010). In particular, a focus group with adult individuals experiencing parental anxieties was formulated with the scope to address those anxieties and fears and empower participants to develop interpersonal skills such as active listening, empathy, and to enable them to regain their lost self-esteem and self-confidence in their role as parents. As Archontaki and Philippouargue, (2003) in such a group the goal is to develop specific skills and acquire knowledge that would find application in daily life. Of course, this could be achieved by providing knowledge, information and the necessary psychological support to exercise their role (Pappa, 2017a). Indeed, under the proper guidance of the group coordinator the participants can set their work within a realistic context and be stimulated (Pappa, 2017a). Focus group participation helps them recognize their unique value and strength and teaches them to take their own decisions about their life as well as the life

of their children. Focus groups are based on instilling into their members a sense of belonging, and on reinforcing their confidence in a feeling of security and trust. Participants contribute to this process individually, by stating their own personal experience, ideas and knowledge (Pappa, 2017a).

In a non-governmental family and child protection organization located in northern Greece, where one of the authors of this paper used to be employed as a social worker, service users were requested to participate in professional counseling on parenthood issues. As a result, a group of interested parents appeared and was assigned with the task to discover and pinpoint anxieties and challenges in relation to their parenting role as well as to generally exchange their views and concerns on the topic. The group consisted of 6 women who had children at preschool age, 2 to 6 years old. The average age of participants was 28 to 35 years old, all married and graduates of secondary level of public education, living in a semi-urban community. All of them participated in the survey voluntarily being informed on confidentiality and anonymity issues, which bound the ethical dimension of the present study. The coordinator carried out meetings with the participants three times in a month, with each session lasting for two hours. The interview agenda included basic and introductory questions at its beginning, followed by more sensitive and reflective ones in the middle stage, concluded by questions in the final part of the interview that helped the coordinator recap the basic themes of discussion. The researcher assumed the role of group coordinator using circular discussion and active listening techniques to employ an attitude of concern, acceptance, authenticity and empathy (Poulopoulos, 2010). Technically, by the means of coordination the researcher attempted not only to guide the group towards a common goal, but mainly to reach an understanding of what is happening and "how" it works. In other words, "what happens" concerns the subject matters discussed by the participants, whereas the "how it happens" involves the participants' emotions and the general team atmosphere (Trilliva & Anagnostopoulou, 2008, p. 93). All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim for the analysis.

Thematic analysis was used to process the data, a method of defining, analyzing and reporting the various issues that arise according to the data. A more general way is to select the key-points of the interviews, decode the transcript on the basis of research questions and then focus on the main issues so as to find common ground among participants (Tsiolis, 2018).

### 3. Findings

Data were decoded, categorized, analyzed, and provided to the authors under seven thematic categories, as follows:

#### 3.1 Developmental challenges

Parents of infants and preschool children are worried about when and how a two-year-old will learn to eat on his/her own, sleep on time, not cry when leaving his/her parents, play along with other children, not exhibit strong fears, adapt easily and not be demanding and obstinate (Pappa, 2017a).

##### *Sleep problem*

Owen & Cox (1997) have demonstrated that negative consequences of conjugal conflict on parental behaviors affect the development of attachment over time. The reflection of marriage

quality or marital relationships on child attachment and parenthood indicate that marital relationships should be considered as a major influence on the emotional safety of children (Davies & Cummings, 1994). The projection of marriage quality on relationships where children also participate as well as attachment and other dimensions of parenthood show that marital relationships ought to be acknowledged as influential factors in the emotional safety of children (Davies & Cummings, 1994). In this case, the findings show that mature cooperation with the spouse results in an effective treatment of the child's sleeping issue. Indicative is the following extract:

E: "My older child who is eight still sleeps with us or with me or with his father ... me and my husband are handling this problem together and it has taken us days... but now we are good and [now] our child sleeps alone. We work along to tackle our children's issues."

Also, a child's sleep is an issue that concerns all parents, when for example their children often refuse to sleep alone and resort to parents' bed in the evening. At the same time, there are ways for this problem to be solved by the parents themselves. Some participants said:

M: "I had an issue with my child, who is 4...she likes to sleep with me in bed ..."

D: "...all of my children have occasionally come to our bed, now my little one is coming too.."

### *Problem adjusting to the kindergarten*

One's own reassurance of the attachment figure availability as a safe base lies therefore at the heart of attachment safety. Expanding on that, a child in a foreign environment would use this attachment person as a "safety base" to explore space and interact with adult strangers. Under insecure circumstances, he/she would seek contact with the attachment figure. However, these reactions, which Bowlby (1958) has characterized as adhesion reactions, fall into the gap when no attachment face is present and can last long. When the child is in the nursery or kindergarten without his/her parents, then it is a matter of time for an incident to occur that would trigger the child's attachment reaction - if this has not already happened during the parent's effort to bid their child farewell. The result may be long periods of continuous crying or discomfort that would take days and could not be alleviated by the still unknown [environment]. As mothers report, their children experience similar difficulties with adjusting to the kindergarten. Indicative are the extracts from their speech:

E: "Another problem I'm facing is that I bring my little one to the kindergarten every day and she screams asking me to take her back home ..."

T: "You know what I think [it] could be? and I have faced the same in the past...you can do what she wants inside the house but in the kindergarten there are some rules, program, so I realized why she refuses to go ..."

### *Jealousy and competition among siblings*

Parents still describe events in which jealousy and competition among siblings are evident. Specifically, they comment :

D: "they constantly fight with one another....trying to capture my attention all the time and getting angry, if I favour one over the other... "

## **3.2 Daily routine and lack of free time**

Modern living conditions (e.g. exhausting working hours) are not only unhelpful to parents, yet even hardly bearable for them (Pappa, 2017a). Parents find daily routine too tough, especially

because it is boring and usually a source of problems and not joy (Pappa, 2017a). Indeed, what is clearly stated by all participants is the fact that in their everyday life they lack time for themselves, because of the never-ending duties to their children, which makes life even harder. They mention characteristically:

X: "I do not leave them to grandmother ... I do not go out at all ...there is no free time only when they are at school.. As I say, you sacrifice many things to raise your children... I quit my job. "

D: "I feel like I'm suffocating. All I need is some time on my own...."

M: "I do not have time for myself..sometimes I cannot even go to the bathroom...I'm tired of everyday life, I cannot stand it.."

S: "I want some space and time on my own, even for a half an hour would be great, but I don't have it ..."

### ***3.3 Grandmothers' role in the upbringing of the child***

The first attachment is most likely to be formed with the mother, but this may soon be complemented by other attachments with one or a few specific individuals (Ainsworth & Hopkins, 1969). Once formed, either to the mother or to another person, an attachment tends to withstand. Attachment is not a term that should apply to any transitory relationship or a purely occasional state of dependency. Relationships depend on the requirements of the given situation (Ainsworth & Hopkins, 1969). Admittedly, attachment behavior may present fluctuations according to the particular situational factors, yet the attachments themselves remain ever-persistent, even under the impact of unfavorable conditions (Ainsworth & Hopkins, 1969). Thus, it becomes increasingly obvious that it is necessary to consider the broader functions of the family such as marital relationships, brotherly relationships, relationships with wider family members (e.g. grandparents), in order to fully understand attachment as an important aspect of parenthood. In this research, most mothers expressed their dissatisfaction with the grandmothers' involvement in child raising. Parents' concerns have to do with whether grandmothers should contribute to children's upbringing. As they claim, there is a sense of denial from their side since grandmothers often defy their role and take care of children their own way. A representative example is quoted below.

X: "You know... they cancel the role of mom, they want to keep it their way ...but this creates problems to me [as] a mum»

M: "I do not interfere with the grandparents' work, but nor should the grandmother intervene in mine."

### ***3.4 Remorse***

Another issue arising out of the mother's speech is the feeling of remorse, when parents are unable to be fully committed to their children due to reasons such as postpartum depression, pregnancy, which prevents the development of a healthy relationship and communication between mother and child. Nevertheless, the group coordinator suggested ways for the mother to re-approach the child (i.e. activities ).In short, attachment theory provides rich feedback for parent-child, parent-parent and parent-environment affective and social relationships. The theory of attachment is considered to embrace a holistic view where external influences are acknowledged. For instance, when examining safe attachment, Egeland Erickson (1999, p. 4) states : "The development of attachment,

like all human behavior, does not occur in isolation but within a network of influences operating at many levels". In fact, negative events in life such as parental divorce, parent psychopathology, parental loss, illness or domestic violence are important predictors of change in attachment. Weinfield, Sroufe & Egeland (2000) have found that shifts in attachment are linked to difficulties in family conditions (eg depression of the mother and problems in family function due to early puberty). The findings of the present study reveal that something similar has happened to one of the mothers, who admitted that persistent depression did not let her develop the kind of attachment she wanted with her own daughter. Quoting the participant's words:

D: "I still feel remorse for my daughter because after I gave birth I suffered from postpartum depression, I did not breastfeed her, nor did I become attached to her ... I am trying to find a way to catch up with the lost time now"

E: "We all feel remorse ... We cannot help it"

### **3.5 Limits and rules**

The issue of setting boundaries is crucial for parents of infants and preschool children, who usually move from excessive generosity and permissiveness to prohibitions. In terms of defining the limits, the search for measure is perhaps the most important request of parents at this stage of child development. A balanced and calm approach to the issues that arise in the relationship with their children is what is required (Pappa, 2017a). Some of the parents report that they often find it difficult to set rules and limits, and resort to reward, for example, toys. Limits make children feel safe. Rules help school-age children practice decision-making and gain an understanding of natural and logical consequences. The coordinator then proposed that mothers must not promise material goods to children, but rather suggest a nice walk or an activity together, instead. Yet, only one of the parents said she was able to set limits and rules for her children depending on the circumstances.

Some participants mentioned:

M: "The rules and limits are imposed on the younger ages ... there must be limits on nutrition ... I have put them within limits, I am very good at it, but also very strict where I think it is needed..."

E: "We do not make it through, many times ...."

D: "I now come to this logic, I used to be more lenient "

### **3.6 Parenting techniques**

#### *Punishment or reasoning*

Parents react differently when their children cause damage or misbehave. Some of them reported focusing on behavior, namely explaining to their children that they are not behaving properly, while others adopt the measure of punishment to pull children together. In general, they encourage them to focus on verbal communication and dialogue, in case of potential difficulties. Negative parenting attitudes, involving physical and non-physical punishment, have been associated with both parental and child mental health problems. Also, parents exchange views on the technique of punishment and reasoning in order to correct or improve some of their children's attitudes.

S: "The positive thing that M. says is that there must be rules and limits. And, when the children- something bad, we try to make them understand what they did wrong. Now, M. followed this way; another mum however can behave differently. This does not mean that any way applies to any child... It is important that you all want to guide children's actions, it is advisable to do it in a sensible way, which of course is determined by the circumstances. In any case, it is beneficial to encourage verbal communication and dialogue with your child"

### *Encouragement and praise*

It is worth noting that most parents also focus on the technique of encouragement, which has prolific effects on child behavior regulation (Sizer, 2013). Sizer (2013) holds that parental attention, time, and verbal encouragement are perhaps the most effective tools in enhancing desirable behaviors; and indeed, children are in need of the acceptance and emotional support of parents or primary caregivers, so as to develop equally across various domains (cognitive, social, emotional, etc.). Encouragement is one of the most significant means to improve our relationship with children (Pappa, 2015). It is the process by which we direct our attention onto their positive aspects, cultivating in this way their self-esteem (Pappa, 2015). The encouraging parent helps children accept their own mistakes and learn from them, while also promoting the idea of acting perfectly (Pappa, 2015). In addition, praise is also used as a means of encouraging and enhancing the desired behavior (Pappa, 2017c). Parents praise children, reward them verbally, offering positive feedback on their performance and behavior (Pappa, 2017c).

In the parents' speech, another important element is that of encouragement and praise. In particular, most participants reported reinforcing their children's attitude or artistic expression in order to make them feel important and confident. Accepting the facts presented, the coordinator pointed out that it is very positive that they adopt the technique of encouragement, because only this way would the children wish to maintain their good behavior and perhaps try even further.

As they report:

D: "...I like to praise them..."

S: "...we all need to encourage the positive attitudes or, in general, the good elements of our children .... Recognition of effort and improvement is very important ..."

### ***3.7 Supporting and mirroring the concerns of other parents***

At the end of the meetings with the group, the coordinator asked them what their impressions from the group had been. Some of the parents said that they felt relieved when realizing that there were other parents who had similar dilemmas and concerns. Still, one of the basic acknowledgements that prevailed was the experience of being part of a group along with other mothers, something which gave them the opportunity to gain knowledge, exchange views, learn a lot about themselves as well as about others and, ultimately, understand the importance of their behavior in depth.

X: "This worked as pure psychotherapy to me...."

D: "I saw that we had many common experiences as well as different ones at the same time... I saw how each of us grew their children up, and I am relieved that I'm not alone any more, every mom is worried about the same things..."

E: "I feel the same, it helped a lot to talk honestly and exchange views, experiences and new ideas onboard ...I definitely feel more confident than ever..."

## 4. Discussion

**I**n the present research, participants largely showed that there had been a need for them to learn new things to help them improve their communication skills with their own children and feel more empowered to handle the situation. Attachment theory proved to play crucial role in interpreting their own behavior regarding child raising. All participants were quite active in the group, making extensive references to personal issues about their children and expressing their concerns and worries. Furthermore, there was a climate of acceptance, cohesion and interaction in the group, which is apparent from the understanding and support shown by the participants, when realizing that they had experienced similar fears and anxieties in the raising of their children. This intimacy was expressed by all of them, stating that there was proximity and consistency among group members throughout. More specifically, in all meetings, intimacy and positive mood for communication was evident, while there were no negative implications such as intense controversy, negative criticism or isolation that undermined the proximity and cohesion of the group.

The purpose of this study has been to cast light on participants' anxieties and challenges of parenthood and empower them to face it. The group participation provided them with the opportunity to get in touch with other parents, who were experiencing similar problems, and this has had a positive impact on their self-stimulation because they discovered they were not alone, and that others shared the same dilemmas and concerns with them. Indicative is the following extract by a group member : "... I'm not alone any more... every mom is worried about the same things I also experience." Finally, they learned a great deal about themselves, through feed back from the reactions of fellow-participants. By participating in this group, members realized that they cannot be perfect and that it takes time and courage to accept this. Making mistakes is something to be realized by themselves and, via these group interviews they restored their self-confidence and esteem as well as the knowledge that would assist them in formulating a guide to wiser, more appropriate choices for the future (Pappa, 2017a).

## 5. Conclusion

**I**n view of the above, we conclude that a central issue in the study of attachment is to appreciate its rich and unique theory in relation to parenthood, that serves as the basis for its "field" and is a useful tool in the educational inventory of every specialist. Attachment is still supposed to be subject to change, if the parenthood or environmental context alters substantially over time (Cummings & Cummings, 2002). Like "objective relationships," attachments occur at all ages and do not necessarily imply immaturity or weakness (Ainsworth&Hopkins, 1969). Attachment is not a term that should apply to any transitory relationship or a purely occasional dependency transaction. It refers to a bond that an individual forms with another specific individual.

Finally, the authors believe that this study carries new knowledge and information, hence opening a new path for parenthood and attachment theory on real practice level for social welfare professionals, such as social workers, developmental and social psychologists, pedagogists, educators, etc, who work with the target groups at hand, in order to help them uncover, mobilize, develop and conquer their own strengths and competences, so as to lead a successful and rewarding personal, family and social life.

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ΧΡΗΣΤΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΥ – ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ ΣΑΚΕΛΛΑΡΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ  
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Η κοινωνική πολιτική των αυτοδιοικητικών φορέων (Περιφέρειες, Δήμοι) αποτελεί ένα νέο, ραγδαία αναπτυσσόμενο και δυναμικό πεδίο της ευρύτερης κοινωνικής πολιτικής και του κοινωνικού κράτους στην Ευρώπη και την Ελλάδα. Έχει τα πλεονεκτήματα της λεπτομερούς γνώσης των τοπικών κοινωνικών προβλημάτων και της άμεσης παρέμβασης για την επίλυση τους. Το βιβλίο σχεδιάστηκε ως χρήσιμο βοήθημα για τους προπτυχιακούς και μεταπτυχιακούς φοιτητές της κοινωνικής πολιτικής, τους μελετητές του πεδίου, αλλά και όσους απασχολούνται επαγγελματικά με την τοπική και περιφερειακή αυτοδιοίκηση.



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# Internet addiction and other problematic online behaviors among teenagers

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## Διαδικτυακή εξάρτηση και άλλες προβληματικές συμπεριφορές εφήβων στο διαδίκτυο

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### ABSTRACT

Internet use, in people's everyday lives, has rapidly increased in recent years globally. It is estimated that today 47% of the world population uses the Internet on a daily basis. The tremendous possibilities to communicate, conduct transactions and interact it offers, have rendered the Internet an indispensable part of everyday life in the modern world. Especially today's kids and teenagers, we could argue that from the day they are born they coexist with technology and the Internet. Various research efforts in recent years found that the time teenagers spend on the Internet and the range of their online activities are constantly increasing. This excessive use of the Internet by minors, however, despite offering a host of benefits can lead to a number of problems that in certain cases can turn into a pathological addiction to the Internet and new technologies. The present research aims to examine problematic Internet use during adolescence, a critical period in a person's life, and how excessive Internet use, combined with other social factors, can lead to dangerous situations for the vulnerable psyche of teenagers.

**KEY WORDS:** Internet, addiction, teenagers, prevention, treatment.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η χρήση του διαδικτύου, στην καθημερινή ζωή των ανθρώπων, τα τελευταία χρόνια έχει παρουσιάσει μια ραγδαία αύξηση σε παγκόσμιο επίπεδο. Υπολογίζεται ότι το 47% του παγκόσμιου πληθυσμού έχει άμεση πρόσβαση καθημερινά στο Διαδίκτυο. Οι απίστευτες δυνατότητες επικοινωνίας, συναλλαγών και αλληλεπίδρασης που προσφέρει, το έχουν κάνει αναπόσπαστο κομμάτι της καθημερινότητας του σύγχρονου ανθρώπου. Ιδιαίτερα τα σημερινά παιδιά και οι έφηβοι γεννιούνται με δεδομένη την συνύπαρξή τους με την τεχνολογία και το Διαδίκτυο. Μέσα από πολλές έρευνες των τελευταίων ετών έχει προκύψει ότι οι ώρες που οι ανήλικοι περνούν συνδεδεμένοι στο διαδίκτυο και οι δραστηριότητες που κάνουν μέσα από αυτό αυξάνονται συνεχώς. Ωστόσο, αυτή η υπερβολική ενασχόληση των ανηλίκων, πέρα από πολλά θετικά σημεία εμφανίζει και πολλές προβληματικές καταστάσεις που σε ορισμένες περιπτώσεις μπορούν να γίνουν παθολογικές και να οδηγήσουν σε εξάρτηση. Σκοπός της παρούσας μελέτης είναι να αναδείξει την προβληματική χρήση του και πως η υπερβολική ενασχόληση, σε συνδυασμό και με άλλους κοινωνικούς παράγοντες, μπορεί να οδηγήσουν τελικά σε καταστάσεις που μπορούν να γίνουν επικίνδυνες για τον ευαίσθητο ψυχισμό των εφήβων.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Διαδίκτυο, εξάρτηση, έφηβοι, πρόληψη, αντιμετώπιση.

## 1. Introduction

The modern world is characterized by the rapid evolution of technology. The Internet has become an indispensable tool in people's everyday lives. Computer communications networks have created a global web, where various groups of people gained access to information and "a channel for online socialization and communication" (Siomos, Sfakianakis, Floros, 2012). Furthermore, the evolution of communications technology has paved the way for innovations in the fields of education, work, health, social sciences, communications, trade and management. New technologies are a rather attractive environment for new ways of working, education, developing interpersonal relationships and utilizing free time, with all users recognizing the various benefits offered (Polo-Manou, 2016).

Additionally, the Internet offers various benefits in the field of education. Utilizing the Internet teaching becomes more attractive and interesting, providing additional incentives for learning as the audiovisual material and the immersive graphics make it easier to mobilize students, whose commitment to the learning process, with the use of the Internet, appears to grow. As students are familiar with new technologies they are exposed to different opinions and cultures, something that wouldn't be otherwise possible. Students are advised to use the Internet, as it is an easy, quick and free medium for finding and filtering information, allowing them to broaden their horizons and become critical thinkers (Weinstein-Lejoyeux, 2010).

The Internet is an important tool of education, counseling, information and entertainment, the inability, however, of certain people to control their relationship with the Internet can lead to multiple hazards. Internet misuse is causing unpleasant feelings and forces people who make problematic use of the Internet to postpone many of their daily activities and neglect their obligations. Furthermore, prolonged Internet use can lead people to isolate from friends and family. In particular, when Internet use exceeds reasonable qualitative and quantitative limits, then we can refer to Internet addiction (Tsitsika-Kormas, 2012).

Previous research examining Internet use concluded that excessive and compulsive use of the Internet can become pathological and addictive. Initially, the criteria used in previous research were based on the criteria for addiction to alcohol, substances and pathological gambling. Today, however, Internet addiction disorder has its own diagnostic criteria, with Kimberly Young's questionnaire, known as the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) (Young, 2004), the most prominent among them. Additional important questions from previous research pertain to whether Internet addiction is an autonomous mental disorder or there is a pattern of comorbidity with other mental disorders and, if so, which ones. Moreover, is Internet addiction an antecedent or the expression of these mental disorders?

To avoid pathological behaviors with regard to Internet use, a person must be aware of the dangers associated with excessive Internet use and use it with prudence and within clearly defined limits. It is crucial for everyone to realize that the Internet is a tool to make our lives easier and not a substitute of real life. For this reason, it shouldn't be used uncontrollably, at the expense of our quality of life and the obligations of each individual according to his role in various aspects of life.

## 2. Conceptual clarifications about the internet

Some scholars use the term Internet addiction (Young, 1996), while others prefer the term Internet Addiction Disorder (Goldberg, 1996). Davis (2001) uses the term Pathological Internet Use, while in Scherer's (1997) study the term Internet Dependency is used. In the present study both the term Internet addiction as well as the term addiction to the Internet are used, along with the term problematic use of the Internet and new technologies.

A review of the relevant literature on the Internet, its use and abuse, allows one to realize that a plethora of terminologies have been used at times by different researchers to describe the phenomenon.

The constant improvement of the Internet's capabilities along with the ever-increasing Internet use by people, led to different types of use depending on the time spent and the purpose. Hence, five distinct categories of Internet use are identified (Siomos, Sfakianakis & Floros, 2012):

a. Typical Internet use. It refers to a benign use of the Internet for professional, informational, educational and recreational purposes. This type of use does not have an adverse impact on the user's behavior.

b. Problematic Internet use. In this case, the user is spending excessive amounts of time accessing the Internet using a computer, a tablet, a mobile phone or any other internet-enabled device. The Internet is used to communicate with other users, recreation and playing online games, for the most part role-playing games or gambling (Polo & Manu, 2016). The meaningless use of the Internet in this case may not lead to abuse, but it indicates a tendency towards misuse that serves as a warning sign for potential abuse.

c. Internet abuse. Repeated internet use leads to a reduction in the user's functionality. That is, the user is unable to perform his work, school or family duties. He neglects his personal care with important implications for his physical and mental well-being. He faces problems in his personal and social life and engages in delinquent behavior online that may result in voluntary or involuntary wrongdoings. The user is euphoric while sitting in front of a computer, while, on the contrary, he feels discomfort, irritation, stress and is depressed when he can't go online.

d. Internet addiction. To diagnose a person with Internet addiction his behavior must be observed and he must have at least three of the following symptoms for at least 12 months (Siomos, Sfakianakis & Floros, 2012):

- i. When adverse impacts on the user's mental and physical health are observed, manifesting withdrawal symptoms. That is, he must feel discomfort and have psychosomatic annoyances.
- ii. Repeated failed attempts by the user to reduce or even control time spent online.
- iii. Time spent using the Internet keeps increasing. The user spends more time using the Internet than initially planned for.
- iv. Constantly seeking ways to improve his Internet access. The user is always looking for ways to improve his Internet connection.
- v. He neglects his social, school or professional activities in order to stay online. He may even neglect recreational activities, preferring to spend time on the Internet.
- vi. Even when he realizes Internet use is causing him physical and mental problems, the user can't stop using the Internet.

The controversy with respect to the concept of Internet addiction are also reflected by the fact that there is no relevant category in the diagnostics tools for psychiatric disorders, such as the DSM, which does not yet acknowledge Internet addiction as an autonomous mental disorder. Regardless of that, however, Internet addiction is an important issue for social scientists around the world. It is no coincidence that there are already various treatment interventions for users addicted to the Internet globally, along with self-help groups for rehabilitation from Internet dependence, including «Internet Addicts Anonymous» and other initiatives, such as Restart (<http://www.netaddictionrecovery.com/>).

### **3. The Cognitive-Behavioral Approach of Social Work in preventing and treating internet addiction**

**T**he methods and techniques of the cognitive-behavioral model of Social Work can be applied both for the prevention and the treatment of Internet addiction. Firstly, with respect to prevention, the cognitive-behavioral model is important in learning and developing cognitive skills. Using this term, we refer to the skills a teenager must develop in order to establish healthy behavioral patterns in his everyday life, along with defense mechanisms against addictive and delinquent behaviors. Such cognitive skills include self-awareness, understanding the opinion of others, adopting a positive stance towards life, using problem-solving techniques that proceed in stages, internal dialogue, self-confidence and self-esteem. Self-esteem is an important factor in preventing personal dysfunctions, thus improving the teenager's self-esteem is one of the main aims of most cognitive-behavioral prevention interventions. Self-esteem is directly associated with human behavior, since it is a crucial factor for a healthy relationship with one's self and with others. Self-esteem refers to how we perceive certain aspects of our self and how others around us perceive us. Developing self-esteem, a person becomes aware of "good" and tries to develop his personality with behaviors consistent with the concept of "good" and healthy social role models. Finally, self-esteem includes an element of assessment (Makri – Mpotsari, 2010).

Beyond developing cognitive skills, during a prevention and treatment intervention based on the cognitive-behavioral approach, it is necessary to develop the social skills of teenagers. Using the term social skills, we refer to the awareness, expression and handling of emotions, developing empathy, cooperation and improving communication skills (Goleman, 1998). Social workers work with groups of teenagers, using methods and techniques such as simulations, role playing, experiencing exercises, brainstorming and dialogue, positive reframing etc. to help them develop their social skills. The aim is to identify all these negative thoughts and feelings that may lead a teenager to addictive and delinquent behaviors on the Internet, so that through learning social skills he can develop strong prevention mechanisms of these behaviors (Goleman, 1998).

The cognitive-behavioral approach is based, as we have seen, on the relationship between three main dimensions: a) Thoughts, what we are thinking, b) Feelings, what we feel, c) Behaviors, how we act (Stallard, 2002).

The cognitive-behavioral approach is focused on modifying dysfunctional beliefs, through experience and knowledge acquisition by the person itself. The dysfunctional beliefs are identified in order to revise the knowledge and the thoughts that weigh negatively on the person's behavior, trapping the individual in a negative view of his own actions (Stalikas, 2011).

According to all of the above, cognitive-behavioral methods involve interventions focused on changing the pattern of thoughts and feelings in order to modify problematic behaviors. Through the cognitive-behavioral approach individuals are trained to identify the dysfunctional thoughts that lead to addictive behaviors and replace them with thoughts that allow them to develop functional behaviors. The basic component of the cognitive-behavioral approach is the theory of social learning that focuses on the ways we learn in social situations, observing how others act successfully in similar situations (Filippidis, 2017).

For the prevention and treatment of Internet addiction, the cognitive-behavioral approach focuses mainly on cognitive interventions about wrong perceptions, training in problem solving methods and developing cognitive and social skills. Treatment interventions take place in special centers with specialized scientists (Child psychiatrists, Psychologists, Social workers). In mild cases a series of cognitive-behavioral sessions in regular intervals is advised, while in severe cases cognitive-behavioral treatment in special centers is necessary, combined with medication in certain particularly severe cases with comorbidities. In this particular approach, patients examine the emotional motives that constitute the background of their addiction and seek alternative ways to address these needs (Papadimitriou & Sementeriadis, 2014).

## 4. Research methodology

**F**or the present research a quantitative method using structured questionnaires was used. Data were collected from 14 public child protection facilities of Social Care Centers around the country, hosting teenagers of various age groups. The research population was 252 teenagers, aged between 11 and 18 years old, living permanently in these public facilities. A population census was conducted, as the entire population of the aforementioned teenagers was included, and employing a sampling method wasn't required. To conduct the research, prior specific written authorization was granted from the Deputy Minister for social care issues of the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity, following a positive recommendation from the Directorate of Child Protection of the General Directorate of Social Care. Prior authorization was also obtained from the Boards of Directors of the Social Care Centers operating in every prefecture of Greece and are responsible for the public child protection facilities referred to as Child Protection Branches.

The quantitative method using structured questionnaires was applied, as already mentioned, to study the 252 teenagers living in public child protection facilities. The quantitative method was selected because, on one hand, the population under study was large enough to use any quantitative method, while, on the other hand, the quantitative method allows the generalization of the results and a more objective assessment of the phenomenon under study. Moreover, the main aims of quantitative studies are to examine the causes of various social phenomena and uncover the relationships between the main factors that contribute to the emergence of phenomena of social pathogenesis. Structured protocols are used for data collection in a quantitative research and subsequently objective measurements are obtained and numerical analysis using modern statistical methods and mathematical models is performed.

Each teenager completed a questionnaire and handed it over to a researcher. To complete the questionnaire each teenager required around 15 to 20 minutes. As already mentioned, the total number of teenagers that participated in our research was 252 teenagers that comprised the total population of teenagers aged 11 – 18 years old living in public child protection facilities

at the time the research was conducted. In particular, questionnaires were collected during the period between February and November 2015. (Filippidis, 2017)

## 5. Research findings

Our research findings indicate increased rates of Internet addiction among the teenagers of our study population, compared to the general teenage population examined in previous research in recent years. Namely, 8.9% of teenagers were addicted to the Internet, 23.3% had moderate levels of addiction, 27.5% had low levels of addiction and 40.3% of teenagers had “healthy” Internet use patterns (Table 1). In teenage boys pathological Internet use reached 10.5%, while in teenage girls it was 6%. The addiction rate of the teenagers under study is higher compared to the average European rate of 4.4% and the average rate among the general population of Greek teenagers, that was estimated at 5.4% according to previous research in recent years. However, we shall not forget that our study population was teenagers living in orphanages and the reasons for the increased rates of Internet addiction and other findings will be analyzed in the study’s conclusions.

**Table 1. Addictive behavior among teenagers**

Addictive Behavior Score among Teenagers		Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Valid	0-30	95	37,7	40,3	40,3
	31-49	65	25,8	27,5	67,8
	50-79	55	21,8	23,3	91,1
	80-100	21	8,3	8,9	100,0
	Total	236	93,7	100,0	
Missing values	16	6,3			
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100,0</b>			

Additionally, according to descriptive statistics, 31.8% of teenagers are online all the time, 28.4% browse the Internet 3 - 4 times a day, 14.4% at least two times a day, 16.1% once a day and 9.3% not every day (Table 2). According to the above findings, 90.7% of teenagers that use the Internet, do so on a daily basis and with fairly great frequency.

**Table 2. Frequency of Internet use**

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
I'm constantly online	75	29,8	31,8	31,8
3 - 4 times a day	67	26,6	28,4	60,2
At least twice a day	34	13,5	14,4	74,6
Once a day	38	15,1	16,1	90,7
Not every day	22	8,7	9,3	100,0
Total	236	93,7	100,0	
Missing values	16	6,3		
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100,0</b>		

With respect to the duration of Internet use, 34.3% of teenagers use the Internet for over 4 hours daily, 15.7% for 3 – 4 hours, 17.8% for 2 – 3 hours and 32.2% for 1 – 2 hours a day (Table 3). It is worth noting that between teenage boys and girls there were no significant statistical differences in the frequency and duration of Internet use. Both sexes use the Internet daily for the same duration, with teenage girls using the Internet for a bit longer as they are more active on social media. Social media use, according to a large volume of the extant research is, at the moment, the main reason that teenagers spend many hours in front of a computer monitor, followed by online games. Around a decade ago, the relative time spent performing each of these online activities was reversed. However, the rapid growth of social media and especially Facebook, in the previous decade, turned social media into the most popular online activity for teenagers.

**Table 3. Duration of Internet use**

Hours	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
1-2	76	30,2	32,2	32,2
2-3	42	16,7	17,8	50,0
3-4	37	14,7	15,7	65,7
More than 4	81	32,1	34,3	100,0
Total	236	93,7	100,0	
Missing values	16	6,3		
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100,0</b>		

Furthermore, for 86.4% of the teenagers in our study population Facebook is one of the main reasons they use the Internet, followed by downloading music and video for 72.9% of them, without being aware, however, that it is illegal and violating copyright law. Playing online games is the reason they use the Internet 69.5% of the teenagers in our study, while 52.5% use it for chatting. To watch movies and listen to music use the Internet 41.1% of teenagers, to seek

online friends 35.6% and 35.2% as a study aid and for their school assignments. Finally, 27.5% of teenagers use the Internet for online shopping, 23.7% to seek sexual partners, 18.6% to catch up with the news, 14.8% for online gambling and just 13.1% to send and read e-mails, as most people in these age groups interact with each other using social media (Table 4).

**Table 4. Why teenagers use the Internet**

Reasons for using the Internet	Frequency	Percent (%) (N 252)	Valid Percent (%) (N 236)
Studying/school assignments	83	7,2	35,2
Online games	164	14,2	69,5
Facebook	204	17,6	86,4
Seeking new friends	84	7,2	35,6
Chatting	124	10,7	52,5
Seeking sexual partners	56	4,8	23,7
Gambling	35	3,0	14,8
News	44	3,8	18,6
E-mails	31	2,7	13,1
Online shopping	65	5,6	27,5
Downloading music/videos	172	14,8	72,9
Watching movies/listening to music/gaming	97	8,4	41,1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1159</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>491,1</b>

The next question in our research examined whether teenagers in our population study played online games with real money. According to our findings, 18.2% of teenagers play online games with real money (Table 5), 37 of them teenage boys (24.2%) and 6 teenage girls (7.2%) (Table 6). Out of the 43 teens playing online games, 12 of them are severely addicted and an additional 18 are moderately addicted to the Internet (Table 7). We observe, therefore, a high degree of correlation between pathological Internet use and playing online games with real money, as, out of the 43 teenagers that play online games with real money, 30 of them are severely or moderately addicted to the Internet. Moreover, we observe that teenage boys (37) that play online games with real money vastly outnumber teenage girls (6). Once again it is confirmed that teenage boys gamble far more than teenage girls do.

**Table 5. Do teenagers play online games with real money?**

Do you play online games with real money?	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Yes	43	17,1	18,2
No	193	76,6	81,8
Total	236	93,7	100,0
Missing values	16	6,3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

**Table 6. Do teenagers play online games with real money? Breakdown by gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
<b>Boys</b>			
Yes	37	22,7	24,2
No	116	71,2	75,8
Total	153	93,9	100,0
Missing values	10	6,1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Girls</b>			
Yes	6	6,7	7,2
No	77	86,5	92,8
Total	83	93,3	100,0
Missing values	6	6,7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

**Table 7. Degree of addictive behavior playing among teenagers by playing online games with real money**

Degree of addictive behavior	Frequency	Total number of addicted teenagers	Percent (%)
Moderate Addictive Behavior	18	55	32,73
Severe Addictive Behavior	12	21	57,14

Next, we examined which online games teenagers play with real money, either to buy various in-game characters or become more competitive and win more money. In this question teenagers were able to mention more than one game and there were no predetermined answers. As shown in Table 8, 29.6% of the 43 teenagers that play online games with real money play League of Legends (LOL), 18.4% play OPAP's Pame Stoixima Live, 17.3% play Counter Strike Global Offensive (Cs Go), 13.3% play Heroes of Newerth (HoN), 12.2% play World of Warcraft (WOW) and 9.2% play games in online casinos (poker, roulette, slot machines, etc.).

**Table 8. Online games teenagers play spending real money**

If you play online games with real money name which ones:		Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Valid	League of Legends (LOL)	29	11,5	29,6	29,6
	Counter Strike Global Offensive (Cs Go)	17	6,7	17,3	46,9
	Heroes of Newerth (HoN)	13	5,2	13,3	60,2
	World of Warcraft (WOW)	12	4,8	12,2	72,4
	Pame Stoixima Live	18	7,1	18,4	90,8
	Casino Live	9	3,6	9,2	100,0
	Total	98	38,9	100,0	
Missing values		154	61,1		
<b>Total</b>		<b>252</b>	<b>100,0</b>		

Adolescents' communication with strangers online is another significant finding of our survey. More specifically, 46,4% of the teenagers questioned, conceded that they talk with people they do not know, on the Internet, whereas, 53,6%, do not. It seems then, that, almost 1 in 2 adolescents who participated in the survey, communicates with strangers online (Table 9). 82 boys responded positively, that is 53,9% and 27 girls, which is 32,5%. Boys apparently, tend to contact strangers more often, than the girls who took part (Table 10).

**Table 9. Exploring adolescents' communication with strangers on the Internet**

Do you talk to strangers online?	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Yes	109	43,3	46,4
No	126	50,0	53,6
Total	235	93,3	100,0
Missing System	17	6,7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

**Table 10. Exploring adolescents' communication with strangers on the Internet based on gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
<b>Boys</b>			
Yes	82	50,3	53,9
No	70	42,9	46,1
Total	152	93,3	100,0
Missing System	11	6,7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

<b>Girls</b>			
Yes	27	30,3	32,5
No	56	62,9	67,5
Missing System	6	6,7	100,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

Apart from talking to people they do not know, 36,2% of the adolescents in question, admitted that they have already got together in the real world with strangers they had met online, whereas 63,8% claimed they have never met in person. (Table 11). Amongst those who responded positively, there are 65 boys (39,3%) and 21 girls (25,3%). It can be drawn from this as well, then, that boys outweigh girls in meeting in person with strangers they have met online, however, girl numbers cannot be overlooked (Table 12).

**Table 11. Meeting in person with online strangers.**

Have you ever met in person with strangers you met online?	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Yes	85	33,7	36,2
No	150	59,5	63,8
Total	235	93,3	100,0
Missing System	17	6,7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

**Table 12. Meeting in person with online strangers, based on gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
<b>Boys</b>			
Yes	65	39,3	39,3
No	88	54,0	57,9
Total	152	93,3	100,0
Missing System	11	6,7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100,0</b>	
<b>Girls</b>			
Yes	21	23,6	25,3
No	62	69,7	74,7
Total	83	93,3	100,0
Missing System	6	6,7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

The main reasons why, the adolescents who took part in our survey, met in person with strangers they had only met online, were further studied.

34,5% met for simply making another acquaintance, 17,2% for company/friendship, 26,4% met with strangers for sexual reasons, 17,2% to have an affair and 4,6% for the purchase of a certain object.

The most common reason for boys going out with a stranger they met online is, to get an acquaintance (36,4%), for sexual reasons (28,8%) and to have an affair (15,2%). Last but not least, boys meet with strangers for company/friendship (13,6%) and in order to buy something from them (6,1%)

On the other hand, girls meet with strangers equally looking for an acquaintance (28,6%) and for company/friendship (28,6%). Having an affair follows as the main reason why, they would meet a stranger in person (23,8%) and finally, sexual reasons (19%). None of the girls claimed they meet in person with strangers they meet online, in order to buy a certain object.

In our survey, 21 adolescents have been attributed seriously addictive behavior. According to the following (Table 13) 18 out of the 21 adolescents who have met in person with strangers from the Internet, have, also, got seriously addictive behavior concerning the use of Internet, that is, 85,7%.

On the other hand, 55 adolescents in our survey have been found to exhibit moderate addictive behavior concerning the use of Internet and 33 of them have met in person with strangers from the Internet; that is, 60% (Table 13). Thus, there seems to be a significant correlation between the Internet- addicted adolescents and the risky behavior of meeting in person with strangers they've met online.

**Table 13. Addictive behavior and meeting with strangers.**

Have you ever met in person with strangers you met online?	Frequency	N	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Seriously addictive behavior				
Yes	18	21	85,7	85,7
Moderate addictive behavior				
Yes	33	55	60,0	60,0

Another important point examined in our study is whether the teenagers that participated in our research have watched informative talks about safe Internet use and which teenagers believe are the necessary conditions to stay safe while browsing the Internet. According to our findings, shown in table 14, 43.2% of teenagers have watched informative talks or discussions about safe Internet use, while 56.8% haven't. Namely, 59 teenage boys (36.2% of all boys) and 43 teenage girls (48.3% of all girls) have watched informative talks or discussions about safe Internet use (Table 15).

**Table 14. Have teenagers watched informative talks or discussions about safe Internet use?**

Have you watched informative talks or discussions about safe Internet use?		Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Valid	Yes	102	40,5	43,2
	No	134	53,2	56,8
	Total	236	93,7	100,0
Missing values		16	6,3	
<b>Total</b>		<b>252</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

**Table 15. Have teenagers watched informative talks or discussions about safe Internet use? Breakdown by gender**

Gender			Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)
Boys	Valid	Yes	59	36,2	38,6
		No	94	57,7	61,4
		Total	153	93,9	100,0
	Missing values	10	6,1		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100,0</b>		
Girls	Valid	Yes	43	48,3	51,8
		No	40	44,9	48,2
		Total	83	93,3	100,0
	Missing values	6	6,7		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100,0</b>		

Finally, table 16 presents the necessary conditions to stay safe online according to teenagers. For this question teenagers were able to select more than 1 option. According to the analysis that followed, 73.7% of the teenagers that participated in our research believe that they should avoid chatting with strangers online, 58.5% that they shouldn't visit websites with illegal content, 80.1% that they shouldn't share their personal details on the Internet and 64.8% that they should inform an adult they trust when they feel they are in danger while online. Furthermore, 44.5% of the teenagers asked answered that not browsing websites with adult content is another condition for safe Internet use. According to our research findings, 61.4% believe that they shouldn't gamble online or conduct financial transactions over the Internet and, finally, 69.9% believe that they shouldn't join dangerous online groups, such as violent or racist groups, groups for seeking sexual partners etc.

**Table 16. The necessary conditions to stay safe online according to teenagers.**

What are the necessary conditions to stay safe online in your opinion?	Responses		Valid Percent (%)
	N	Percent (%)	
Not chatting with strangers	174	16,3	73,7
Not browsing websites with illegal content	138	12,9	58,5
Not sharing my personal details on the Internet	189	17,7	80,1
Informing an adult i trust when i feel in danger	153	14,3	64,8
Not visiting websites for adults only	105	9,8	44,5
Not gambling or conducting financial transactions online	145	13,6	61,4
Not joining dangerous online groups (such as violent or racist groups, groups for seeking sexual partners etc.)	165	15,4	69,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1069</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>453,0%</b>

## 5. Conclusions – Discussion

**I**nternet addiction is a modern social phenomenon, that tends to become more common as use of new technologies becomes more widespread. Teenage Internet addiction can be attributed to multiple factors and is interwoven with the global social, cultural and humanitarian crisis that via certain dysfunctional social institutions is reflected on deficient personalities and especially on the vulnerable teenage psyche. Especially the teenagers in the study population, having to overcome various social adversities, carrying multiple childhood emotional wounds, heavily stigmatized and lacking socialization, are particularly vulnerable to Internet addiction.

All the aforementioned deviant behaviors of teenagers on the Internet that we examined in our research, that lead, as we have seen, to soaring Internet addiction rates, can be attributed to various special factors affecting our research population that is comprised of teenagers living in child protection facilities in Greece. These special factors can, under certain conditions, be specified and generalized, to draw insightful conclusions about behaviors of the general population of teenagers in Greece. First of all, the absence of a family environment and parental guidance and control is responsible to a large extent for the misuse of the Internet and the development of delinquent and antisocial behaviors. Growing up without a family environment or in an abusive and inappropriate family environment up to a certain age, for the minors we studied, appears to have a significant impact on the difficulty to control the behaviors of this particular group of teenagers. At the same time, there are serious and major shortages in scientific and social care staff in the institutionalized facilities these teenagers grow up in, resulting in limited or, in certain cases, non-existent supervision and guidance on the proper use of the Internet. Expert on issues of delinquent behaviors, psychiatrist Matsa (2009) notes the significance of the lack of a family or any other type of supervisory framework on harmful and illegal activity using the Internet, arguing that “individuals that usually develop addiction to the Internet and are involved in delinquent behaviors online are persons with deficient identity, that grew up without firm parental role models, with their parents barely or not present in their lives, or with parental substitutes”.

Another important reason for the increased rates of Internet addiction and problematic Internet use among the teenagers in our study, is a tendency to imitate negative behaviors that appear in institutionalized facilities, because of the influence of older teenagers on younger ones, but also between peers. According to the theory of social learning many adolescent behaviors are the outcome of a learning process and imitating the behavior of important others around them. In particular, classic reflective or classic dependent learning interprets every behavior, positive or negative, as the response to stimuli from the teenagers' immediate environment. Furthermore, the child protection institutions in Greece are desperately understaffed, lacking scientific and social care personnel, while the limited staff has high rates of work exhaustion (Filippidis, 2015) and is thus unable to provide the minors hosted there with the proper edification and psychosocial support. Hence, usually in these institutions the younger teenagers tend to imitate the negative behavioral patterns of the older ones, that are especially prone to problematic and unsafe Internet use. As the younger teenagers observe the older ones using the Internet for many hours a day, threatening others via e-mail, but also being threatened themselves, they become accustomed to these behaviors and thus a vicious learning cycle of negative behaviors is established in child protection facilities.

Additionally, another important element contributing to the high rates of problematic Internet use among teenagers living in child protection facilities, is the fact that this particular group of teenagers comes from various biological, social and cultural environments. Most of the time they enter these facilities with already developed personalities and preexisting delinquent and addictive behaviors. It is widely known that childhood and especially the first few years in a child's life, are particularly crucial for the development of their personality and their psychosocial resilience. Minors that had to be transferred to a child protection facility lived in abusive and dysfunctional family environments, exposing them to unhinged behaviors and negative role models. These behaviors of teenagers and their childhood traumas cannot be easily controlled and treated in the public child protection facilities, suffering by all the aforementioned problems, and as a result these uncontrolled behaviors result in problematic Internet use. Furthermore, highly deficient personalities not accustomed to clear rules and limits to their behavior, minors with major socialization issues, individuals unable to come to terms with their frustrations and individuals who can't express their feelings and suffer from low self-esteem and limited social functionality are especially prone to Internet addiction.

Finally, another important factor that we believe leads to increased rates of Internet addiction among teenagers living in child protection facilities is the stigma and the social prejudice against them. According to "labelling theory", society is to a large extent responsible for deviant behavior and not the person deviating from the rules (Matza, 1969). Deviant behavior is the result of social reactions and social representations that influence a person's behavior. As we have seen, minors who live in orphanages are stigmatized, both by their peers as well as the rest of society. Social perceptions that teenagers living in orphanages are usually violent, aggressive, out of control, delinquent etc. stigmatize and marginalize these teenagers forcing them to interact only with each other. Thus, according to labelling theory, as long as persons are subject to prejudice and stigma, they will resort to delinquent behaviors as a defense or attack mechanism (Kourakis, 2004). Moreover, according to the theory of self-fulfilling prophecy, this process mutates the teenager's self-image and eventually he conforms to the image of the stigma attached to him from those around him.

Today, it remains as relevant as ever, the chronic demand in Greece for the establishment of social services. If not in every school, in groups of schools staffed with social workers and psychologists. These scientists could develop various programs and projects in the school community to promote diversity acceptance and the treatment of phenomena of social pathogenesis, such as Internet addiction. These programs would aim to change negative behaviors and thoughts and promote behaviors and skills that would boost students' self-esteem and self-confidence and create groups based on cooperation and acceptance of diversity. Social workers and psychologists in schools are able through cognitive-behavioral approaches to design and implement innovative projects to create a supportive environment and a complete set of interventions focused on the prevention and treatment of addictive and delinquent behaviors.

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## Biographical Note

**Georgios Filippidis** currently works as a social worker at the Special Education High School in Northern Greece and an academic supervisor for Social Work students' practicum at the department of Social Work at the Democritus University of Thrace. He holds a degree in Social Work from the same department (previously named Social Administration and Political Science), and two M.A.'s in Pedagogy and in Administration of Health Institutions from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He holds a PhD on Internet addiction and electronic juvenile delinquency in Greece awarded by the Dept of Social Administration and Political Science at the Democritus University of Thrace. In the recent past he was the General Administrator of the General Public Hospital of Komotini-Northern Greece and Vice President of the Child Welfare Centre of the Prefecture of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. His main research interests involve issues in social work and clinical social work, addictions, electronic violence, child protection, special and general education.



Ελένη Πρόκου

Πολιτικές εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων  
και διά βίου μάθησης στην  
Ευρώπη

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Το βιβλίο αυτό επιχειρεί να αναλύσει και να ερμηνεύσει τις πολιτικές για την εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων και τη διά βίου μάθηση στην εποχή της παγκοσμιοποίησης. Στο κέντρο του ενδιαφέροντός του είναι η Ευρώπη, υπό την έννοια τόσο της συγκριτικής μελέτης των εν λόγω πολιτικών σε επιλεγμένες ευρωπαϊκές χώρες όσο και της ανάλυσης και ερμηνείας της ευρωπαϊκής πολιτικής για τη διά βίου μάθηση. Ιδιαίτερη έμφαση δίνει στις επιδράσεις της πολιτικής της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης για τη διά βίου μάθηση στην Ελλάδα, καθώς και στην περιγραφή του θεσμικού πλαισίου λειτουργίας των βασικών φορέων εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων στη χώρα μας.

Το παρόν βιβλίο φιλοδοξεί, έτσι, να συμβάλει στην κατανόηση της εξέλιξης του πεδίου της εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων/διά βίου μάθησης στην Ευρώπη και την Ελλάδα, και να θέσει το πλαίσιο προβληματισμού για περαιτέρω έρευνα στις πολιτικές για το εν λόγω πεδίο. Απευθύνεται σε εκπαιδευτικούς, φοιτητές, εργαζόμενους και γενικότερα σε όσους ασχολούνται με την εκπαίδευση.

# Defining green social work

Evrpidis Papadimitriou, *Democritus University of Thrace*

## Ορίζοντας την πράσινη κοινωνική εργασία

Ευριπίδης Παπαδημητρίου, *Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης*

### ABSTRACT

In the current dispensation, there is a lot of work being undertaken globally by social workers to address the issues at the nexus of environmental and community sustainability. This is due to the fact that environmental problems are also proving to have a social angle and therefore social workers are increasingly finding it important to include the attainment of environmental justice and sustainability as part of their social interventions. The phenomenon is being referred to as green social work. The paper presents the basic proposals of scholars which concern the content and the particular attributes of this new example. In addition, it aims to connect the theoretical discussion with the practical application and to describe the role of the green social worker.

**KEY WORDS:** Green Social Work, eco-social approach, environmental inequality, sustainability.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Τα ζητήματα της περιβαλλοντικής και της κοινωνικής βιωσιμότητας αποσπούν σήμερα σε διεθνές επίπεδο το ενδιαφέρον των κοινωνικών λειτουργών οι οποίοι έχουν συμβάλει στην παραγωγή σημαντικού ερευνητικού έργου. Καθώς όλο και περισσότερο αναγνωρίζονται οι κοινωνικές διαστάσεις των περιβαλλοντικών προβλημάτων, καθίσταται αναγκαία η συμπερίληψη των στόχων της περιβαλλοντικής δικαιοσύνης και της βιωσιμότητας στις παρεμβάσεις της κοινωνικής εργασίας. Πρόκειται για μια τάση η οποία αναφέρεται στη σχετική βιβλιογραφία ως πράσινη κοινωνική εργασία. Το άρθρο παρουσιάζει τις κεντρικές προτάσεις των μελετητών αναφορικά με το περιεχόμενο και τα ιδιαίτερα χαρακτηριστικά του νέου αυτού παραδείγματος. Περαιτέρω, στοχεύει να συνδέσει τη θεωρητική συζήτηση με την πρακτική εφαρμογή και να περιγράψει το ρόλο του πράσινου κοινωνικού λειτουργού.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Πράσινη κοινωνική εργασία, οικο-κοινωνική προσέγγιση, περιβαλλοντική ανισότητα, βιωσιμότητα/αειφορία.

## 1. Introduction

**G**reen social work is a new paradigm for the management of social problems as well as dealing with the negative consequences brought upon the environment by the industrial society of mass consumption (Dominelli, 2012 & 2018). This approach recognizes a particularly important role for social workers in relation to the issue of environmental injustice and the development of sustainable communities and societies (Jones, 2018; Peeters, 2012; Hetherington & Boddy, 2013). Environmental injustice is the failure to use the earth's resources in a conscious, useful, and equitable manner. It is a concept that is based on the impact of environmental deg-

radation and climate change on the most vulnerable people as well as on the unequal distribution of the environmental 'goods and bads' (Bell 2009, p. 19) in the society. The social impact of industrialization on the environment worsened by unsustainable development models, power dynamics, consumerism, by the implementation of neoliberal policy and imbalanced resource distribution (Mason et al., 2017; Rinkel & Powers, 2017; Shajahan & Sharma, 2018). These factors are central to the prevailing socio-economic systems that exacerbate structural inequalities and worsen the situation for the poor and low-income individuals or communities (Bullard & Johnson, 2000; Montgomery & Chakraborty 2015). It is also these situations that undermine these individuals' capacities to reduce risk, and they also lower their resilience (Dominelli & Ku, 2017; Dominelli, 2012).

Thus, environmental justice is premised on equitably sharing the burdens caused by environmental deterioration and benefits that are involved in the maintenance of healthy and sustainable environments. Consequently, social workers have their roles to play in the achievement of this objective. The social worker mitigates the vulnerabilities that the poor people might be exposed to in their efforts to build resilience. It is also certain that the earth's environment should be maintained in order to meet the needs of the current and future generations (Bell, 2009; Rocha, 2018; Philip & Reisch, 2015; Lucas-Darby, 2011).

Dominelli (2012, p. 8) defines green social work as the practice that "intervenes to protect the environment and enhance people's wellbeing by integrating the interdependencies between people and their sociocultural, economic and physical environments, and among peoples within an egalitarian framework that addresses prevailing structural inequalities and unequal distribution of power and resources". The new environmental and societal context requires not only the further development of the theoretical background, but also the inclusion of environmental issues in the education of social workers (Närhi & Matthies, 2018; Boetto & Bell, 2015; Jones, 2013).

The article includes a review of the main ideas in the concept of green social work. It also seeks to explore the role of the social worker in the light of this new approach, to show how social workers have a part to play by ensuring that resources and individuals are mobilized when they declare the unacceptability of environmental degradation and where these efforts are aimed at formulating alternative socioeconomic and environmental protection models entrenched within the environmental justice principles for a healthy and sustainable existence (Coates & Gray, 2012; Beltran et al., 2016). The paper argues that the social worker is a formidable force in tackling environmental degradation and enhancing environmental and community sustainability through a combination and channeling of various factors such as education, enforcement, and possession of particular skills such as the mobilization of citizens towards this goal.

## 2. Environmental justice, sustainability and green social work

**T**he interventions regarding environmental justice are aimed at the promotion of safe and clean environments through the meaningful involvement of all in the development of policy decisions that impact the environment (Jones, 2012). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines this concept as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Concerning sustainability, the use

of natural resources in a responsible manner is necessary so that they will remain viable and available for future generations (Hayward et al., 2000). It is this cause that has attracted traditional social workers who have previously been involved in the promotion of social justice and human rights to become reliable partners of movements that advocate for environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012). Green social work is a practice that is rooted in the enhancement of the wellbeing of individuals and their environments. It is in this light that social work is by definition linked to the concepts of environmental inequality and ecosocial justice.

Social workers derive the authority for their interventions from the fact that most nation-states are current and active members of the United Nations. Thus, each state is tasked with the provision of resources that mitigate the risks exposed to its citizens. Subsequently, they are responsible for providing the necessities for the sustenance of life as the countries that have also signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, i.e., UDHR (Boetto & Bell, 2015; Dominelli, 2012). Here, articles 22-27 indicate that nations should be committed to ensuring that the wellbeing of their citizens is taken care of in terms of their access to food, shelter, education, health resources, and clothing, among other necessities for the maintenance of human life. Moreover, the work of social workers in enhancing environmental justice is further supported by other protocols and treaties that promote environmental justice as a right and where human beings are supposed to live in a healthy environment, with examples such as the Rio and Stockholm Declarations (Dominelli, 2013). Nevertheless, some countries state their inability to comply with these demands as envisioned by the UDHR and declarations. New public management models combined with the impacts of fiscal crises and austerity policies have further aggravated the situation of the most vulnerable people and societies.

Notably, this is a phenomenon that is not only visible in poor countries, but also in rich nations whereby there are public expenditure cuts that have been incorporated as some of the examples of the austerity era. There has been a decimation of publicly funded welfare-provisions that negatively affect the citizenry's wellbeing (Jones, 2012). A typical example is the case of Greece, Spain and Portugal, where the economic crisis has dramatically affected the least privileged, while at the same time several social services have been disrupted and the capacity of the social state to support these social groups has been reduced (Teloni & Adam, 2016; Petmesidou, Pavolini & Guillén, 2014. Pentaraki, 2017; Kallinikaki, 2015).

It is against this backdrop that green social work is premised. Green social workers are concerned about the current unsustainable development forms as encapsulated by contemporary production, consumption, and reproduction modules. This is due to the fact that these methods exploit the labors of their citizens and the environment to perpetuate environmental and social injustice (Livingstone, 2014; Reese & Jacob, 2015). In dealing with the many forms of environmental degradation, the green social worker also has to adopt a political stance in recognition of the fact that there are power relations that determine human interactions (Rambaree et al., 2019; Jones, 2012; Molyneux, 2010).

Green social workers have to address structural-social-inequalities such as the unequal distribution of resources and power, to deal with poverty and its impact on people, to understand global interdependencies and to promote egalitarian and solid relationships (Mason et al., 2017; Dominelli & Ku, 2017). Furthermore, the green social worker also addresses how limited resources are to be utilized effectively. Consequently, the ultimate goal for the social worker is to support the reformation of the economic and social-political forces that are having deleterious impacts on the quality of life of the marginalized and poor populations, to secure the necessary

social transformations and policy changes that will enhance the well-being of the planet and the people on it both now and in the future (Nojd, 2016; Livingston, 2014).

Therefore, the specific areas that green-social-workers are concerned about include violations of human rights, environmental degradation, and the presence of economic systems that perpetuate inequalities as well as a lack of corporate responsibility. Many scholars argue that green social workers are concerned about including the neglect of cultural diversity plus the non-affirmation of indigenous and aboriginal lifestyles. The green social workers are also concerned with the lack of localities that are people-friendly and supportive of cooperative relationships that can deal with unsustainable economic development (Philip & Reisch, 2015; Ramsay & Boddy, 2017).

According to Rinkel and Powers (2017), practitioners undertake the following duties (a) supporting individuals in the affirmation of their human, environmental and social rights, (b) enabling the citizenry to protect their environments as well as enhancing their wellbeing and achieving environmental justice, (c) mobilizing individuals to be in various alliances and partnerships to promote their well-being as residents and (d) empowering the marginalized individuals, groups and communities that are in commercial and institutional routines as decision/policymakers.

### **3. Interconnections between green social work and other theoretical concepts**

**T**he eco-social approach refers to issues that are crucial to social work, such as human rights, promoting equality and social solidarity (Norton, 2012). The consequences of environmental degradation are examined in relation to preexisting social inequalities. Poverty, deprivation, social exclusion are connected to the socially unequal distribution of environmental goods, but also of the environmental burden stemming from pollution and the generalised degradation of the quality of the environment and of life. Climate change is the most dramatic example of how the natural environment can - sometimes even violently - affect all aspects of the lives of millions of people (Coates & Gray, 2012). This highlights the link between green social work and structural social work to the extent that the latter focuses on the structural causes of social problems, on the relationship between individuals and social and economic structures. Green social work proposes interventions by social workers to improve the ability of individuals to understand and deal with the impact of these structures on their daily lives (Hanesworth, 2017; Moreau, 1979; Mullaly, 1997; Payne, 2005). This new paradigm highlights the special role of ecological factors in the well-being of individuals and the community and proposes a holistic approach to these relationships. In this way we can also say that the eco-social approach highlights an important element which systems theory does not include in its own perspective (Närhi & Matthies, 2018). Systems theory sees society as a system that functions in a way analogous to a biological system, an organism. It focuses on the interactions and interdependencies between the parts of the system. It perceives people as parts of the social system and focuses on the relationships between individuals as well as between the individual and the social environment to which he belongs (Payne, 1994 & 2005). However, this approach does not take into account the role of the natural environment.

Scholars argue that the person-in-environment perspective of social work should be expanded to encompass "a more holistic view of human behavior and the inclusion of the natural

world" (Coates, 2003: 178). Boetto & Bell propose the expansion of the philosophical background of social work and the inclusion of eco-central perspectives in order to better manage eco-social issues (Boetto & Bell, 2015; Bell, 2019). Here, the concept of environment differs from the conventional sociocultural context and takes into account the interactions of the socio-economic and cultural context with ever-changing conditions in the natural environment. The term 'eco-social' highlights these interconnections (Närhi & Matthies, 2018).

The eco-critical approach was developed under the influence of environmental sociology, the idea of sustainable development and the environmental movement. Besthorn (2000, 2001 & 2002) was one of the first to explore the relationship between radical ecological approaches and the development of individuals and of society. Important for the development of the eco-social approach were the ideas of deep ecology by Arne Naess (1973 & 1984) and Murray Buchchins 'social ecology' (1996 & 2006). Deep ecology makes explicit the connection between the human and the eco-logical system. Naess makes a distinction between shallow and deep ecology movements. While shallow ecology movements focus on the impact of ecological problems on the economy, deep ecology movements are concerned with the relationship between human society and nature. Both the approach of deep ecology and social ecology put the blame on the dominant anthropocentric economic and political paradigm for causing several economic, environmental and social problems. Both approaches support the biocentric equality that holds that all entities in an ecosystem have intrinsic value and an equal right to reach their individual self-realization. Thus, they are related to the eco-social approach insofar as they look for the roots of social problems, among others, in the relationship between individuals and their natural environment. Social ecology criticizes modern culture and challenges the rational humanity that aims to tame nature. Humanity has created a non-human-friendly model of development, super-centralized institutions and an impersonal bureaucracy that manages the fate of people. These endanger not only the freedom of the individual, but also the ability of humanity to survive. Social ecology emphasizes the need to unhook the process of community development from extra-communal elements and resources, and to expand participation and promote the autonomy of the community. The political power that is concentrated in the hands of extra-communal actors leads to the preservation of the dominant culture and the homogenization of communities. The transition to an ecological society presupposes a fair distribution of political and economic power among citizens, the autonomy of the people and their active participation in decision-making processes.

The above shows that the eco-social approach refers to structural, critical and radical approaches. Many scholars argue that social work should adopt a more critical perspective on social problems and take on a more political dimension. The eco-social approach highlights the fact that social work "has not been able to defend the most vulnerable people and promote social justice" (Närhi and Matthies 2018: 494; Gray et al. 2012; Coates & Gray, 2012). Green social work expresses a broader understanding of the power relations that exist globally, goes beyond the person-in-environment and proposes strategies that will extend to the macro-level and to structures not only locally but also globally. In a globalized economic environment linked to both an unequal distribution of wealth and prosperity and the emergence of global environmental problems, it is important for social work to broaden its theoretical background and the scope of intervention of social workers. (Dominelli, 2012; Hanesworth, 2017). This places social work with a responsibility to highlight the links between all the factors, social, political, economic and environmental, which are worsening the living conditions of the most vulnerable people.

## 4. Attributes that define green social work

There can be an adaptation of core social work skills, values and knowledge for the promotion of social change and also assisting practitioners to mitigate and to respond to the impacts of environmental degradation (Schimitz et al., 2012; Ramsay & Boddy, 2017). Generally, social workers are tasked with addressing the immediate communal concerns that include health, housing, poverty, and child protection. However, they must be mindful of the fact that the magnitude of these issues is compounded by environmental degradation. Thus, the wellbeing and health of individuals can be taken care of or improved through the incorporation of the natural environment within the green social workers' practice. According to Ramsay & Boddy (2017), there are four key attributes that define green social work. These include (a) the creative utilization of skills by green social workers in environmental concepts (b) being open to different ways and values of doing and being (c) executing changes in orientation and (d) operating across boundaries as well as within multiple spaces. These attributes will be presented below by taking into account the contributions of other scholars.

a) Concerning the creative application of existing social skills to environmental concepts, an examination of various texts concerning green-social-work suggests that social work skills such team building, empowerment, management, community development, the promotion of anti-oppressive and culturally competent practices, the conducting of multi-level assessments, relational practices, and holistic interventions are essential in mitigating and managing the effects of environmental degradation (Dominelli & Ku, 2017; Lucas-Darby, 2017). Nevertheless, more environmental protection can be achieved through better planning that is based on holistic environmental assessments that enhance the existing resilience available. Thus, the application of creative skills should combine with the involvement of the local populace in the decision making and disaster reduction initiatives that promote sustainable development. Teixeira & Kings (2015) state that these are measures that would ensure that poor decisions are not made that would further undermine environmental integrity. Furthermore, through these practices, there is a co-production of partnerships and knowledge that crosses the divides of various disciplines, and that facilitates contact between experts and the local population (Beltran et al., 2016, Dominelli & Ku, 2017).

b) Regarding the openness of green-social-workers to different values and methods of doing and being, there has to be a shift in practice, values, and theories that can be incorporated within natural environments (Kings et al., 2018). Boetto & Bell (2015) state that social workers can begin by accepting the different ways and values of doing and being as some of the attributes that concentrate on the growth of self-awareness. Also, Nojd (2016) states that it is here that green social workers can focus on understanding other cultures, appreciating how valuable other forms of life are and their contribution to the ecosystem as well as having an awareness of the ways that natural environments support life so that the workers can make the correct choices that are congruent with the functions of green social work and their lives. According to Shajahan & Sharma (2018), these are assertions that have been agreed on by most researchers. Consequently, there has to be a recognition of the innate value that nature has to necessitate a move to ecocentrism. Even though there is a place to respond to natural disasters, nevertheless, green social workers need to be proactive in the prevention of environmental deterioration (Ramsay & Boddy, 2017) and strengthening community resilience.

Many scholars suggest that green social work may involve learning from indigenous cultures and spirituality. Thus Beltran et al. (2016) state that many scholars have also been evaluating aboriginal, native American-Indian, and African traditions as well as Taoism, Buddhism and collectivism, Jungian psychology, and romanticism to conclude that spirituality is helpful in the development of the green social work framework. It is here that researchers suggest that through spirituality, social workers could learn and be inspired by such cultural diversities and spiritual traditions (Weiss-Gal, 2008; Beltran et al., 2016).

Moreover, it is suggested that there should be an incorporation of the natural environment in green social work and its education through the integration of environmental practices and values within curriculums (Boddy et al., 2018). Most scholars in their writings suggest that simplistic environmental conceptualizations should be avoided through the application of a critical lens and if the education concerning green social work happens outside formal settings, it should be part of the professional development process of eco-social endeavors (Teixeira & Kings, 2015; Drolet et al., 2015).

Also, there should be an appreciation of the intrinsic and instrumental values for the non-human being, that means, a shift to ecocentrism (Rocha, 2018; Livingston, 2014). It is recommended that green social workers should change their strategies and depart from anthropocentricity i.e., the longheld view that humans are the most significant creatures of all living beings on earth to the notion that green social work is fulfilled when it is also connected to the natural environment since it improves wellbeing and gives purpose, fulfillment, insight, and confidence. Thus, Mason et al. (2017) state that it is this knowledge of the instrumental benefits by green social workers that enables the justification for their efforts concerning environmental interventions when they engage anthropogenic power configurations.

c) Adopting an improved change orientation: green social workers should have the ability to critique the status quo. As stated by Phillip and Reisch (2015) and Ramsay and Boddy (2017), they are the conclusions of at least 85% of the articles concerning green social work wherein they state that in conducting their work, green social workers need to understand and analyze these paradigms to reveal the anti-oppressive and radical practices that underlay anthropocentrism, contemporaries, andropocentrism, somatophobia, speciesism, environmental racism, and green-washing among others. Additionally, new and ecocentric narratives to encounter postmodern and modern narratives have to be developed.

A change in orientation also means a change in societies whereby societal changes concerning the environment must be undertaken both at macro and micro levels to imprint the notion that the practicing of environmentally destructive tendencies is immoral. Green social workers should use forums such as the mass media, the facilitation of public forums and workshops to enhance public consciousness as well as researching alternatives to ensure the quicker achievement of environmental justice (Drolet et al., 2015). As well, Kings et al. (2018) state that green social workers should be at the forefront in advising key critical decision-makers, informing public discussions, contributing, and lobbying policy formulation towards these goals. Green social workers could also participate in social actions, civil disobedience and protests as well as facilitating others to join these endeavors (Nojd, 2016; Kings et al., 2019; Rambaree et al., 2019; Bent-Goodley, 2015). The objective would be to call on governments to enforce and enact the necessary environmental safeguards whereby limits are set on the levels and rates of human population and growth, the promotion of motivation for environmental activities, and advocating for systems that shift from continual industrial growth to sustainable economies. Furthermore, Rambaree et

al. (2019) indicate that the advancement of alternative paradigms, whereby environmental practices are adjusted to include non-linear problem solving and nature, should be considered. Also, in their work, green social workers should advise on the evaluating and monitoring activities of big conglomerates as they critique greenwashing and expose exploitative companies to hold them responsible for environmental damage. It is through these efforts that green-social-workers would be seen as explicitly valuing ecological and environmental justice, and they would also be seen as those that commence the change processes that would ensure the creation of sustainable societies (Androff et al., 2017; Dominelli, 2012).

d) Working across boundaries and multiple spaces: the green social worker should work within multidisciplinary teams through which they are to develop and maintain inter-disciplinary partnerships with activists, cultural leaders, community leaders, and other professionals. Such collaborations provide renewed insights, skills & knowledge that are critical in solving the current and complex problems caused by environmental exploitation (Coates & Gray, 2012; Dominelli & Ku, 2017; Rocha, 2018). It is also through interaction with nature that there is an improvement in cognitive, physical, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing. It is because it gives space for individuals to socialize, to derive aesthetic pleasure, social cohesion and for the development of communities. Furthermore, the connection with other animals enables individuals to overcome stress and to provide awareness of the perilous position of various ecosystems (Rambaree et al., 2019; Drolet et al., 2015). Moreover, operating across boundaries and within multiple spaces enables people to collectively and individually decrease their environmental footprint even as they care for themselves. Thus, individuals will act compassionately in minimizing the suffering in all scopes of life (Livingston, 2014).

It is also here that green social workers need to work with communities in achieving environmental justice, whereby the sharing of local resources and knowledge assists in the development of resilience and strength to overcome environmental problems. An examination of various research documents (Dominelli & Ku, 2017; Rinkel & Powers, 2017; Nojt, 2016) indicates that the interventions that green-social-workers would apply are required to mobilize, support and educate community activism, establish alliances & assist in building capacities for community initiatives such as food cooperatives, local production, permaculture, cohousing and the purchase of clean technologies Mapp et al., 2019; Dominelli, 2011). Thus, it is one of the ways to sort out the issues with materialism, consumerism and the individualism that is associated with capitalism (Drolet et al., 2015; Mason et al., 2017; ). It is also crucial for green social workers to cooperate with individuals in assisting them to gain the requisite skills to reduce their environmental footprint and to care for the environment and themselves. Furthermore, individuals require assistance to reclaim and accept their dependence on and interconnection with the natural world (Lucas-Darby, 2011).

The adoption of these attributes of green social work create a vision and an increase in professional integrity whereby the objectives of anti-oppression, social justice, and equality will be fulfilled to ensure human survival, wellbeing, the comprehension of systematic discrimination and have the compassion to value the innate qualities possessed by other animals as well as recognizing their moral right to exist (Rinkel & Powers, 2017; Rocha, 2018). Thus, the collaboration of green social workers with the community and individuals results in an interaction with nature, and consequently there is a zest for life that is exhibited through having confidence, feeling purposeful, empowered, and fulfilled. It is also here that authenticity, self-insight, knowledge, and sensitivity are increased as concepts that assist in professional and personal development (Jones, 2012).

## 5. Guideposts for green social workers

**I**n addition to the United Nations as one of the organizations that regulate green social work, there are two other types of international organizations that regulate the conduct of social workers, i.e., the International Federation for Social Workers (IFSW) plus the International Association of the Schools of Social Work (IASSW). They have jointly developed the accepted international standards that guide how social worker should be done, including its definition, education, and practicing standards (Shajahan & Sharma, 2018; Rocha, 2018; Mason et al., 2017). The documents argue that even though the social worker should be trained within the local context, there should nevertheless be core purposes and universal paradigms that should guide the practice of the social worker across the boundaries (Teixeira & Kings, 2015; Beltran et al., 2016; Dominelli, 2015).

There are several paradigmatic guideposts that traditional social workers can use to weave in the environmental justice context. Teixeira and Kings (2015) consolidate the 8 paradigms included in the original document into following 4 guide-posts: They include (a) the recognition of the worth and dignity of all human beings, the recognition of their strengths, and the identification of the inherent potential within all human beings. (b) There should be an identification of the inter-connectedness that is inherent in mezzo, macro, and microsystems. (c) The significance of advocacy as well as the changes in political, economic, and social-structural conditions that disempower, exclude, and marginalize individuals. (d) Focusing on capacity building and the enabling of individuals, groups, families, communities, and organizations through human-centered and developmental approaches (Teixeira & Kings, 2015; Jones, 2012; Rambaree et al., 2019; Drolet et al., 2015).

### *The recognition of worth, dignity, strengths, and diversity*

There should be an examination of their interventions to ensure that they meet the thresholds of fairness and equality. Therefore social work trainers should educate potential green social workers to identify and tackle the reasons for social problems instead of blaming the victim. It is one of the approaches that can be applied by even green social workers in solving eco-social problems (Teixeira & Kings, 2015; Ramsey & Boddy, 2017; Coates & Gray, 2012). Thus, instead of the poor being blamed for their problems, social work professionals can emphasize the underlying political, economic, and social systems that result in environmental degradation and how social workers can intervene. Nojt (2016) states that some of the social problems that would be out of reach of the poor and yet cause environmental degradation would include living in constrained housing conditions that are in hazardous environments due to limited financial options. Moreover, because it is widely known that the host communities will reject any hazardous developments, therefore, most corporations decide that they will build in politically marginalized regions (Jones, 2012; Nojt, 2016)

### *The recognition of the interconnectedness among the mezzo, macro & microsystems*

Primarily, social work is premised on the appreciation of the multi-systematic nature of social problems, and therefore social workers are unique compared to the other helping professions. Therefore as green social workers, existing sociological guidelines can be used to understand the mechanics of the built and the natural environment as part of macro contextual practices. Thus, through the green social worker, he/she will bring multi-systematic perspective and a capability

to work across and within systems as one of the ideal jump-offs to educate other social workers that environmental injustices are global issues that have local, global and individual implications (Jones, 2012; Ramsay & Boddy, 2017).

### *The significance of advocacy & changes in the social-cultural, economic, & political conditions*

Social workers are committed to the advocacy of the changes in the conditions that cause detrimental conditions in individuals or communities. It is one of the integral parts of social work that can also be used to execute and advance environmental justice against the background of the existing social systems. It originates from the fact that social work trainers teach various methods such as social action and consciousness raising (Rocha, 2018). Thus, so that the common traditions can be integrated within the context of the pursuit of environmental justice by green social workers, social work trainers must lead in the formation of discussion groups and in the organization of public awareness events that highlight the disproportionate use and placement of the locally undesirable land that is where the poor live and the impacts that such use has on the health of the people (Mason et al., 2017; Rambaree et al., 2019).

### *Capacity building of individuals through human-centered developmental approaches*

Here, social workers evaluate empowerment as both an outcome and process whereby there is a promotion of approaches and interventions to build community and individual capacities that allow professionals to leverage their assets, skills, and influence across systems (Nojd, 2016; Shajahan & Sharma, 2018; Ramsay & Boddy, 2017). Thus, in as much as empowerment is an ambiguous term whereby information is required in its most basic form, concerning social work and the advocacy for environmental injustices, green social workers may be required to acquire highly scientific and technical information and decipher it into forms that can be understood by ordinary citizens. It is here that green social workers can utilize the empowerment concept to push for more citizen-centered governance. Therefore, there has to be an understanding of the various proposals that are to be considered as well as the viewpoints of everyone that can be affected including developers, residents and government officials (Lucas-Darby, 2011; Dominelli & Ku, 2017).

## **6. Challenges for green social work**

**E**ven though various themes concerning green social work by scholars have been highlighted, nevertheless, there is also some divergence. These differences should be expected since both social and cognitive changes are evolutionary processes as the literature on green social work gravitates towards the practice and awareness of reciprocal ecocentrism from anthropocentric and instrumental opinions concerning nature (Kings et al., 2018). Some of the gaps include the fact that there are minimal examples concerning green social work that have been implemented when compared to other forms of social work. Therefore, in the development of their practice, green social workers should also develop their test methods as do other professionals so that they can engage in thorough research and practice to come up with a convincing theory base in this area. Thus, it will involve the development of both content and process knowledge (such

as ecological information), social media, information and technology utilization, among others (Dominelli & Ku, 2017; Rocha, 2018; Nojt, 2016).

Furthermore, the articulation of change by green social workers might face various difficulties as they seek to prioritize the physical environment. Therefore, they must strike a balance between an obligation to enable widespread environmental and social change, the social worker's commitment to protect minority groups, the respect of the rights of individuals to self-determination, which is a daunting task. However, Androff et al. (2017) state that such predicaments are not unique, but they need a detailed and dedicated critical analysis as one of the strategies that are mindful of the maintenance of the values that govern social work as well as the interconnectedness that is present between human health, wellbeing and the natural environments (Livingston, 2014; Teixeira & Kings, 2015; Rinkel et al., 2017; Shajahan & Sharma, 2018). There is more work required to clarify how green social work can negotiate on these issues and how social workers must challenge the status quo and tackle the present environmental issues.

Other challenges include the maintenance of grassroots support and momentum for the implementation of their interventions against bureaucratic systems. This is because these systems ensure that innovations are slowly implemented, and therefore green social workers must maintain their connections within and without their disciplines for innovations to happen while maintaining social change. The maintenance of these connections by the professionals may be through online and social media communities (Beltran et al., 2016; Androff et al., 2017). However, it should be noted that even though green social workers borrow from other professions, they should also expand into other fields that can be great contributors to environmental science. It is because having sufficient knowledge in such fields is one of the strengths in addressing the complex concepts such as biodiversity loss, climate change, access to clean and freshwater as well as food security that green social workers will perform well in the execution of their duties (Drolet, et al., 2015; Kings et al., 2018). It is also through an expansion in their knowledge of other fields that they can identify the contributions they can make in furthering their goals. These fields may not be environmental and may include counseling, politics, business, and teaching (Androff et al., 2017; Kings et al., 2018; Nojd, 2016).

## 7. Implications for the education of social workers

Combined with the increasing visibility of environmental justice issues during recent years, the agitation for green social work, practices, and education is timely. Therefore, there has been a burgeoning of social work scholarships whereby educational content regarding environmental justice has been incorporated into the curriculum concerning social work (Ramsay & Boddy, 2017; Rocha, 2018). Moreover, environmental sociology scholars have insisted on the inculcation of the content that concerns human behavior within eco-social environments. Here, there will be an exploration of gaps in environmental behavior and knowledge. Therefore social work students will be assisted in understanding and analyzing the complex interrelationship between human wellness, health, and environmental problems through the advancement of fieldwork and research opportunities (Philip & Reisch, 2015).

Also, for meaningful change to happen whereby social work mutates to green social work, the social work education needs to be restructured in such a way that students are allowed to

critique and explore the dominant paradigms that are responsible for exploitation and inequality. Therefore Dominelli (2012) states that it is through these curriculums that educators will accord students the time to make reflections that will give way to the integration of both political and personal connections. Also known as transformative learning, students are introduced to change and its nature to consequently shift in the way they view the meaning of global events. It is from these reflections that there is a birth of ecological consciousness whereby the educator creates disorienting dilemmas for the students as they engage in the out of class activities through social justice curriculums (Shajahan & Sharma, 2018; Rinkel & Powers, 2017; Teixeira & Kings, 2015; Hanesworth, 2017).

To summarize, the full support of green social work to address issues that surround environmental justice can only happen when the institutions that are involved in social work such as the profession's governing and disciplinary bodies begin to decisively enforce and direct that the values that define social work should be inculcated in the clamor for environmental justice (Weiss-Gal, 2008; Androff et al., 2017; Kings et al., 2018; Naranjo, 2020). It should be done on a larger scale so that the corresponding educational content can be created and later applied concretely.

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# Political theology in recent case-law on Religious Education in Greece: “religious consciousness” vs “religious conscience” within the Greek Constitution

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## Πολιτική θεολογία στην πρόσφατη νομολογία για το μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών στην Ελλάδα: «θρησκευτική συνείδηση» με την έννοια του ατομικού δικαιώματος ή της συλλογικής συνείδησης κατά το Σύνταγμα των Ελλήνων;

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### ABSTRACT

The social and political dialogue on Religious Education in Greece has reached a peak. A series of court decisions annulled a corresponding series of administrative decisions, by which the New Curriculum for Religious Education was legislated and reformed repeatedly since 2016. The controversy between a “confessional” and an “interreligious” approach concentrates on two ostensibly contradictory terms within the Greek Constitution: the “religious conscience” (Article 13) as an individual right and the “religious consciousness” (Article 16) in the broad sense of the collective consciousness. The main issue is the exact meaning of the “Orthodox consciousness”, since it is identified with the “religious consciousness”. Does it imply only a religion or a cultural identity that also has a supra-constitutional status in Greece? Is it really in conflict with or does it rather presuppose an “open society”? Resolution to such dilemmas is given by a political theology based on recent constitutional case-law.

**KEY WORDS:** Religious education, religious consciousness, political theology, constitutional theory.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ο κοινωνικός και πολιτικός διάλογος για το μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών στην Ελλάδα έχει φτάσει στην κορύφωσή του. Σειρά Αποφάσεων του Συμβουλίου της Επικρατείας ακύρωσε αντίστοιχη σειρά Αποφάσεων του Υπουργείου Παιδείας. Η αντιπαράθεση μεταξύ μιας «ομολογιακής» και μιας «διαθρησκειακής» προσέγγισης κινείται στον άξονα δύο φαινομενικά αντιφατικών όρων του Ελληνικού Συντάγματος: στη «θρησκευτική συνείδηση» του Άρθρου 13 ως ατομικού δικαιώματος και στη «θρησκευτική συνείδηση» του Άρθρου 16 υπό την ευρεία έννοια της συλλογικής συνείδησης. Το κύριο ζήτημα όμως είναι η ακριβής έννοια της «ορθόδοξης συνείδησης», από τη στιγμή που κατά τη νομολογία και τα όρια του Συντάγματος ταυτίζεται με τη «θρησκευτική συνείδηση». Υποδηλώνει απλά μια ακόμη θρησκεία ή μια ταυτότητα πολιτισμού με υπερσυνταγματική ισχύ στην Ελλάδα; Βρίσκεται πράγματι σε σύγκρουση ή μπορεί ακόμη και η ίδια να προϋποθέτει μία «ανοικτή κοινωνία»;

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Θρησκευτική εκπαίδευση, θρησκευτική συνείδηση, πολιτική θεολογία, συνταγματική θεωρία.

# 1. Introduction: A total failure of social and political dialogue - from the academic and legislative fora to the court-rooms

The controversy around the subject matter of Religious Education, which reflects the existence of a vague “cultural model” in modern Greek society (Simitis, 2017), emerges inside several institutions (Theological Schools, particularly their religious-pedagogical Departments, Church of Greece, Secondary Education, etc.) What dominates is an unbridged gap between two main ideological parties, which, personally, I would characterize as the “Christian Right” and the “Christian Left”. The most prominent example is the existence of two separate “Panhellenic” Greek private-law “Associations of Theologians” (“ΠΕΘ” and “ΚΑΙΡΟΣ”) opposed to one another in a conflict about the real meaning of notions such as “confessional”, “orthodox”, “modern” and “openness”, concentrating on the most crucial constitutional term of “religious consciousness”. The climate of dialogue seems to be far from being peaceful and hence constructive. We are referring not merely to two opposite viewpoints but mainly to two totally different “worlds” with hardly any common understanding of shared notions.

Two years before, this debate continued in the courtroom of the Hellenic Council of State. A series of Court Decisions annulled a series of corresponding Administrative Decisions, by which the “New Curriculum for Religious Education” was legislated and reformed over and over again from 2016 to 2019. In particular, the Council of State’s Court Decisions 660/2018, 926/2018 and 1749/2019 annulled respectively the Administrative Decisions of the Hellenic Ministry of Education 143579/D2/7.9.2016 (*Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education at the High School level*), 99058/D2/2017 (*Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education at the Elementary and Middle School level*) and 101470/C2/16.6.2017 (*Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education at the Elementary and Middle School level*). Educational models which had already been applied in Great Britain were the pattern for this Greek “New Curriculum”, causing “problems such as religious syncretism” (Komninou, 2018: 33).

With due consideration to the aforementioned Court Decisions, a new Curriculum for both the primary and secondary religious education replaced the previous ones, just in last March (Official Government Gazette of Greece 698/B/4-3-2020, 7659-7738 & 699/B/4-3-2020, 7739-7834). It is going to be in full force and effect after the next School year. However, no one can predict with absolute certainty if it will be annulled once more as “unconstitutional” by a Court Decision, as it happened with its prior Curricula. Any Greek legal theorist knows that it is almost impossible for the Council of State to change the logic of an established case-law. On the other hand, now is the first time for “ΠΕΘ” and “ΚΑΙΡΟΣ” to become allies even for their own reasons, yet against a common enemy: the current new Curriculum for Religious Education in Greece.

In modern pluralistic society, “a lesson of interreligious education on terms and criteria of school learning rather than religious inclusion” is a reasonable demand (Karamouzis, 2017: 47), compared to a Religious Education which tends to focus exclusively on the “prevailing religion”. On the other side, the right of exemption either from a “confessional” or from a “multi-religious” School Subject is the same, based on the right of all citizens to develop freely their personality according to the 5th Article of the Greek Constitution (Venizelos, 2016). This clearly shows that the most serious problem is that Religious Education is not free from religious and ideological trends and conflicts. For these and other reasons, it has been proposed the introduction of “Theology”

within the meaning of the Aristotelian "First Philosophy" as a distinct science and School Subject instead of or together with the Religious Education (Georgiadis, 2018).

In this impasse, what matters most is a main rationale of the Council of State as the primary and commonly accepted ground among any opposing ideologies. If major ideological dilemmas around shared notions had been proved false in their basis, no one would have been a victim of ideological prejudice or social distancing and, therefore, the Greek Religious Education would not have been in danger for falling into a chaotic situation, as of today. The question lying in misconceptions regarding crucial terms such as "reason", "science" and "critical thinking", on one hand, and "Christian Orthodox faith", on the other, is obviously the stumbling block for a commonly accepted character of the Religious Education in Greece.

The Council of State has based its verdict on the participant litigators as well as on the material provided without overrunning the institutions in charge, such as the Church of Greece and the Institute of Educational Policy, in order to assess what the terms "religious" or "orthodox consciousness" mean and how these notions are cultivated,. This puts into play the "Minor Premise" of the Decisions 660/2018, 926/2018 and 1749/2019 subjected to its "Major Premise". Here is precisely where the divergence between the Council of State and the "New Curriculum for Religious Education" lies; for both of which there is no explicit reference in the corresponding legislation that their main purpose is to cultivate the "orthodox consciousness". The problem, however, would then be transferred on to how this consciousness should be compatible with the purpose of a modern "open" School, emphasizing on the easily misunderstood polarity between the "Orthodox Christian faith" and the "unrestrained critical thinking". In any case, the value would not be accredited to "what is signified by someone", but rather on "the signifier itself", even in the context of the respective legal impressions in the field of Justice. In general, the most crucial issue is the specific "investigation" of the term "Orthodox Christianity".

## **2. Legal commentary on the recent Council of State's Decisions 660/2018, 926/2018 and 1749/2019**

### ***2.1 Council of State's "Major Premise"***

The Council of State's Decisions 660/2018, 926/2018 and 1749/2019 concentrate on Constitutional terms such as "In the name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity" (Preamble of the Greek Constitution), "human rights" (Article 2, 4 et seq), "prevailing religion" (Article 3), "religious conscience" (13th Article) and "national and religious consciousness" (Article 16), enabling us to seek for a "philosophy of State and Education" in their meaning. The "Major Premise" of the Decision 660/2018 is summarized in the following points: a) the "religious consciousness" of the 16th Constitutional Article is identified with the "orthodox consciousness", b) the "Religion" School Subject is predominantly addressed to Orthodox students, without impeding the participation of non-Orthodox students, while 13th Constitutional Article provides the right and not the obligation to be dismissed of it and, c) the so-called "non-Orthodox approach" of "New Curriculum for Religious Education" impinges on the Orthodox students' liberty, who in this specific aspect are also protected by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (Decision 660/2018: 9-11).

Thus far, for the conceptualization of the Decision 660/2018, two things are evident: a) no opposite view from the minority of Judges is entailed in identifying “religious consciousness” with “Orthodox Christian consciousness”, as the main issue, in which unanimity is found, and b) from the explicit reference to the Preamble of the Constitution and to the 3rd Constitutional Article, an external “Supra-Constitutional” principle is implied. Assuming that this principle has not been enforced like a rule of law or even had “limited legislative consequences” (Decision 660/2018: 11), it somehow appears to be “the spirit of the Constitution” pervading it in its entirety, as well as in its particular provisions. Although the legal theory has almost never developed such an approach, apart from a few special cases (Nikopoulos, 2011), the moment on which political authorities, especially former governmental ones characterizing the Preamble as “remnant of the King’s era” (Filis, 2018), the Council of State claims the opposite. The impressive perspective here concerns a liberal Constitution in concurrence with a “confessional” Preamble and a “prevailing religion”, particularly the Orthodox Christianity.

Similarly, the “Major Premise” of the next Decisions 926/2018 and 1749/2019, is substantiated by the following evidence: a) both the Preamble and the 3rd Constitutional Article, where a specific “Political Theology” is found (Decision 926/2018: 5-7; Decision 1749/2019: 5-6), b) the Articles 5, 13 and 21 of the Greek Constitution (Decision 926/2018: 5-6; Decision 1749/2019: 5) in combination to the accordingly protected Rights of Articles 9 of ECHR and 2 of its Additional Protocol for the benefit of the Orthodox Students (Decision 926/2018: 7; Decision 1749/2019: 6-7) and c) the paragraph 2 of the 16th Constitutional Article, which defines a specific basis of statutory framework for Religious Education, where “religious consciousness” and “orthodox consciousness” are synonyms (Decision 926/2018: 6-10).

At this point, it goes without saying that the reasoning of the Council of State’s “Major Premise” is clearly rational and objective with no space to accommodate any ideological view or selectivity. The Constitution is concrete, as is the methodology to approach its terminology and the particular legal provisions along with a Philosophy of Law, or alternatively a *Political Theology* with its classic *Schmittian* meaning (Wikipedia contributors, 2020; Flynn, 2010; Vatter, 2016; Georgiadis, 2020). More specifically, the Decisions 660/2018, 926/2018 and 1749/2019 are clear in that: a) the Preamble has got not only historical and symbolical value, but also “limited legislative consequences”; b) the “religious consciousness” in the context of the 16th Constitutional Article coincides with the “orthodox consciousness”.

## ***2.2 Re-examining a key issue: “religious conscience” (13 Article) vs “religious consciousness” (16 Article) within the Constitutional framework***

The fact that the Council of State protected the Orthodox students’ religious liberty from a “non-Orthodox” Religious Education, even in the name of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), has surprised the Greek legal theory (Venizelos, 2020), although this fact alone was not of crucial importance in the reasoning of the Court’s Decisions (Decision 660/2018: 11). Nevertheless, it does require profound analysis, by which deeper conceptual misunderstandings or pseudo-dilemmas could be resolved before anything else. The main question is whether dissimilar legal concepts have actually been compared.

In particular, the constitutional principles in conflict are the “religious conscience”, perceived as a specific “individual right” within the context of 13 Article, and the “religious con-

sciousness", which in Article 16 is described as a main aim in Greek Education. Even the simple difference in terminology between "conscience" and "consciousness" denotes that there may not even be a legal issue. However, this distinction is clear in the official English translation of the Greek Constitution, but not in the authentic Greek text, where the multi-meaningful word "θρησκευτική συνείδηση" is used equally for both cases, depending on the contextual relevance. The same distinction is also found in the official German translation, among the "religiösen Gewissens" (Article 13) and the "(nationalen und) religiösen Bewusstseins" (Article 16). Thus, sometimes in the sense of "conscience" the term "θρησκευτική συνείδηση" apparently means "the [moral] feeling that you know and should do what is right and should avoid doing what is wrong" (Cambridge online Dictionary), "claimed to somehow be of God, therefore implicating a sovereignty above the state" (Underkuffler, 1992: 93), "a byproduct of intelligence, not something of sacred origin", (Washington, 1992: 29) and sometimes in the sense of "consciousness" it means "the state of understanding and realizing something" (Cambridge online Dictionary) or else "your awareness of yourself and the world around you" (Cherry, 2019). As a consequence, there is no ground for collision of "rights" (25 Article), since the "religious conscience" in Article 13th is a "right", while the "religious consciousness" in Article 16th is a "constitutional requirement". The first concerns the private beliefs of each individual citizen, "the right of free inquiry and private judgment" (Underkuffler, 1992: 97), while the second is considered as synonym to a collective cultural identity of a whole nation.

### **3. An alternative interpretation of the constitutional term "religious" consciousness in the meaning of the "Christian Orthodox" one**

#### ***3.1. Bridging the gap between "traditional" and "modern" by the "classic"***

In the Decisions 660/2018, 926/2018 and 1749/2019, the concern shifts to the two questions stated below, culminating in the second: a) how the "religious consciousness" in the context of the Hellenic culture and Orthodox Christian tradition should be defined, along with the exemplary manner of its "development", b) is it in line with the rest of objectives in the present Greek educational system which is supposed to operate in accordance with the principles of scientific reason, far from any pseudoscientific ideology? In particular, is the crucial concept of Reason existent in the Greek reality, as introduced by the ancient Greek philosophy to the world culture and elaborated by the Orthodox Christian tradition? Is it a pre-existing reality for a Greek civilization "with ancient roots and Christian soil", thousands of years before the "Age of Reason"?

A positive answer to the last question would prove that the so-called dilemmas, like the ones between "progressive" and "conservative" or "modern" and "traditional", are false in their essence, much more on the level of clichés. They should be subsided by what is really "classic", particularly in the debate for the Religious Education in Greece. To be more precise, the "modern" is brilliantly present in the (Orthodox) Church tradition, for example in the democratic functioning of its "synodical" institution; in the Greek Orthodox cultural tradition, the "traditional" or "orthodox" element is distinguished from what some self-proclaimed keepers of Orthodoxy today think, while Reason remains the solid point of reference, balancing with a not-at-all "blind faith" whatsoever.

Drawing on the latter, the very literal interpretation of the term “Orthodoxy” is illustrative. As a Greek compound word (“Ὁρθοδοξία”), it is made up of the adverb “reasonably” (“ὀρθῶς”) and the verb “think” (“δοκῶ”). Its synonym “faith” (“πίστις”), which in Greek is conceptualized only as “confidence” («πεποίθηση»), is totally discharged from additional semantic connotations. In fact, the separation between Faith and Reason after the “Age of Reason” never took place in an Eastern Christian Greek-speaking culture, mainly during its Byzantine era. This means that either this civilization did not progress as much as it should or in it there was no ground for the devaluation of Reason.

Thus, there is a first indication that values such as Reason, “critical thinking” and modern education are not incompatible with the “orthodox consciousness”, yet rather they are included in it. In this sense, who and on which basis would stand against this educational philosophy and policy, even if one of the main objectives officially stated in “New Curriculum for Religious Education” was “the development of the religious consciousness”? And, precisely because the latter is identified with the “Christian Orthodox consciousness”, no conservative group in Greece, which supports the “confessional” and hence “Orthodox” education, would react to this Curriculum. On the other hand, the same perspective is nothing else in its essence than the modern educational perspective, incorporating as “supplementary” the ideas of “unrestrained critical thinking”, “democratic consciousness” and “openness”.

Of course, it was only to be expected that the authors of the “New Curriculum” would aim at a School Subject “open” to all students, “Orthodox” and non-orthodox, so as not to disrupt the unity of the School Community by any means. The unexpected would be an alternative approach to things, a sophisticated perspective supporting that the aim of developing the “orthodox consciousness” in the Greek Education is far from being contrary to the other aims of Modern Education. In any case, the “orthodox consciousness” does not acquire significant status, at least explicitly, in the “New Curriculum”, either by being presented as a main pedagogical principle or by being rejected purposely. On the contrary, the “New Curriculum” promotes other principles known, for example, as “from local to ecumenical” and “knowledge through (any) religion”, through which it is implied that the world is dominated by a historically non-existent “Archimedean, post-cultural and post-religious principle” and on its basis all religions should be examined (Schambeck, 2016: 15). Putting aside the hypothesis that the notion of Orthodox Christianity, in its ecumenical dimension, already presupposes a corresponding School Subject “open” to all students as well as the fact that a “multi-faith approach” would be considered as problematic from a pedagogical perspective, the Greek State is clear through its Constitution and Judiciary on the compulsory “development” of the “Orthodox consciousness”. Finally, the issue is transferred to what the term “orthodox consciousness” signifies.

### ***3.2. The German theory of “positioneller Religionsunterricht” (“positional Religious Education”) in parallel with the recent Greek case-law on Religious Education***

The recent applicable case-law regarding the Religious Education in Greece interprets the “letter” and “spirit” of major Constitutional terms. The crucial point was set to be the reference to the (confessional) Preamble of the Greek Constitution, as if it had been a rule of law with “limited legislative consequences” (Decisions 660/2018: 11; Decision 926/2018: 15; Decision 1749/2019: 5-6) besides its unquestionable historical and symbolical value. For this approach,

which, incidentally, was completely unexpected for the to-date Greek legal literature (Kassimatis and Mavrias, 1999: 8-9; Iliadou, 2002: 1050-1052), there would be no need for any Court to define two levels of the Constitution; one "Supra-Constitutional" with universal validity, as the "spirit of Law" depicted in any "Symbol of the Nation" like the Constitutional Preamble, and another one cited in the individual constitutional provisions. This is the reason why the term "religious consciousness", implying undoubtedly the "orthodox" one, is placed by the recent case-law on both levels, albeit with different force and effect accordingly. Even if the Preamble had indeed no legislative consequence, it certainly would have a great impact on provisions like that of the 16th and so its legal effect would be real even indirectly. In simple words, how else would "the development of the religious consciousness" be interpreted and implemented, than in the light of the Preamble? This way, it could answer the question: "what function does [the Preamble] intend to serve other than an expressive one", "given [that] [it] typically lacks legal effect" (Law, 2016: 188).

Drawing on the above, the Christian Dogma of the Holy Trinity, as a symbol at the level of the Constitutional Preamble, is one thing and another is the synonym reference to the Orthodox Church as an equal religious community among all others within the constitutional provisions' framework. In the first case, we talk of an independent and sovereign nation with its own "collective consciousness", the "political theology" of the modern Greek Democracy, and in the second case about a "prevailing religion" (3rd Article of the Greek Constitution), but not in the sense that any other religion or faith are not equal.

Herein lies the main question: why should any citizen compulsorily adhere to such an Orthodox Christian Preamble of the Greek Constitution, given the context of an otherwise democratic regime, much more according to 13th Constitutional Article about the "inviolable" religious freedom? The answer is simple: the Orthodox Christian "Symbols of the Nation", except for their metaphysical dimension, which nobody is obliged to admit to whatsoever, they gave birth in the past to general human values and fundamental ethical principles, which undoubtedly are "commonly accepted" by all citizens-even the non-Christians; likewise, the Orthodox Christians in Greece bow to the "Olympic Idea", study the Homer and are generally inspired by the ancient Greek mythology, although without believing in the objective reality of its deities. To be more precise, this is a legacy from their ancient ancestors through their medieval ones, and so it belongs to them together with their Christian faith. It is subject to a unique collective or national consciousness on the basis of which everything is built: cultural and philosophical background, state and political regime, justice, education etc. And, since Orthodoxy ultimately pervades already this collective consciousness, explicitly expressed by the "Symbols of the Nation", is it apparently itself the "spirit" of the Greek Constitution, occupying all of its range from the obvious avoidance of theocracy to the religious equality and the inviolable individual rights, including that of religious liberty? Is this the "political theology" of the Greek Constitution throughout its existence, even since the first "Political Constitution of Greece" (Troezen, 1827) during the Greek Revolution (1821-1827)? In contrast, can anyone demonstrate another principle, historically justifiable and define it?

Thus, the "orthodox consciousness" right under examination at a Supra-Constitutional level is also presented as an Education principle for citizens with similar cultural identity, no matter if the 16th Constitutional Article with the corresponding requirements continues to exist as such or is revised. Specifically, the "Political Theology" of Decisions 660/2018, 926/2018 and 1749/2019 leads to a principle which was already characterized as "positioneller Religionsunterricht" ("po-

sitional religious education” or “specific interpretive perspective”) (Schambeck, 2016; Stogiannidis, 2016), or similarly as “learning [about religion] through religion” (Komninou, 2012: 495); all that applying to a consciousness of a state, in our case the Modern Greek state, which, righteously or wrongly, has been rooted in Orthodox Christianity. After all, it is a presumption that absolutely no cultural and statutory entity exists without an identity which is a common basis on whether people “share the same understanding” or are “of one mind together” («ὁμονοεῖν» according to Aristotle’s Politics) or not, simultaneously co-existing in harmony by having either different or same opinions («ὁμόδοξον»). Sheer reasoning also leads us to a second presumption: speaking of culture, we instantly think of education, too; the latter being the image of the first, while the given educational system is the expression of both. This is true, unless there is a “Supra-Constitutional” “natural law” beyond nations and civilisations to be imposed on in accordance to the legal theories and pedagogical models revolving around terms such as “multi-culturalism”, “globalisation” etc.

In any case, speaking of the collective consciousness of any nation or any specific group of citizens we also talk of an accordingly shaped State and Education, where the national “boundaries” are flagged out only against a negative version of globalisation. Unfortunately, the “New Curriculum for religious education” were drafted by overrunning the aforementioned principle; without adopting neither a positive nor a negative stance towards relevant pedagogical theories, such as that of the “positioneller Religionsunterricht”. The absence of direct reference to the paramount “orthodox orientation” possibly constitutes the constitutional “Achilles’ heel” of that Curriculum before the Hellenic Council of State, at least for sake of the impressions of the non-expert in Theology and Pedagogy senior judges. This crucial detail is true, although in practice the “New Curriculum” could equally serve the “orthodox orientation” and, indeed, more successfully in contrast to the former Curriculum, which perceived the “Religion” School Subject as “Orthodox Subject” arbitrarily (Poniros, 2017); that is, not by an ecclesiastical synod which would attribute this quality to it “typically and essentially”, or even following a similar precedent exemplar to this case coming from Byzantine times. Nonetheless, the Council of State in the name of the Constitution’s Preamble and against a continuous mutual disagreement on the Religious Education leads us subtly to a bridging point, which has already been proposed by and analysed extensively in the European pedagogical theory: the “positioneller Religionsunterricht”.

### ***3.3. A deeper analysis of the “(Orthodox) Christianity’s” exact supra-religious meaning within the constitutional term “religious consciousness”***

A simple and unbiased reading of the 16th Constitutional Article does not justify the reason why the notion of “religious consciousness” per se contradicts to notions such as “unrestrained critical thinking”, “democratic school”, etc. That could be probably justified, if the Constitution had provided for terms like the “superstitious consciousness” or if the indicated religion, that is the Orthodox Christianity, had been related to a “blind faith” or the “religious fundamentalism”. An effort to counterbalance the supposed opposing terms is carried out by the Council of State itself. In its Decisions 660/2018, 926/2018 and 1749/2019, the minority of the senior judges expresses that “imposing” the “religious consciousness” on students differs radically from “developing” it (Decision 660/2018: 20; Decision 926/2018: 18). What is missing though is a scientific approach which could easily prove that the denoted “orthodox consciousness” or “faith” is not only com-

patible with the values of "Reason" and "unrestrained critical thinking", yet it rather incorporates them already. In this way, not only the mentioned endless debate would be restricted, but its whole foundation would also be disproved since it emerged from nowhere only being based on misinterpreted "words" and not on the "facts", the real history.

Orthodox Christianity, however, considering itself as the genuine continuation of the Church being rooted directly in the very words of Christ and the Apostles and remaining united at least until the East-West Schism (1054 AD), is related neither to Scholasticism nor to Protestantism especially regarding the issue of conflict between Faith and Reason. This fundamental distinction gives rise to the following remarks:

a) The "Church" ("ἐκκλησία"), in its dialectic, encounters the "world" ("κόσμος") throughout the Ante Deus years, from the environment of the Greek language and philosophy to the context of the European Enlightenment and postmodern times, is not opposed to Reason. Both "faith" (i.e. the Greek meaning of "πίστις" as "confidence") and "reason" ("ὀρθὸς λόγος") are interrelated in Greek patristic and synodical literature, to the extent that each of the Christian Doctrines ("Δόγμα") is perceived and evaluated as a reasonable axiom, a "philosophical tenet", b) based on the latter, theology of the Church is defined as "mythica" ("mythical theology") as well as "civilis" ("political theology") yet predominantly also as "naturalis" ("natural theology", i.e. of science and philosophy), according to the classic distinction of "theologia tripartita" (Georgiadis 2016: 32-33). In other words, Christianity is not "religion" or more accurately it is not only "religion", as a phenomenon concerning every facet of life, from science to art and politics. In this sense, it is a subject matter examined equally by theology as well by history, sociology, philosophy and any other science,

c) Church councils turned out to be "Ecumenical" in practice, since among a huge variety of cultures, languages, origins, politics, ideologies, peculiarities etc. they succeeded in embodying to the Church practically everything, the whole of humanity, through a kind of globalization, which is exemplar even for today's standards,

d) in times preceding modern thought, which is not able to escape from the pseudo-dilemma between Faith and Reason, Church Fathers like Gregory Palamas insisted that theology, like any other science, necessarily relies on mathematical logic (Gregory Palamas, 1981a: 40424-31; Yagazoglou, 1994; Yagazoglou, 2007; Terezis, 1993; Georgiadis, 2016), following either the abductive ("ἐπαγωγή") or the deductive reasoning ("ἀποδεικτικὸς συλλογισμὸς") for all Christian doctrines without exception (Gregory Palamas, 1981a: 40424,31; 1981b: 48022-4824.20; 1981c: 52032-5245, 55815-17).

In general, is it possible for anyone to claim that they truly believe in a value, without having ever doubted about it? Otherwise, we would not be talking about knowledge, derived inevitably from comparison, but about prejudice. Moreover, what else would be the knowledge itself than identifying differences and similarities among objects of the same kind? On the other hand, even if someone was absolutely certain about the validity of a "dogma", how could they be convincing, via a dialectical contradiction or a "confessional" approach? Here, important to be worthy of attention is the following statement of J. S. Mill: "unwillingly a person who has a strong opinion may admit the possibility that his opinion may be false, he ought to be moved by the consideration that, however true it may be, if it is not fully, frequently, and fearlessly discussed, it will be held as a dead dogma, not a living truth" (Mill, 1859: 34). However, the word "dogma" in the Greek language does not mean a religious faith in the sense of "unreasonable beliefs", but rather an axiom taken to be true within Reason and shown in symbolic form. Therefore, not

only in terms of modern education but also according to the real Orthodox Christianity, a science and a school subject like that of the “comparative theology” (Papathanasiou, 2014) seems more appropriate, compared to a religious education concentrated absolutely to one specific religion. Even if the Orthodox Christian sources were being approached separately, following the “mono-religious” or “confessional” model, it would be admitted that these texts already incorporate the “multi-religious” or “multi-confessional” concept, since they are involved in dialogue with any other religion and belief. What else is Gregory Palamas’ (c. 1296-1359) theological writings other than the dialectic juxtaposition of the Orthodox faith towards the “Hellenic wisdom” (ancient Greek philosophy and theology), the Scholasticism (Thomas Aquinas), Barlaam of Seminara, Islam etc.? Or also texts of Kollyvades (late 18th and early 19th century) referencing and answering the atheistic influence of the Western Enlightenment? Therefore, even the advocates of a “confessional” School Subject “confined” to Orthodoxy, would, in fact, be facing an essentially false dilemma on their part, in contrary to the very same tradition they appeal to. Thus, by reference to the context of the contemporary multi-religious model as well as to that of the Church tradition, we come to have the same thing: all the theological voices from around the globe. In this respect, the pedagogical issue is another: which particular “positioneller Religionsunterricht” would be the fundamental principle for examining religions and cultures, a historically non-existent “Archimedean”, post-cultural and post-religious basis on which all religions would depend on a collective consciousness as the unique “native language” of every person who lives in the real world under the influence of specific hereditary and environmental conditions?

### ***3.4. Resolving key pseudo-dilemmas of the social and political dialogue***

A series of ideological and legal dilemmas was mentioned above as the substantial cause of the public debate’s impasse. What matters most, in the field of the Philosophy of Law, is the underestimation of the Constitutional Preamble in its philosophical significance and legal effect. Indeed, it is reasonable for any legal theorist, political scientist or ordinary citizen to be afraid of losing a liberal State by a “confessional” Preamble and any other national symbol invoking God, in the shadow of a “prevailing religion” provided by the Greek Constitution itself (Article 3). That’s why almost all the Greek legal literature identifies the Greek Preamble as a symbol depicting only the crucial role of the Orthodox Church to the survival of the Greek culture during the times of the Ottoman Empire, as well as to the Greek Revolution and independence (Iliadou, 2002: 1050-1051), but nothing more. Indeed, no one can dispute the Orthodox Church as the womb of the Modern Greek national identity and State (Decision 660/2018: 10-11). But only that is expressed through the Greek Preamble?

In this case, arises a second dilemma between the Constitutional or national symbols and the Constitutional provisions. Do both of them have the same legal enforceability? The answer is definitely negative for the symbols, as long as they have no regulatory nature and purpose. The same applies to the Preamble of the Greek Constitution, since it is considered rather as “liberal” in its “archetype”, than “statist” or “universalist” (Law, 2016: 239). Moreover, the Greek legal theory tends to give it no political significance, even discussing its removal from the Constitution itself. In addition, it unanimously defines that the Preamble is only a statement or declaration “without substantive content” (Iliadou, 2002: 1050). This, though, seems to contradict other approaches of Constitutional Law outside Greece claiming that “if there is any part  
Source: O.A.E.D. of Volos, 2006.

of a constitution where one might expect to find explicit expression of ideological values, it is surely the preamble" and "even the most egregious of sham" (Law, 2016: 188,157). Nevertheless, the Greek legal literature in no way recognizes the Preamble as the "spirit" of the Greek Constitution. On the contrary, the Council of State's case-law, insisting clearly on its "limited legislative consequences", takes the opposite point of view. So, the question is how to find a common ground on such an issue. The following simple explanation may be enough: although a symbol can have no direct legal effect, it still expresses genuinely the cultural background or "collective consciousness" of all citizens, influencing their lives even in this indirect way more or less. Furthermore, "if there is any part of a constitution where one might expect to find explicit expression of ideological values, it is surely the preamble" (Law, 2016: 188). Also, "the legitimacy of the state rests upon the state's claim to represent the will of a community. Consequently, constitutions in this vein are attentive to the identity, membership, and symbols of the state" (Law, 2016: 163). That's why the Preamble means nothing and everything at the same time. To be clear through specific examples in the case of Greek State, we wonder how else could Constitutional provisions like those of the "national and religious consciousness" be interpreted (Article 16) or of the compulsory Christian Orthodox oath for the President of the Greek Democracy (Article 33). As a consequence, the Greek Preamble, simply carrying the specific historical and symbolic significance of Orthodox Christianity, can have a great impact on public life, a fact that indicates its supra-constitutional power.

Just in the previous paragraph was implied the third and most intractable dilemma between a liberal State and a Constitution with "confessional" Preamble and "prevailing religion" (Article 3). But what contradiction would there be, if, either through the principles of secular liberalism or in the name of the specific God of Orthodox Christianity, we resulted in exactly the same thing: the inviolable "human rights"? In simple words, can a person with a real (Orthodox) Christian conscience not be liberal? Conversely, can any liberal mind not accept the basic moral values of Christianity, that is, freedom and love?

Before providing answers to these questions, it should be clear what values are going to be compared and then the nature of each one separately. It is most important to examine how the Greeks themselves gave meaning to these values throughout their modern history. In particular, the debate is about the relationship between the (liberal) democracy and the (Orthodox) Christianity. Both of them are equally fundamental and deeply integrated in the Greek consciousness almost for two millennia, after the birth of Christianity and its unification with Hellenism. So, are they in contradiction, simply in balance or even more in identification with each other?

On the side of the (liberal) democracy, things seem to be simple, despite the dominance of an Orthodox Christian confession in the Preamble and in some provisions of the Greek Constitution. There is no lack of religious neutrality, because the Constitution fully protects the individual right to religious freedom and to worshipping God without discrimination of faith. This is provided by the Greek Constitution since its first form after the times of the Greek Revolution (1821-1827). The Political Constitution of Greece (Troezen, 1827), which is one of the first democratic Constitutions in the modern world, fully protects the right to religious freedom from its first article (Political Constitution of Greece: 1-2), while giving the status of Greek citizenship even to foreigners who shall come and be "naturalized" as citizens (Political Constitution of Greece: 12). However, what is most impressive is that this "secular liberalism" is implemented and enforced in the name of the "Triune God" according to the Constitutional Preamble. In this case, it is definitely visible a logical contradiction which, however, could be easily resolved. The

crucial point is the real “collective consciousness” of a sovereign nation especially in times of its first Constitution after its Revolution against the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the Greeks fought for an independent State “in favor of their faith and country” (Political Constitution of Greece: 7(ζ)), while their State and Law was based on two sources: the European Enlightenment, especially the French, as being adopted by the Greek “mentality” (Political Constitution of Greece: 2(β')). Based on this evidence, we dare to suggest that the Greeks formed a liberal State precisely because they were (Orthodox) Christians. Their specific religious consciousness together with their morality at the individual level were the key-factors which did not allow them to do otherwise.

The last suggestion, despite its realism, would appear, in a modern Greek “left-right” political spectrum, to be strange either to a “progressive” ideology endorsing unreservedly a policy of “open borders”, a world with no cultural frontiers or to self-proclaimed defenders of an Orthodox Christianity of which in fact they could appear potentially ignorant. Regarding, for example, the religions and faiths which exist under the “prevailing” Orthodox Church in Greece today, the question arises: is a democratic state allowed to impose restrictions on religion (Stathopoulos, 2008b)? The answer is given indirectly by reversing the question as follows: can anyone in the name of the Orthodox Christianity impose restrictions on any other religion? Similarly, could this specific Christian faith be against the “religious freedom” (Stathopoulos, 2008a)?

In this situation, the biased attitude of a large section of Orthodox citizens is simply incomprehensible. It is unreasonable for them to insist on a “Christian law”, even more, on “imposing” it to others, while the only Christian obligation in human relations is the unrestricted love, that is, the discretion and respect for all fellow humans (Stathopoulos, 2008b). A series of bible quotes indicating the two pre-eminent virtues of Christian world: freedom and love without limits. For example, the bible verses “Whoever wants to be my disciple” (Mark 8:34) and the “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” are indicative (Galatians 3:28) against any trend for a theocratic regime in any state, especially in the modern Greek one, and, furthermore, in its educational system. “Byzantine” examples like that of Saint Catherine’s Monastery in Mount Sinai, where the Orthodox Christian monks and the Islamic Bedouins live peacefully together for more than a millennium before the modern globalization, indicate a model of interreligious dialogue and cohesion in line with the Orthodox theology and spirituality.

Based on the reasoning and considerations mentioned in the previous paragraphs, we dare to argue that the Doctrine of the Christian Church and the liberal democracy of the State are in effect compatible to each other, despite not having the same ideological background. The comparison, in the context of a civilization with its own distinctive history and identity, regards no other Christian denomination than the Orthodox Church and no other State than the modern Greek. The role of the Orthodox Christian theology, dominant or not to the State, cannot be exactly the same to that of the Catholic or of Protestant denominations in the States of the Western world, even more owing to its different cultural background. In this case, neither the “State” nor the “Religion” has anything to lose from each other; there is nothing divorcing “jurisprudence” from “theology” and hence any dilemma between them is proved false.

To sum up, what is already put forward as the foundation stone of the Greek State and Education is a “collective consciousness”, characterized as “national and religious” in the 16th Article of the Greek Constitution and implied in its Preamble. It is not something individual to be protected as an “inviolable right”. It denotes the cultural identity of a whole nation, which, being firmly rooted in its past and at the same time open to any cultural exchange, can evolve

over time. In other words, “national and religious consciousness” and particularly its compulsory “development” in education means that every citizen is free to have a broad view of the world, to accept or reject the religion of their ancestors, to adopt any other religion or belief, to be atheist, etc. But is impossible for them not to have a linguistic and hence specific cultural identity through their heredity and environment, including national history, religion, shared common values etc. We are not talking about an identity in ideologies, religions, etc., but rather in the way of perceiving reality. It is far either from the “multi-cultural” or else “multi-religious” model along the lines of a negative globalization, having no historical basis and hence being non-existent in the real world, or from the nationalism, which isolates an entire population from the world community and history.

Orthodox Christianity as “religion” is recognized as equal among other religions and faiths, according to the “spirit” and the provisions of the Greek Constitution. However, as the cultural “background” of the whole nation’s identity it assumes a supra-constitutional character before and above all facets of the State including all religions and beliefs with no exceptions. This is the reason why Orthodox Christianity is gloriously depicted through the “Symbols of the Greek Nation”, such those of the Cross on the Greek Flag, the National Anthem, the National Public Holidays etc. and at the same time is put by the State on an equal footing with any other religion. Is this double nature of the Orthodox Christianity the proposed content of Religious Education in Greece, rather considered as “Cultural”? The positive answer is summarized to the following statements of two senior Judges of the Council of State:

“religious education is not allowed to go beyond its character as a “valid” but still a “proposal” for the formation of free consciousness capable of their own personal choices. therefore, it is unacceptable for it to change into a doctrinal confession of faith or a lot more into catechism.... it must maintain as its primary and main concern not the provision of information or the processing of knowledge or the development of historical, religious or sociological concerns (fields of other School Subjects), but the consolidation and strengthening of the Orthodox Christian consciousness” (Decision 1749/2019: 9; For similar remarks, see Venizelos, 2016; 2020).

Exactly the same principles are expressed explicitly by the new Curriculum for the Religious Education (March 2020), in the balance of a “religious consciousness” that means neither “multi-religious” nor “catechism” (Official Government Gazette of Greece 698/B/4-3-2020: 7660).

Consequently, what is rejected in the democratic Greek State and Education is either a fundamentalist approach, which can find no ground even in Orthodox spirituality, or a globalization that knows no boundaries (Begzos, 2005). Moreover, “in the history of civilization, the “outside” is always in dialogue with the “inside”. Between them, of course, are defined a boundary - a zero point, which rests on both the “inside” and the “outside” without being part of them... The boundary is an indicator of the ability for “erotic expansion”” (Stamoulis, 2019).

## 4. Conclusion

■ (Christian) Orthodox consciousness” symbolizes something not antagonistic to universal values of modern world such those of “reason”, “unrestrained critical thinking”, “open society” and “modern education”. Even more so, it presupposes them. As something essentially different from Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, Christianity in its Orthodox authentic form, shaping a specific culture and civilization in common with the Greek language and philosophy, is completely irrelevant to dogmatism, catechism and fundamentalism. This is easily evidenced by

an unprejudiced research of its true nature. As a consequence, the dilemma between “modern” and “traditional” is proved false in its essence and under the symbol of “classic”, a pretext in the controversy between a so-called “orthodox” and an “anti-religious” or “modernistic” side. Moreover, “collective consciousness” as a way of perceiving reality, a “native language” open at the same time to any idea, belief, ideology, religion etc., incorporates any “individual conscience”. That only would be just fine, if it had not become also a matter of a legal dilemma around the Constitutional term “religious consciousness”. It is a pity for the Justice, the school community and generally the whole society in Greece to be in trouble for no essential reasons and with no end in sight.

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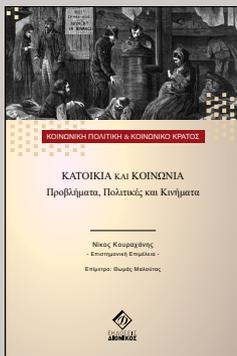
## Biographical Note

**Konstantinos Georgiadis** studied Theology and Law at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His master's degree and doctorate, which were received by the Faculty of Theology (A.U.Th.), are in the field of Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology, as is his first postdoctoral research. His second postdoctoral research is on the public debate over Religious Education in Greece. He has numerous publications in scientific journals and conferences. For three years, he has worked as an adjunct lecturer at the Aristotle University. Throughout the past two decades and presently he is teaching Religion and Sociology at Greek Secondary Schools.



ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ  
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ΝΕΕΣ ΚΥΚΛΟΦΟΡΙΕΣ  
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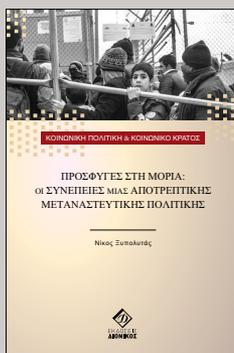
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Ένα πολύτιμο και ρηζικέλευθο βιβλίο για την μελέτη και γνώση του προσφυγικού ζητήματος στην Ελλάδα. Ο τόμος παρουσιάζει τα αποτελέσματα μιας επιτόπιας έρευνας που πραγματοποιήθηκε στο Κέντρο Υποδοχής και Ταυτοποίησης της Μόριας στη Λέσβο. Στόχος της είναι η ανάδειξη των αδιεξόδων μιας αποτρεπτικής μεταναστευτικής πολιτικής και η επισήμανση των σοβαρότατων συνεπειών τους στους ίδιους τους πρόσφυγες. Μέσα από το λόγο των εγκλωβισμένων συνανθρώπων μας αναδεικνύονται οι μακρές διαδικασίες περιθωριοποίησης των προσφύγων.



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## Die demographische Schwäche Ostdeutschlands

Dr. sc. Uwe Malich, *Königs Wusterhausen*

**D**ie einfache Reproduktion der Bevölkerung (Bestandserhaltung) in Ostdeutschland ist nicht gewährleistet. Schon lange nicht mehr! Die negative Entwicklung war u.a. schon zu DDR-Zeiten zu beobachten. Trotz auch seit vielen Jahren steigender Lebenserwartung (nicht so stark wie im Westen Deutschlands). Die Geburtnlichkeit, die Geburtenrate, ist zu niedrig. Dazu kam in vielen Jahren (vor allem nach der sog. „Wende“) die Abwanderung in den Westen Deutschlands.

Zuletzt geriet die ostdeutsche Bevölkerungszahl und damit auch die ökonomische Leistungsfähigkeit Ostdeutschlands unter einen doppelten demographischen Druck: im Gefolge der „Wende“ ging die Fertilität, die Geburtnlichkeit, dramatisch zurück. Die Zahl der Geburten sank bis 1994 auf 80.000, nach noch 200.000 zum Ende der DDR hin (= 40 %). Die Geburtenrate sank von 1,90 (1980) auf 0,77 (1994), also auf 40,5 Prozent gegenüber dem relativ guten Stand von 1980. Allerdings war die Geburtenrate schon in den letzten Jahren der DDR rückläufig, trotz sozialpolitischer Maßnahmen.

Außerdem kam es nach der „Wende“ zu einer starken Abwanderung aus Ostdeutschland in den Westen Deutschlands, vor allem von jungen Leuten auf der Suche nach stabilen und gut bezahlten Arbeitsplätzen. Schätzungen zufolge sind ungefähr 2 Millionen junge Leute (bis 35 Jahre) in den Westen Deutschlands gegangen.

Die niedrige Geburtnlichkeit („Wendeknick“) und die Abwanderung haben inzwischen zu einem fühlbaren Arbeitskräftemangel in Ostdeutschland, vor allem an jüngeren Leuten geführt. (Natürlich auch wegen der positiven ökonomischen Entwicklung und dem Abbau der Massenarbeitslosigkeit im Osten Deutschlands.)

Der Arbeitskräftemangel im Osten bedeutet eine langfristige Beeinträchtigung seiner ökonomischen Leistungsfähigkeit. Anfang der 90er Jahre gab es in Ostdeutschland ungefähr 10 Millionen Arbeitskräfte, für 2050 werden nur noch 5,3 Millionen Arbeitskräfte (unter sonst gleichen Bedingungen) prognostiziert. Damit verbunden ist eine starke Verschlechterung der Bevölkerungsstruktur zulasten der arbeitsfähigen Altersgruppen der Bevölkerung.

Die Geburtnlichkeit der Frauen (Fertilität) ist inzwischen wieder angestiegen, sogar knapp über „Westniveau“, aber noch nicht ausreichend für die Bestandserhaltung der Bevölkerung. Auch die Wanderungsbilanz zwischen Ost und West ist inzwischen ausgeglichen. Aber noch immer fehlen in Ostdeutschland wegen der Abwanderung und wegen dem Geburtenknick nach der „Wende“ potentielle Mütter, Frauen im gebärfähigen Alter.

Die zu niedrige Geburtnlichkeit der Frauen geht in Deutschland (mit zeitweiligen Ausnahmen) auf die Zeit des Ersten Weltkrieges zurück. Im Ersten Weltkrieg wurden relativ plötzlich über 5 Millionen Frauen in den Arbeitsmarkt geholt, weil die Männer in die Schützengräben und auf andere militärische Stationen mußten. Seit dem hatten und haben deutsche Frauen eine Doppelrolle und Doppelbelastung. Sie sind als Mutter und als Arbeitskraft gefragt. Diese Doppelrolle und Doppelbelastung aber überforderte und überfordert die Frauen systematisch. Aus diesem

objektiven Dilemma kamen und kommen die Frauen nur durch einen Kompromiss: wenig oder keine Kinder! Vor allem hochqualifizierte Frauen, also Leistungsträgerinnen in der Wirtschaft (Wettbewerb in der Wirtschaft!), entscheiden sich häufig gegen Kinder, gegen die Mutterschaft. Ein systematisches Problem seit Jahrzehnten.

Die offiziellen Demographie sieht vor allem in der Zuwanderung aus den bekannten Bevölkerungsüberschußgebieten Afrika, Naher Osten, Mittlerer Osten (Willkommenskultur!) die Lösung der demographischen Probleme Ostdeutschlands. Das ist aber nur die halbe Wahrheit. Rein zahlenmäßig würde das wahrscheinlich funktionieren, unter anderem weil die wahrscheinliche Fertilität der Zuwanderinnen wesentlich größer sein würde als die der deutschen Frauen. Ökonomisch würde diese Zuwanderung aber nur wenig bringen. Die Mehrzahl der entsprechenden Frauen hat nur wenig bzw. gar keine Qualifikation. Und sie würden vor allem Mutter sein, kaum Arbeitskräfte. Also der ökonomische Nutzen dieser Migration würde gering sein und für die Leistungsfähigkeit Ostdeutschlands nur wenig bringen.

Ich sehe eine andere Arbeitskräftequelle für Ostdeutschland, ggf. mit positiven demographischen Effekten: die hohe Jugendarbeitslosigkeit in verschiedenen südeuropäischen Ländern, z.B. Griechenland, Italien, Spanien, Portugal. Natürlich müßte Ostdeutschland dafür sein Image in diesen Ländern stärken. Real und „propagandistisch“, durch Präsentation seiner Stärken in diesen Ländern. Sinnvoll wäre eine entsprechende Zusammenarbeit der ostdeutschen Länder (offen für interessierte West-Bundesländer, aber unter ostdeutscher Dominanz). In diesem Wanderungsprozeß würden die jungen Leute aus Südeuropa Ansprechpartner (Mentoren) in Ostdeutschland benötigen, um das Ankommen im „kalten Norden“ (im doppelten Sinne: klimatisch und mental) zu befördern.

Unternehmer/Arbeitgeber und Politik hätten eine große Verantwortung. Die in Deutschland unvermeidliche Bürokratie müßte auf ihr notwendiges Minimum reduziert werden. Die Bezahlung müßte fair und ausreichend sein. Die jungen Leute aus Südeuropa würden - wenn es gut „läuft“ - nach einigen Jahren Arbeit in Ostdeutschland entscheiden, ob sie dort bleiben wollen oder in ihre ursprünglichen Heimatländer zurück gehen. Eine sog. Ethnogenese, also südeuropäisch/deutsche Mischehen, wäre möglich. Und natürlich Kinder! Dann würde es positive demographische und ökonomische Effekte für Ostdeutschland geben. Die ursprünglichen Heimatländer würden zwischenzeitlich wenigstens von der ökonomischen Belastung mit der Jugendarbeitslosigkeit nennenswert entlastet werden. Entscheidend für Ostdeutschland ist die Image-Entwicklung!

# Social Policy after the COVID-19 Pandemic

Marina Angelaki, *Panteion University*

**T**he coronavirus pandemic has been addressed primarily as a global health crisis, yet the challenges posed as the crisis unfolds are not limited to the health sector alone, but spread to the economies and societies. As a response, governments around the world have taken a series of measures in their efforts to mitigate the pandemic's impact on workers and households. Variations in the emergency measures enacted depend on the exposure of each country to the pandemic and the readiness of its health system, its fiscal capacity and institutional setting.

In Greece, the announcement of the first laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in late February led to the introduction of quarantine/ confinement measures in the regions affected, before the adoption of travel and movement restrictions at national level, along with the obligatory shut down of economic activities. In the health sector, the first measure enacted was the hiring of 2.000 health professionals on a two-year contract basis, in addition to 950 doctors and nurses that had already been hired. Funding was also provided to contract private hospitals and laboratories to provide facilities (OECD 2020).

Turning its attention from the health sector to the economy, the Greek government introduced a series of income support measures for individuals and households. An 800-euro payment (in addition to the payment of health and social insurance contributions) was introduced targeting different categories, such as employees whose contracts have been temporarily suspended as the enterprises in which they work have seen a sharp drop in turnover, in addition to self-employed, free-lancers, and employees made redundant since the beginning of March. The initial list of beneficiaries was subsequently revised to cover more categories of workers whose employment conditions have been affected by the pandemic. Employees whose contract has been suspended will also benefit from a 40% reduction of their monthly rent for their main residence for the months of March and April. In the case of liberal professions, economic support will be provided in the form of a training voucher (600 euros). Furthermore, the regular unemployment, the long-term unemployment and the unemployment benefits for free lancers will be provided for two additional months to current beneficiaries, while a one-off allowance of 400-euros for long-term unemployed was also announced in mid-April. For employees of the public sector with children below the age of 15 a special leave has been introduced to facilitate parents while schools are closed (OECD, 2020). Furthermore, parents will be exempted from paying for services which are no longer provided (such as school meals, transport to and from schools, and other extra curriculum activities).

Following a decade of austerity and the introduction of major cuts in its health sector (in addition to the introduction of significant retrenchment in other social policy programmes) as prescribed in the economic adjustment programmes agreed with the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the hiring of health professionals has been a much-needed (yet still small) step to strengthen the Greek health system in the face of the crisis. The announcement in March by the Prime Minister that short-term contracts will gradually be converted to indefinite period ones (Μπουρδάρης 2020), highlights the shortages of personnel in addition to those of infrastructure and equipment. In this context, the confinement measures have also been understood as a way to ease the pressure on the health system that would otherwise have been unable to respond effectively to the pandemic. The extension of unemployment support enacted to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 can also be understood as a limited attempt

(an emergency-type measure) to enhance a system that is not among the most generous or effective ones in protecting the unemployed. At the same time though, concerns have been raised regarding the access of vulnerable groups such as the homeless, refugees and Roma to social protection and health services during the pandemic, but more importantly regarding the extent at which the measures adopted to mitigate the effects of the crisis can effectively reach and protect these groups (ΕΛΕΔΑ, 2020).

The Greek response is no different from those of other countries around the world who have opted for Keynesian type measures as a response to the current crisis. While the relative low death rates in Greece (partly resulting from the strict confinement measures adopted) give some room for optimism in terms of how the country has managed to deal so far with the crisis, there is no doubt that the pandemic has highlighted (and exacerbated in some cases) inequalities, while it will most certainly increase social risks in the medium to long-term. The similarity of the policy responses has in turn stimulated a debate among welfare state scholars regarding the extent at which these temporary and ad hoc measures can lead to more lasting changes in social policy. Looking at the experiences of Canada and the USA during the crisis of 1929 and 2009 Beland (2020) argues that important factors to consider in assessing the extent at which crises can create the conditions for more lasting changes in social policy are the duration of the crisis (as the longer it lasts the more likely it will lead to more durable changes), the institutional features of a country at the time of the crisis and any partisan shifts that may occur, but which may have an impact even after the end of the crisis.

We argue that the EU dimension is an additional factor to be considered in discussions on the nature of the welfare state in EU countries in the post-pandemic era. The proposal for issuing “coronabonds” was rejected, while the resistance of member states to further integration in the health sector has also been strongly resisted, at least until now (May 2020). Nonetheless, the EU member states have agreed to depart from the budgetary requirements that would normally apply under the Stability Pact to allow member states to tackle the economic consequences of the pandemic. Obviously, the fiscal room has not been the same, with countries of Southern Europe such as Greece or Italy being in a less favorable situation. Other measures agreed upon over the past months include the mobilization of funds to support national health care systems, as well as of Cohesion Policy funds to address the effects of the public health crisis, the introduction of flexibility to allow member states to reach out to the most vulnerable, and the setting up of SURE instrument to help member states cover the costs of short-time work schemes to preserve employment, thus supporting “job insurance” rather than “unemployment insurance” (Commission EC, 2020a). The most recent and probably boldest initiative relates to the Commission’s proposal of a post-pandemic recovery plan announced in late May. The latter relies both on the EU budget (2021-2027) and a special 750-billion-euro recovery instrument (Next Generation EU) divided in 500 billion euros given to EU countries as grants and 250 billion given as loans. To do so, the Commission will issue bonds on the financial markets on behalf of the EU (Commission EC, 2020b). While the proposal leaves room for optimism, the final decision is expected to be adopted at the end of 2020 following the usual process of lengthy negotiations. It has also been noted that the recovery funds are concentrated in the period 2020-2024 (whereas the Multiannual Financial Framework spans over the period 2021-2027) as a return to the fiscal status quo is expected from 2025 (Ανδρέου, 2020). It is thus obvious, that for EU member states the welfare state that will emerge after the crisis will result not only from the interplay of domestic institutional and economic conditions, but also from European-level developments.

The recent crisis has once again highlighted the importance of European solidarity, much needed during these turbulent times. Interesting discussions are taking place regarding its nature: whether for example this should take the form of a single giant scheme in the form of a “European Emergency Solidarity Facility” or different schemes including a fully-fledge European unemployment re-insurance scheme (thus shifting the focus for the current protection of employment to unemployment, and at the same time signaling the EU’s automatic response to severe shocks) and a minimum income guarantee (Ferrera et al., 2020). Effective policy responses from the EU will also need to be coupled with transnational mechanisms of crisis management and resolution as well as an understanding of how different crises like the COVID-19 intersect with others like the economic and the migration crises (Bozorgmehr et al, 2020). The choices made for the post-pandemic era will not only affect the nature of European welfare states, but also the very nature of the European integration process. Failure to respond adequately could open the window to a new existential crisis with unknown results.

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