

## Social Cohesion and Development

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No. 32, National Identities through Media in Contemporary Societies

# Social Cohesion and Development

Biannual Scientific Review,  
Autumn 2021, volume 16, issue 2

# Κοινωνική Συνοχή και Ανάπτυξη

**32** Εξαμηνιαία Επιστημονική Επιθεώρηση,  
Φθινόπωρο 2021, τόμος 16ος, τεύχος 2

**FOCUS** National Identities through Media in the Contemporary Societies  
**ΘΕΜΑ** Εθνικές Ταυτότητες στα ΜΜΕ στις Σύγχρονες Κοινωνίες

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## SOCIAL COHESION AND DEVELOPMENT

Biannual Scientific Review

**AIMS AND SCOPE.** Social Cohesion and Development (SCD) is a biannual interdisciplinary scientific journal for research and debate on social policy, social cohesion and social development issues. It aims to advance the understanding of social cohesion in the contemporary development and to promote social justice within and between the nations. Articles are covering policy analyses, developments and designs, evaluations of policy outcomes, comparative research, analyses of the role of international organizations, the voluntary, private and local agents in social development and policy. The journal provides comprehensive coverage of a wide range of social policy and development issues, such as labour market and employment policies, poverty and social exclusion, ageing, pensions and social security, health and social care, education and training, family, gender and child policies, migration, crime and corporate responsibility, as well as civil society and third sector activities. The Review welcomes scholarly articles, book reviews and short research reports, in Greek or English. It encourages a multidisciplinary, comparative and historical approach.

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Εξαμηνιαία Επιστημονική Επιθεώρηση

**ΣΚΟΠΟΣ.** Η Κοινωνική Συνοχή και Ανάπτυξη (ΚΣΑ) είναι μια εξαμηνιαία επιστημονική επιθεώρηση για την έρευνα και συζήτηση θεμάτων κοινωνικής πολιτικής, συνοχής και ανάπτυξης. Σκοπός της είναι η καλύτερη κατανόηση του ρόλου της κοινωνικής συνοχής στη σύγχρονη ανάπτυξη και προώθηση της κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης στο εσωτερικό και μεταξύ των εθνών. Τα άρθρα που δημοσιεύονται καλύπτουν τα πεδία της ανάλυσης, του σχεδιασμού, της εφαρμογής των πολιτικών, της αξιολόγησης των αποτελεσμάτων τους, της συγκριτικής έρευνας, της ανάλυσης του ρόλου των διεθνών οργανισμών, των εθελοντικών, κοινωνικών, ιδιωτικών και τοπικών φορέων στην κοινωνική ανάπτυξη και πολιτική. Ειδικότερα, η Επιθεώρηση φιλοξενεί άρθρα που αντιπροσωπεύουν ευρύ φάσμα γνωστικών πεδίων, όπως εργασιακές σχέσεις και απασχόληση, φτώχεια και κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός, συντάξεις και κοινωνική ασφάλιση, υγεία και κοινωνική φροντίδα, εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση, πολιτικές για το παιδί, την οικογένεια και τα φύλα, μετανάστευση, εγκληματικότητα, εταιρική κοινωνική ευθύνη, καθώς και δραστηριότητες του τρίτου τομέα και της κοινωνίας πολιτών. Η Επιθεώρηση φιλοξενεί επιστημονικά άρθρα, βιβλιοκριτικές και βιβλιοπαρουσιάσεις, σύντομες εκθέσεις ερευνητικών προγραμμάτων, είτε στα ελληνικά είτε στα αγγλικά. Ενθαρρύνει τη διεπιστημονική, συγκριτική και ιστορική προσέγγιση.

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**Κοινωνική Συνοχή  
και Ανάπτυξη**



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## ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ

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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 οριζόντιου 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.

# National Identities in Contemporary Media. Introduction to the Special Issue

Christiana Constantopoulou, *Panteion University of Athens*

## Εθνικές Ταυτότητες στα Μέσα Επικοινωνίας στις Σύγχρονες Κοινωνίες. Εισαγωγή

Χριστιάνα Κωνσταντοπούλου, *Πάντειον Πανεπιστήμιο*

### ABSTRACT

Collective identities (as it is the national identity) are an object of continuous process, negotiation and redefinition (in the field of private as well as in the field of public discourses –such as the media discourse). Two hundred years after the creation of the so called “romantic nations” (among which modern Greece) how the contemporary media define the world? Are “national” identities still important or solidarities among people follow different (such as religious, technological or simply “monetary”) inspirations of “belonging”? How the contemporary “identities” are shaped and how are they “reported” by the contemporary media and political discourse? The articles of this volume, based on research data and analyses contribute to answer the question: what is the national idea nowadays?

**KEY WORDS:** National Identities, Media, Modern Greece, community, national idea.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Οι συλλογικές ταυτότητες (όπως οι εθνικές) αποτελούν αντικείμενο συνεχών διαπραγματεύσεων και επαναπροσδιορισμών (τόσο στο πλαίσιο του ιδιωτικού όσο και στο πλαίσιο του δημόσιου λόγου όπως είναι ο λόγος των μέσων επικοινωνίας). Διακόσια χρόνια μετά την δημιουργία των λεγόμενων «ρομαντικών εθνών» (μεταξύ των οποίων και η Ελλάδα) πώς ορίζεται ο κόσμος από τον σημαντικότατο δίαυλο αναμετάδοσής του που είναι τα μέσα? Συνεχίζουν οι «εθνικές» ταυτότητες να είναι σημαντικές ή η αλληλεγγύη μεταξύ των ανθρώπων εδράζεται σε άλλου είδους εμπνεύσεις της έννοιας της ταυτότητας (θρησκευτικές, τεχνολογικές ή απλά οικονομικές) και της αίσθησης της κοινότητας. Πώς τείνουν να σχηματιστούν οι σύγχρονες ταυτότητες και πώς εκτίθενται στο μηνιακό και πολιτικό λόγο? Τα κείμενα αυτού του τόμου που στηρίζονται σε έρευνες ανάλυσης περιεχομένου των διαφόρων μέσων συνεισφέρουν στην απάντηση στην βασική ερώτηση: τι σημαίνει «εθνική ιδέα» σήμερα?

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Εθνικές ταυτότητες, ΜΜΕ, κοινωνότητες, σύγχρονη Ελλάδα, εθνική ιδέα.

## 1. Introduction

Collective identities (as it is the national identity) are an object of continuous process, negotiation and redefinition (in the field of private as well as in the field of public discourses –such as the media discourse).

Nowadays, Media play a very essential role giving meaning to current ideas and diffusing perceptive images of the ongoing social reality (through concrete symbolical forms). Thus, the sociological study of identities needs to observe the (mass and social) media narratives and the social representations (images and arguments) which are reproduced by them creating the “feeling of community”. This “feeling of community” is essential because it determines the constitution of social links (the nature of “social link” reveals the conditions of being together in a concrete society). Common symbols (such as the national ones) are converted to a part of everyday life for the audiences, bridging distances in time and space and bringing events in the sphere of personal and everyday perception.

In times of globalization and of social and economic uncertainty (due to the economic crisis, the refugee and migration problems, the construction of supranational entities or the deconstruction of the existing socialist systems etc.), the contemporary societies redefine borders and identities. Two hundred years after the creation of the so called “romantic nations” (among which modern Greece) how the contemporary media define the world? Are “national” identities still important or solidarities among people follow different (such as religious, technological or simply “monetary”) inspirations of “belonging”? How the contemporary “identities” are shaped and how are they “reported” by the contemporary media?

The articles in this volume (whose edition is motivated by the celebrations of 200 years since the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire, in 1821), intend to investigate media and current discourses describing the contemporary meaning of “important” identities; questioning if the national identification remains an important one and/or how it is connected with ongoing other important issues for the contemporary social actors?

School remains an essential institution for young peoples’ socialization (although it is not as strong nowadays as it was in the past). This is why it is important to observe the “highlights” of the Greek educational system still focusing on the essential national myth of the Great Idea (the continuity of Hellenism through ages since Greek Antiquity, including the Byzantine Orthodox Christianity, thus mixing two important but rather opposed to each other cultural expressions, in order to create a solid national feeling of belonging to an important “race”<sup>1</sup>). The attempting to discuss the relation between the “classic” historical and religious background inspiring the contemporary teaching in the Greek mandatory educational institutions and the surrounding context (the contemporary international relations and the modern life needs, the economic crisis and its reasons as well as the immigration issue, forcing to accelerate the change of the old conceptions on the “Others” etc.), is undertaken by the first article of the volume which claims that the employment crisis<sup>2</sup> as well as the new forms of labor and the general economic environment dictate first of all the necessity to re-define educational policies and teaching contents.

Yet, the national discourse in Greece (as it was elaborated by school and church) is strongly rooted in common peoples’ consciousness, as it is shown in the following article. The author argues that “normally” official historical narratives are appropriated by national elites, (national days are officially recognized events that celebrate founding myths) and that if there is contest

about the authenticity of history represented or its meaning, as well as of the resulting national identity, it usually comes from grassroots movements or minority groups. Yet, the case of the Bicentennial of the Greek Revolution deviates from this norm as it is the state and its institutions that were about to propose a new narrative, starting with a new emblem, and 'the people' were vociferous in their reject of such a proposal, supporting a two-century old historiography not only about the Revolution and its protagonists, but also its place in the history of the nation. To this "reversal of roles", most members of the examined sample were fast to respond demanding from the state to return to its traditional role and narrative. This feature can also be understood as a return to popular roots against the "Europeanization" which has also brought the economic crisis—at least in peoples' conception of the facts- and may also show that "tradition" is felt as a security against a hostile environment brought by "modernity" weakly assimilated). Under these circumstances it is not strange if a majority of modern Greeks, wishes the stability of the national symbols at least.

A quite interesting and rather related example is given by the study of a neighboring country Ukraine, example which lights up other aspects of the meaning of "identities" in the current political discourses: the "average" Ukrainian runs along the important line of "old-new" also revealing the major contemporary question: the ways of adjustment of popular cultures and beliefs to a quickly changing environment.

The above major question is also hidden behind the results of the survey concerning citizens' idea of European Union (as indicated in the contribution on the European Parliament Elections) because the idea of "Cultural Diversity" against the idea of "Loss of National Identities" in the frame of European Union (as different conceptions of "belonging" and pointing out some kind of antagonism between old and new ways of thinking about "us"), becomes rather "capital" if we considerate the rates on these issues.

This is why, it seems interesting to also investigate the contribution of digital media in the negotiation of young people's identities. Social media platforms intensify not only communication, but also the management of the self; it seems that social media and new technologies have generated a re-imagination of youth identities through a digital lens: it is difficult to approach, yet, it deals with online discussion of ideas and positions not necessarily "new" although using "new media" for their dissemination.

An important issue nowadays concerns the use of words (the same term being understood in different ways) and because of this it become interesting to have in mind the conclusive thoughts about the meaning of the "nation" and "national identities" in contemporary political discourse (which is attempted in the last article of this volume).

Having in mind the above results, what can be the main research questions concerning the contemporary identifications (and especially the national identities)? Almost two centuries after the creation of modern national states and almost a century after the de-colonisation movements, how much the idea of "national belonging" can be important and inspire peoples' beliefs and actions in a "globalized world"? We attempt to examine this issue, focusing on the three following points:

### ***a) National Identities***

Whereas the appeal to culture and tradition is an old weapon of the nationalist, the notion of identity is relatively new. The issue of identity has recently gained cultural and political significance. It originated in social psychology (with Erik Erikson as the contemporary classic) but has become an essential issue in political and social debate nowadays as all sorts of movements appeal to identity,

and the issues of ethno-national identity in particular keep attracting the hearts and minds of millions of citizens, setting the framework of the debate, (even for the most ordinary matters).

The issue of identity has recently gained cultural and political significance. The demise of communism in the Eastern Europe, the German reunion in Central Europe, and the Maastricht Treaty in Western Europe are said to have awakened nationalistic sentiments and movements, and processes of cultural, economic, and political internationalization and globalization are assumed to have caused not only increasing insecurity about national identity at least in Europe (where appear problems of national identifications which generate an emphasis on regional and local cultures, as it can be somehow concluded by the texts in this volume). A central question could thus concern the fact that despite the “globalization” and the “cosmopolitanism” which reign in the modern world according to many social researchers, the possibility to “return” towards the reliable solutions for living together given by the national discourse remains an appealing option for politics, movements and everyday life issues. The existing precarity (in domains such as economy or health) reinforces the desire to “return” to safety (to times thought to be more “comforting” than nowadays)

### *b) Myths and Popular Culture*

Furthermore, contemporary revisions and reinterpretations of mythological elements reflect some important tendencies in current culture. Movies, television, computer games, comics, graphic novels, traditional literature, visual arts, performing arts, politics, blogs etc. hold both explicit and implicit renderings of archetypes such as Thor and Athena and Kali, and of mythological narratives such as those found in bodies of sacred literature, classical Greek tragedies, and medieval Grail legends, to name only a few examples. There is a mythological perspective of modern media in which the question of origins (even if not explicitly referring to national origins tries nevertheless to interpret the modern world according to old myths -very usually medieval, given that “Middle Ages” often appear as the origin of the Western World). This is a tendency for all popular art creations (especially in the field of cinema).

So to some level, there is a general “return” to beliefs and emblematic symbols (archetypes as would write Jung) which favour the search for origins and the “national identity” (together with the religious identification as Islamic Fundamentalism has proved) is one of the strongest discourses. Of course, together with the importance of the origins comes the question of the “otherness” (compared to Self). On this behalf we understand that despite the political precisions given in the conclusive article of this volume, the idea of belonging (as far as it concerns the artistic mass cultural discourse) takes elementary (archetypal) forms, mostly inspired by western middle ages.

### *c) Contemporary social “links” and imagined societies*

Apart the above background, societies change and some features also become dominant. This is strongly relied to the new media ethics. New media contribute to the change of 1) the meaning of social link and 2) the “duration” and commitment towards any “other” (including the private or public sphere meaning close friends or political others).

Mass culture (as Edgar Morin had remarked long ago) praises the individual values (such as romantic love, personal happiness, self-fulfillment). Its rhythm is based on timeliness, the way of participating to it is playful and aesthetical, having as essential core the consumption. The Gods

of mass culture (the mythical heroes) are mortal like all of us. Of course, the consuming society cannot “offer” everything. It is not possible to offer security and risk, so it removes real adventure offering slippers (in order to be comfortable when watching adventure on the screens). Mass culture, provides virtually everything that cannot be consumed in reality and makes virtual a big part of consumers’ lives. Of course, the sociologist can observe as important “parallel effects”: the transfer of responsibility, the emotion on screen heroes (rather than neighboring actors) rendering solidarity mostly “virtual”, the visual cannibalism and the “mandated” existence and last but not least: the duration of the social link; nowadays, social links are rather ephemeral: this is immediately related to the fact that they thus become less “strong” than in past times.

In this frame, “national identities” do matter of course, but only as a part of the general (which is in fact much simulated) background. In this background, media, as it was indicated above play a leading role.

Because this volume was motivated by the bicentenary of the Greek War for Independence in 1821, it is interesting to see how Greek media “define” the features of “Greek-ness” (being more or less the current discourse including the generally admitted “components” of the Greek national identity, thus framing the Greek national discourse).

## 2. How Greek media “define” the Greek National Features nowadays<sup>3</sup>?

The emissions with big audience which have been examined, provide several “features” generally admitted as characteristics of the Greek Identity (so it is generally believed that there is a “national character” which remains primordial and which is thought able to describe the idea of being “Greek”; this idea, is deeply rooted in the popular beliefs and remains present together with the changes and influences due to the globalized issues). Resuming, these (“incontestable”) components of the Greek beingness are the following:

- Extreme Intelligence (of the kind attributed mythologically to Odysseus), which helps the Greek to affront any challenge, especially when abroad (when the Greek has to deal with other nationalities which are not supposed to equal this feature); the examples which are given by the journalistic discourse in order to sustain this “verdict” are sometimes rather funny (as for instance one’s patent to cook on the mountain in order to feed mountaineers with freshly cooked food, or a compatriot who has opened a popular canteen or a tavern in some western country etc. All this is very plausible of course, yet it does not prove any kind of “national supremacy” as it is promoted by the journalistic discourse).
- Sense of Honour (φιλότιμο) and hospitality: This is the everyday discourse given by the media (whose veracity is not at all questioned on this point, even if it is not always verified); in fact, the Agenda often describes realities which go very much against the existence of this kind of characteristics -as for instance the existence of fonctionnaires’ bribery or position abuse or hostile behaviour towards immigrants and refugees); yet the sense of honour and the hospitality are considered as part of the Greek national pride. On this point, as Marx & Engels had discussed years ago (about German Ideology), the most “humiliated” a nation feels the richest national ideology it produces (for instance, this is why the kind of publications which are relevant on “Turkish” threat are very numerous in the Greek media).

Yet, to the above idealization contrasts the so called “remnants of the Ottoman Empire”: tips in order to give solution to a pending request instead of rights’ claiming, use of friends to obtain a public job, sentiment of alienation towards the state, lack of civil attitude in many aspects of everyday life etc.

- Because of the new redistribution of national states in Europe and the role played by European Union, part of which is Greece, and the economic problems of the Memoranda and of German economic hegemony (in Europe) many Greeks folded back to themselves and to what the resources of popular culture could give. When the discussion has to deal with National Identity, all these elements count, this is why the question of “national identity” nowadays is very complicated, yet quite dominant in the global system.

We believe that the pages which follow based on research data and analyses contribute to answer the question: what is the national idea nowadays?

## Notes

1. We should remind that when national states were created, the idea of “race belonging” was dominant (C. Constantopoulou, “Reporting meanings and aspects of contemporary exclusions”, an introduction to the C. Constantopoulou, L. Maratou-Alipranti, D. Germanos & Th. Oikonomou (ed.) *We and the Others, Reporting Tendencies and Symbols*, in Greek, Gutenberg, Athens 1999 & 2000.
2. Eurostat (7/10/2013) survey about the European areas with decreased GDP. Four of these areas are in Greece.
3. The features described above, have resulted from a content analysis of Greek television magazines of the week ends presenting elevated rates of audience such as: «Σαββατοκύριακο με τον Μάνεση» (Weekend with Manesis -Alpha) «Τώρα ό,τι συμβαίνει» (It happens now -Open), «Πρωϊνοί Τύποι» (Matinal Guys -ANT1), Καλημέρα με τον Γιώργο Αυτιά» ( Good morning with Giorgos Autias -S kai)

## Biographical Note

Constantopoulou Christiana is Docteur d’État (University of Paris), Professor of Sociology of Communication, at the Universities of Macedonia (Thessaloniki) and Panteion (Social & Political Sciences -Athens). Author of many scientific articles and monographic works (mostly in Greek, French and English but also translated in Portuguese & Bulgarian) focusing essentially on the communicational structures of contemporary societies. Active member of the “Association Internationale des Sociologues de Langue Française”, and elected member of the executive board (1996-2000, 2000-2004 & 2008-2012, 2012-2016) ; President of RC 14 “Sociology of Communication, Knowledge and Culture of the International Sociological Association (2006-2010, 2010-2014, 2014-2018, 2018-2023, www.rc14-isa.com); member of the board of RC13 “Sociology of Leisure” 2010-2014; member of organizational and scientific committees of many conferences in Cyprus, Greece, France and Italy. Editor/or member of the Scientific Committee of scientific journals (such as *Sociétés*, *Socio-Anthropologie*, *Sociologies*, *OJSS* etc.). Knight (since 2012) and Officer (since 2021) of the Academic Palms (French Ministry of Education). Most recent publications: *Symbols, Archetypes and Phobias, Introduction to the Sociology of the Imaginary*

(in Greek, Papazisi, Athens 2020), *Crisis' Representations, Frontiers and Identities in the Contemporary Media Narratives* (Ed. *Studies in Critical Social Sciences*, Brill, Leiden, Boston 2020), *Représentations Sociales et Discours Médiatiques, La crise comme narration contemporaine* (Ed. in French, L'Harmattan, Collection Logiques Sociales, Paris 2020). E-Mails : [konstant@uom.gr](mailto:konstant@uom.gr) & [christiana.constantopoulou@panteion.gr](mailto:christiana.constantopoulou@panteion.gr)

ΧΡΗΣΤΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΥ – ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ ΣΑΚΕΛΛΑΡΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ  
[ΕΠΙΜΕΛΕΙΑ]

## ΤΑ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΚΑ ΤΗΣ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗΣ



ΓΡΑΦΤΗ

Σωφία Αδύ, Ιωάννης Βαθούρας, Χαρά Βαθούρα, Μοιροί Ιωακείμης, Δέσπη Καϊτερίδου, Στέλλα Κορωνάκη,  
Μαρία Κορμεσίνη, Νίκος Κουρακάνης, Σπύρος Μουρούζης, Αρτέμιος Οικονόμου, Χρήστος Παπαθεοδώρου,  
Γεώργιος Παπακωνσταντίνου, Μαρία Πεμεζούλη, Θεόδωρος Σακελλάρουπουλος, Όλγα Σίμου, Γιώργος Σωρεωνίδης



ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ  
ΔΙΟΝΙΣΟΣ

Χρήστος Παπαθεοδώρου  
Θεόδωρος Σακελλάρουπος  
*-επιμέλεια-*

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Σκοπός του τόμου είναι να εισαγάγει και να εξοικειώσει τους αναγνώστες στις θεωρίες και τις μεθόδους της επιστήμης της οικονομίας που σχετίζονται με την ανάλυση των κοινωνικών προβλημάτων και την Κοινωνική Πολιτική. Ιδιαίτερη έμφαση δίνεται στην παρουσίαση εναλλακτικών θεωρητικών «παραδειγμάτων», πέραν του κυρίαρχου νεοκλασικού παραδείγματος, ενθαρρύνοντας κατ' αυτόν τον τρόπο την κριτική σκέψη, διδασκαλία και έρευνα. Οι επιμέρους θεματικές του τόμου αποτελούν εξειδικευμένα τμήματα της οικονομικής ανάλυσης που συνή-θως διδάσκονται σε προχωρημένο επίπεδο με τη χρήση απαιτητικών τεχνικών.

Το ανά χείρας βιβλίο αποφεύγει, όσο είναι δυνατόν, την χρησιμοποίηση υπερβολικά εξειδικευμένων τεχνικών και φορμαλισμών και δίνει έμφαση στην αξιωματική θεμελίωση των βασικών επιχειρημάτων και υποθέσεων. Τα επιμέρους κεφάλαια είναι εύκολα κατανοητά από κοινωνικούς επιστήμονες και φοιτητές που δεν είναι εξοικειωμένοι με τις μεθόδους και τα εργαλεία της επιστήμης της οικονομίας. Στόχος των συγγραφέων είναι η δημιουργία των κατάλληλων ερεθισμάτων στον αναγνώστη για μία κριτική πρόσληψη των πτυχών, προϋποθέσεων και συνεπειών που θέτει η επιστήμη της οικονομίας στην κατανόηση και ερμηνεία των διαφόρων κοινωνικών προβλημάτων αλλά και στον γενικότερο ρόλο της Κοινωνικής Πολιτικής στην προαγωγή της κοινωνικής ευημερίας.

# Greece 2021: Official and lay understandings of national identity

Hara Stratoudaki, National Center for Social Research

## Ελλάδα 2021: Θεσμικές και λαϊκές αντιλήψεις για την εθνική ταυτότητα

Χαρά Στρατουδάκη, Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικών Ερευνών

### ABSTRACT

Jubilees and national days are privileged opportunities for (re)negotiating national identity and its markers. They offer both to the states and groups of citizens or minorities within states, the opportunity to assure or challenge accepted forms of identity. The Bicentennial of the Greek Revolution, which is the founding moment of modern Greek state, was no exception to this. In this paper we present a synopsis of the public discourses about the meaning of the Bicentennial and the role of the Committee 2021 which was assigned to oversee the preparations and select projects to include in the year-round celebration. We then contrast those discourses to the ones found in the Facebook posts reacting to the proposal of the emblem of the Bicentennial. We find that contrary to conventional wisdom, it is the state and its institutions that opted for a new identity narrative, while the ordinary citizens who decided to express their opinion were resisting such a novelty.

**KEY WORDS:** National identity, Official and lay understandings, Greece 2021, Greek Revolution.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Οι εθνικές επετείοι και ιδίως τα ιωβηλαία αποτελούν προνομιακές ευκαιρίες για την (επανα) διαπραγμάτευση της εθνικής ταυτότητας και των σημάτων της. Προσφέρουν την ευκαιρία, τόσο στο κράτος όσο και στους πολίτες ή τις μειονότητες, να επιβεβαιώσουν ή να αμφισβητήσουν τις παραδοσιακές μορφές ταυτότητας. Ο εορτασμός των 200 χρόνων από την Ελληνική Επανάσταση, με την οποία συγκροτήθηκε το σύγχρονο ελληνικό κράτος, δεν αποτελεί εξαίρεση. Στο κείμενο που ακολουθεί παρουσιάζουμε μια σύνοψη των δημόσιων λόγων σχετικά με τα 200 χρόνια και το ρόλο της Επιτροπής 2021, στην οποία ανατέθηκε η επίβλεψη της προετοιμασίας και της επιλογής προτάσεων για τον ετήσιο εορτασμό. Στη συνέχεια συγκρίνουμε τους λόγους αυτούς με τις αντιδράσεις των χρηστών του Facebook στην πρόταση του εμβλήματος της επιτροπής και του εορτασμού. Διαπιστώνουμε πως αντίθετα με τα συνηθισμένα, το κράτος και οι θεσμοί του εξήγγειλαν τη δημιουργία μιας νέας ταυτοτικής αφήγησης, ενώ οι πολίτες που αποφάσισαν να σχολιάσουν δημόσια αντιπαρέθεσαν σε αυτήν.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Ελληνική επανάσταση, Ελλάδα 2021, εθνική ταυτότητα, Θεσμικές και λαϊκές αντιλήψεις.

## 1. Introduction

**M**odern nation states based their legitimacy upon identities constructed with materials of the past. Thus, they could evoke a perennial history, root themselves in a distant past and claim the deeds of heroes and sages as their own. As several authors have shown (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1984), in this endeavor nation states used rituals or customs, instilling into them the overarching presence of the state. Sometimes this was not enough, hence newly developed ceremonies and invented symbols were presented as re-enacted ancient heritage. The importance of time transformed into 'memory' has proved crucial in forging national identities. Therefore 'memory' should impose itself upon present time, producing a cyclical repetition of remembrance in a semi-religious way. It is this need that inspired the establishment of national days and the relevant rituals as ways of performing the nation (Woods and Tsang 2014, Elgenius 2018) and national identity (cf. Gillis 1994), as well as "seeing a state" (Roy 2006). Commemoration rituals "rediscover and employ older traditions to evoke and celebrate the heroic and sacred qualities of their nation" (Smith 2001, 573) and incorporate elements established centuries earlier by the monarchies and the empires, e.g. parades, decoration with flags and emblems, and participation to special religious ceremonies to support the connection between nation and its God. The yearly repetition of such rituals makes them ideal for the analysis of discourses and ideologies related to nation-building, nation-sustenance and national identity. According to Elgenius (2018, 131), national days "provide by their design a framework for the imagination and expression of nationality in terms of commonality and oneness."

In this paper we first present a brief sketch of existing literature on national days and jubilees. We notice that scholars and researchers are more and more interested in bottom-up approaches to national identity, an interest evident in recent publications focusing on national days. Such approaches complement the analysis of official discourses with an analysis of their reception and the responses from 'ordinary citizens.' We then proceed to our case study, which examines the public discourses around the bicentennial of the Greek Revolution of 1821, and the responses of ordinary citizens, as expressed when the emblem of the Committee 2021 was announced on social media. We present our methodology for collecting data from posts published in Facebook, examine our findings, and discuss them in the light of national identity. It should be noted that a few days after the events reported and the data collected for this paper, the outburst of COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns that followed ruined much of the expectations about the bicentennial and removed the focus from the celebrations for most of the national audiences.

## 2. Commemoration and National Identities

**N**ational days are important symbolic signifiers of national identities (McCrone and McPherson 2009b, 6). They put into perspective the time and timelessness of a nation, incorporating the past into the present and projecting them both into future. The relation between the nation and its past has been established in the writing and teaching of national history together with other nation-centric disciplines included in the curricula (e.g. literature and geography). This relation becomes dynamic through the recognition of some nodal elements as constitutive of the nation, and their inscription upon place and time as mnemonic loci. Historical time becomes

inscribed upon space through the connection with places where important battles have been fought, sanctified in the blood of the fallen martyrs of nationhood (Azaryahu & Kellerman Barrett 1999). It is also inscribed upon space through the constant reminder of the heroes and the sages, the “fathers [and mothers] of the nation” (Hedetoft 1995, Smith 1991), with statues, gardens of heroes (Leoussi 2004), Pantheons (Lyons 2003, Tollebeek & Verschaffel 2004) or “cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers” (Anderson 2006, 9). Such inscriptions upon space are active in day-by-day workings of nation, as a backdrop to banal nationalism (Billig 1995), as vague reminders of national membership. They are officially activated, though, within the sanctified cyclical time of the nation during national days (Gillis 1994, Edensor 2002, Tsang & Woods 2013, Elgenius 2018). This is strikingly clear in the case of jubilees (e.g. Lentz 2013, Sakki & Hakoköngäs, Stevenson & Abell 2011), which provide the opportunity for adding ceremonial, ritual, and symbolic content, as well as for heightened inspiration of the state, as it claims to be baptized once again into the fountain of nation’s will. National days provide an opportunity for re-negotiating the content and explanations of events past, preparing and organizing the events still to come, legitimizing certain aspirations over others.

Smith (2013, 21) contends that though celebrations, commemorative national rituals and performances don’t “constitute either a necessary or a sufficient condition of the persistence of nations and nationalisms, their ubiquity and regularity gives them a special role and significance in the forging and the reproduction of nations.”

Participation to celebrations is not confined to those physically present to events like parades, staging of historical pageants etc. During the post-war era, at least, participation is heavily mediated, allowing each member of the nation to glimpse national glory and grandeur. In fact, such events are organized to be broadcast, which makes them ‘media events’: pre-planned “live broadcasts of great events that transform individuated and stratified masses into the *communitas* of whole societies, riveting them not just to programs in general but to the very same broadcast; transporting them not just elsewhere but to ‘the center’” (Katz and Dayan, 1985: 305).

It is in this vein that M. Skey proposed the idea of ‘ecstatic event’ described as “events designed to celebrate or explicate a particular national community on a mass public scale with reference to symbols and assumptions that inform an understanding of everyday life in a world of nations” (Skey 2006, 151). He proposes that such events allow the researcher “to investigate empirically how different discourses of (national) identity are articulated, disseminated and resisted during heightened (and therefore largely identifiable) moments or periods of time” (Skey 2006, 154-155). Such an empirical investigation “might include tracing their resonance among particular sections of the populations (...) and the degree to which any forms of resistance are managed by institutional authorities” (Skey 2006, 155).

Scholars and researchers in the field of national identity are becoming more interested in understanding national identity bottom up, in place of the top-down approaches that were the norm so far. Researchers turn to ordinary citizens and call for replacing the focus from the elite production of commemorative events to the citizens who are its recipients (Fox 2013). And Randal Collins adds that “it is a danger of symbolic analysis to presume that the analyst can identify the meaning of a symbol without examining what participants actually are thinking and feeling at the moment” (Collins 2013, 54).

### 3. The Jubilees of the Greek Revolution

The annual celebration of the Independence War, formally described as Greek Revolution, was established with a Royal Decree in 1838, determining that the celebration should take place on March 25th, combining the beginning of the Revolution in Peloponnese with Annunciation (Elgenius 2018, 100-101, Geisler 2009, 18), binding thus together the nation and Divine Providence. In fact, the Revolution started some days earlier in Peloponnese and a whole month earlier in Wallachia, but certainly national holidays condense chronological into symbolic time. While National Days in many countries have proved controversial, contested, and susceptible to change (McCrone and McPherson 2009b, Elgenius 2018), that was not the case with Greece.

The golden jubilee of the Revolution, in 1871, took place amidst grave conditions: an unsuccessful rebellion of Crete against the Ottoman Empire, the murder of English and Italian diplomats kept hostages by bandits, and a long-term civil unrest. The celebration was organized around the recovery of the bones of Patriarch Gregory V from Odessa, and their ceremonial transfer and burial in the Athens' Cathedral. Gregory opposed the Revolution and excommunicated the Revolutionaries, but eventually was hung and his dead body was desecrated. With the ritual burial at the Cathedral, he was incorporated into the symbolic pantheon of the Revolution, allowing for the definitive marriage between the State and the Church (Exertzoglou 2001).

The Centennial celebration of the Revolution was postponed until 1930, because of the Greek-Turkish War in Asia Minor, culminating to a disaster for Greece. Nine years later, the socio-economic results of the disaster were still evident, followed by political instability. The stake was that the celebration would signal the effort for development as well as for peaceful co-existence with the neighboring countries (Koulouri 2021).

The Sesquicentennial celebration took place in 1971, amidst the rule of a military dictatorship. The regime attempted to provide a religious aura to its rule through the organization of several local celebrations all over the country throughout the year, with an emphasis to religious ceremonies followed by parades and performances based on events that took place during the revolution. It was another attempt to promote the central mottos of the regime, 'Homeland, Religion, Family.' Such a ceremonial structure was standardized throughout the period, with kitsch spectacles glorifying the regime.

Thus, the Bicentennial jubilee was expected to distance itself from sinister events. As early as 2012, the then Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, promised that his newly elected government would lead the country out of the sovereign debt crisis, to economic and social development, to proudly celebrate the Bicentennial. Officially the crisis ended in 2018 and the next year the newly elected conservative government designated a prestigious committee to oversee the preparations and organize the celebration. Gianna Angelopoulou-Daskalaki was appointed as Chair of the Committee "Greece 2021," having a reputation as the Chair of the Athens 2004 Olympics. She was soon to speak about deconstructing national myths and restoring national truth, since "national is all that is true" (according to the national poet Dionysios Solomos).

## 4. Research design and Methodology

Social media provide a space for studying ordinary citizens' perceptions as well as their response to the elites' public commemorative discourse. They answer to the questions that a researcher might have asked. They even offer the opportunity to realize questions regarding national identity asked by the citizens themselves, guiding the researcher towards unanticipated issues.

Our research is based on data collected from Facebook. They are related to four posts in the "Greece2021" Committee's page, posted on February 7 and 8, 2020 (see Figure 1) and the reactions to them. Two posts presented the change of cover and profile images of the page to include the emblem (logo) of the celebration. The third post was a video with Mrs. Angelopoulou presenting the emblem, along with a declaration of its/her aims regarding the whole concept of its role to the bicentennial celebration. The fourth post included the emblem, along with a call for proposals open to the public.

The reactions were divided between those who 'liked' or even 'loved' them, and those who expressed their contempt by selecting the emojis for 'angry,' 'sad,' or laughing (see Table 1). Negative ('angry' or 'sad') and ironic ('haha' or 'wow') reactions were by 10% more than positive ones. The posts were also widely debated, as they were commented 687 times and shared 239 times. Comments were also shared and met with diverging reactions.

We were able to collect 627 comments, which will be further analyzed in the rest of this paper.<sup>1</sup> The analysis will be preceded by a brief mention to the speeches by the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Parliament, and the Chair of the Committee, given at the inaugural meetings of the Committee.

Figure 1. The four posts of the committee Greece 2021 in Facebook.

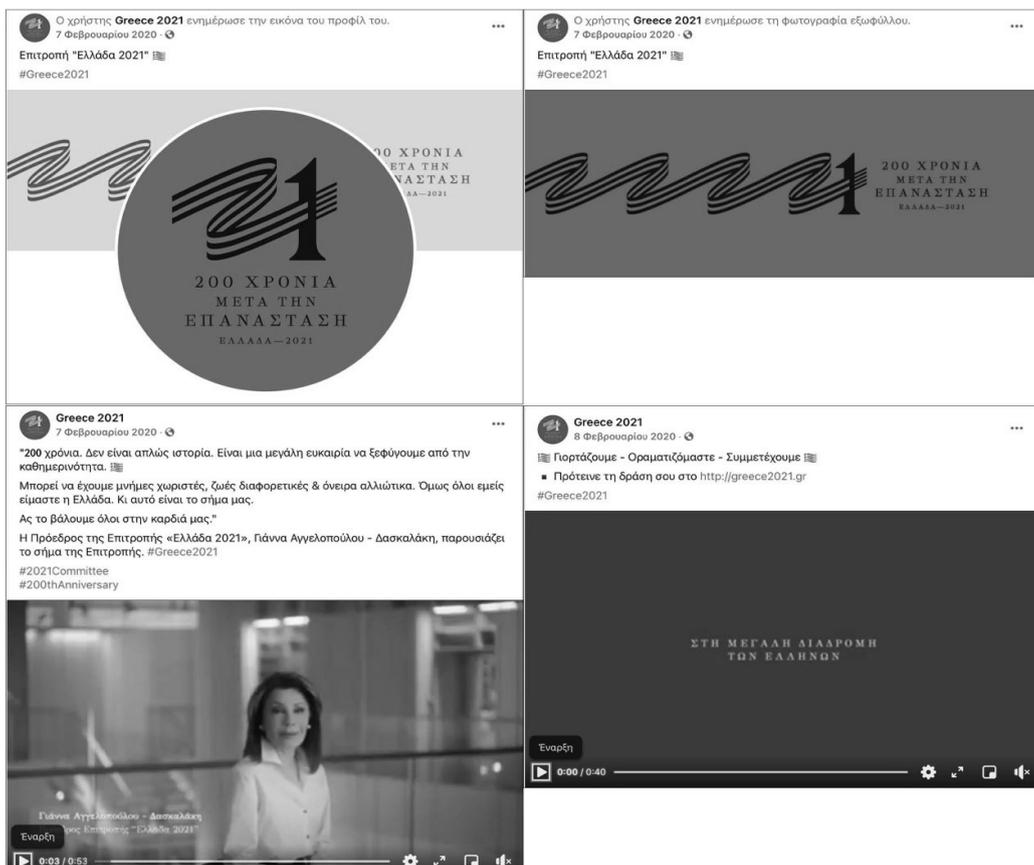


Table 1. Reactions to the four posts of the committee Greece 2021 in Facebook

Reactions	Post A	Post B	Post C	Post D	Total reactions
Like	148	135	319	252	854
Love	21	19	63	42	145
Haha	6	7	49	14	76
Wow	12	10	6	12	40
Sad	2	1	5	2	10
Angry	235	227	302	333	1.097
Comments	106	100	268	213	687
Shares	16	17	137	69	239

## 5. Elite discourses about the Bicentennial and its Emblem

The inaugural meeting of the Committee Greece 2021 was held in the house of Parliament on November 7, 2019. The President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Archbishop, and representatives of the political parties were in the audience. Addressing the meeting, Prime Minister Mitsotakis said that

*...it is worthy to approach the bicentennial of the Revolution from several points of view. In the strong light of historical experience. In the wise light of its teachings. But also, with a positive projection to the future as a compass. It is an opportunity for a bold account as well as for a lively reflection. Reflection and rendering a new meaning to our values, leading – ultimately – to national self-understanding. It is, after all, a re-acquaintance with our collective self, which will offer an opportunity to Greece for internal reorganization, and for re-establishing itself, with its modern identity, in Europe and the whole world. (Mitsotakis 2019)*

Thus, the Government expected a prismatic or multifaced approach to the historical past, with a view to the future. It would be in this light that the content of 'national' values (whatever this meant) should be renewed. The focus is placed upon a stochastic forgetfulness leading to a new self-understanding, to a new national identity. Thus, the identity forged in the last two centuries is deemed insufficient to be modern enough and compatible to 'Europe' and the rest of the world. This is in par with a naive understanding of the narrative construction of identities, as if a new narrative would be replacing the old ones without any friction.

The Chairperson of Hellenic Parliament proposed that:

*Nowadays, in view of 2021, the Committee with its Chairperson along with us all will craft the new Parthenon Frieze. Let us prove equal to the most advanced societies thus honoring our ancestors' memory. We will craft the new Frieze and honoring the Rebirth [of Greece] we will prove that our Frieze is preparing the country for the enormous joy of life, creation, and advancement in response to their battles. (Tassoulas 2019)*

Mr Tassoulas' proposal is in line with a series of previous proposals, like the so-called 'Nation's Vow' to build a Church to the Savior, adopted by the National Assembly of 1829 (Antoniou 2016, Markatou 1995). Similar proposals were made during the two centuries that followed the Revolution. For example, a year before the golden jubilee, a contest was announced for the erection of a Monument and a Pantheon consisting of statues of the heroes in front of the University of Athens, both symbols of the unity of the nation. But Mr Tassoulas' proposal sounds inconsistent with that of the Prime Minister: it is bound to a certain familiar mentality strongly related to the past, while it remains vague enough to accommodate whatever novelty is deemed necessary.

The Chairperson of the Committee, in her speech was closer to the rhetoric of the Prime Minister, and in the following weeks and months she as well other members of the Committee, signaled not only an attempt to deconstruct national myths (which, after all, has been underway for decades), but also to challenge established signs of the nation. As expected, such an idea was not well accepted by the public. Deconstruction sounds suspect when initiated by the bearers of the hegemonic discourse. Therefore, the novel truth, which sometimes looks like an invented tradition as well, was met with criticism and overt hostility in social media, not only by the far-right audiences.

One of the first episodes in this controversy was the presentation of the Committee's emblem. The presentation was made by Mrs Angelopoulou, in a video uploaded to social media platforms, repeating the abovementioned aims and ideas. The post's text in Facebook read:

*"200 years. It is not just history. It is a great opportunity to escape from everyday routine. We may have different memories, lives & dreams. But we are all Greeks. And this is our emblem. Let us all place it in our hearts." The President of the Committee 'Greece 2021,' Gianna Angelopoulou-Daskalaki, presents the emblem of the Committee. #Greece2021 #2021Committee #200thAnniversary.*<sup>2</sup>

The original emblem was available in several palettes, but the one promoted in social media was brown and involved a ribbon with five stripes, instead of nine used in the Greek flag. Thus, it ignited a heated discussion about emblems and the content of national identity, salted by references to current political issues.

## 6. Citizen's responses on Facebook

### 6.1. *Of emblems and flags: The visual markers of identity*

During the aforementioned presentation, the emblem is shown as a waving ribbon with 3 blue and 2 white stripes, which culminates as a free-form number '2' cutting through a number '1' (thus visualizing the shorthand – '21 – for the year of the Revolution), and then it is shown with five blue and four white stripes – similar to those of the Greek flag (see Figure 2). A second video, uploaded the same day, presented only the emblem in several shades of orange, beige, light brown and, eventually, blue. The brown version was selected to become the profile image of the Committee's page in Facebook (see Figure 1). While "during national commemorations important national symbols are often used extensively" (De Regt 2018, 1713) the idea of a new symbol or an emblem diverging from conventionally accepted elements of visual national identity was unusual.

Several comments were focusing on the ribbon, the colors, and the Greek flag. Most were criticizing, or even decrying the choices made as incompatible to accepted symbols of the nation and in several ways (both real and invented) related to the Greek Revolution. The most referred to symbol was the flag, and the users focused on its colors, the number of stripes and the cross included in it, as three elements missing from the ribbon.

Elgenius (2018, 52) noted the relationship of the Greek flag to the revolutionary tradition: "the Greek flag is interesting as it has combined the cross with 'revolutionary' stripes representing the motto 'Liberty or Death'. Hereby, the flag acknowledges the role of Christianity in the formation of the Hellenic Nation raising boundaries during the war of independence (1821) against the Ottoman Empire".

**Figure 2. The final frame of the video with the Committee 'Greece 2021' logo.**



Users supported the necessity to use the national flag throughout, including all its elements: the cross (since the Revolutionaries mentioned that they were fighting “for Christ’s holy faith and the freedom of homeland”), the nine stripes corresponding to the syllables of the motto “Freedom or Death”, as well as the blue and white colors. Even the presence of blue-white stripes without the cross are considered as unrelated to the flag and Greek history in general: “In each and every version [of the Greek flag] there was a cross (even sometimes there was just a cross). This [emblem] could be well fit to Uruguay as it is with blue and white stripes. People have died to keep the cross on the flag, it cannot be erased as an unimportant detail.”

They were also quick to indicate the resemblance between the emblem and the ribbon of Saint George, a decoration of the Russian Empire that survived into the Soviet era until the present-day Russian Federation (Zeglen 2020).

The designers offered the following explanation:

A color code was chosen illustrating the numerous ideas and colors of the Revolution and emphasizing the diversity of Greek landscape and culture as well as the receptivity and utilization of divergent ideas and experiences. (Beetroot design group 2020)

Though the color was often mentioned, it is the absence of the Cross that infuriated most of the commenting users. Indeed, the responses range from a moderate protest to overt accusation about “plotting to de-Christianize Greek society by imposing a secular multicultural state, eventually leading to Islamization through the acceptance of an ever-increasing number of immigrants and refugees.” Thus, behind such stances lie either a moderate conservative Christian-Orthodox identity, or a xenophobic identity leaning towards alt- or far-right theories about the nation.

Only a handful of users commented in favor of the Committee: They reminded that the flag used today was adopted a long time after the Revolution. Thus, they insisted on the invented tradition surrounding the flag, as one more of the 'myths' that should be overthrown during the year-long period to the celebration, when the "national self-understanding" and the "re-acquaintance with our collective self" was to take place.

One should note though, that most of those opposing the emblem are attached to an idealized and abstract concept of a flag with certain elements on it. Michel Pastoureau (2001) has supported the idea that for the most part of the history of modern states, even the colors of the flags were abstract categories.

One user proposed a different perspective, indicating that the emblem is unimportant, since even a better emblem would not be able "to save the country from its situation and its breakup," adding that "the point is whether we can be freed from breakup, misery and decadence."

## 6.2. 'Us' and 'You': An internal divide

Such a controversy between the Committee Greece 2021, proposing an emblem for the Bicentennial, and most of the audience who took the pains to post a comment denying this same emblem, offered the ground for unveiling an internal divide within Greek national identity. The controversy offered the opportunity to the users to distinguish between a collective 'Us' or 'We' and a less populated though powerful 'You' or 'Them.'

Most of the comments imply a divide not only in aesthetic terms, but also one about the ideals concerning the nation and its aims. They use several descriptions for the Committee and the socio-political group it represents or their ideas:

- They attribute them a Europe-centered mentality, as being foreign modernists eager to erase Greekness through changes in the markers of identity (as shown in the case of the flag) as well as faking history.
- They relate them to politicians, heirs of the local authorities of the pre-revolutionary era, who opposed the Revolution and are held responsible for the civil wars waging during the Revolution.
- They consider the academic members of the Committee as propagandists of leftist and communist ideals, though among them were several liberal historians. This confusion between liberalism and the Left is pronounced in several cases. Those ideals are understood as a "post-modernist marketing based on human rights chatter," orchestrated by politicians as well as the civil society, extremist, and antifascist movements.
- They call the Committee one of "famous celebrities," organizing "a feast fit for a political, intellectual and economic elite, praying on Greece." Only one user, though, related this elite with bourgeoisie, while others conflated it with the 'ruling class.'

On the other hand, they understand themselves as "the people," loyal to national symbols and the familiar historical narrative. They demand to have a say about the whole concept and the proposals of the Committee, since "in national issues and symbols no modernization is acceptable." They claim that "memory, interpretation and search for perspective" belong to the people.

Two posts estimate the magnitude of the two groups in opposite ways. The first notes: "you are not alone in being anti-Greek... you are the 80%... and therefore we are the last of the last... [...] Because of you Turkey is nowadays a super-power while Greeks are searching for food

in the garbage. You are the abettors of the abjection of the country." The latter takes a different position: "we are the majority, and we demand that this nonsense – imposed by some appointed [i.e., not elected, hence illegitimate] non-Greek internationalists without even asking our opinion – must change."

Either a significant minority or the majority, those considering themselves as part of "we, the people" claim a special position as guardians of the nation, its history, its traditions, its authentic essence. And they also find a homology between the times of Revolution and the present time: while they keep alive the line of revolutionary Greekness, of resistance, they consider their opponents as keeping alive the contra-revolutionary tradition of subservient local rulers, responsible for the near failure of the Revolution.

### ***6.3. "What stands homeland for, for you? Is it just an identity card mentioning you are 'Greek'?"***

When identity is at stake, it does not become salient in its totality, nor all its markers are being negotiated (Stratoudaki 2021). People tend to negotiate only those markers that are challenged. In the case of the emblem, such challenged markers were the flag and the symbols contained in it. Only a few users went far enough to question the meaning of homeland: "What stands homeland for, for you? Is it just an identity card writing that you are 'Greek'?" Thus, he suggested that identity is something one becomes rather than something one has, and therefore that "an authentic Greek must confirm his title day after day" (Savidis in Stratoudaki 2010, 219).

Another comment is lengthier, providing a complete account of what is considered to compose 'homeland':

*Do you know what homeland is? homeland is the blood of the soldier, the tears of his mother for our freedom. homeland is the painful feeling for all that this nation has been through. homeland is from Evros to Corfu, to Kastelorizo and Cyprus. homeland is the sea, the air, the blood-watered land, the Holy Mountain... homeland is the children playing, the poor, the grandparents, the neighbors. homeland is a grandmother in a small island, a cafe, a school... homeland is our glorious flag, our Orthodox faith, and everything that will enter our heart.*

In this account, homeland is a territory, a culture, and the people one meets in everyday life, along with its symbols. But most than everything else, homeland is thought of as a feeling not shared with the elite. The Chairperson of the Committee proposed the exact opposite: "a great opportunity to escape from everyday routine", thus suggesting that routine identity is an inferior one. The emblem condensed a rejection of the way people feel their national identity.

A few more comments were asking for the meaning of the celebration or the emblem. "An emblem must signify something, refer to something, clearly and without ambiguity. It must be understandable from people of all ages, educate the youth and remind them of the spiritual roots of our nation."

On the other edge, a user goes against the grain: "The prevailing hysteria because the video does not over-display symbols labeled as 'national' is just a superficial understanding of what a country, its people and its heritage mean. We will NOT allow the celebration to end as a celebration of obsession with ancestry, chauvinism and nostalgia." And a second user adds: "Escape from everyday routine is not calling for vacations. If we all were understanding it so superficially, then we would not honor our country's historical past."

Jon Fox (45) would insist that a legion do indeed escape from everyday routine during national days enjoying a free day. He suggests that we should *shift attention away from the enthusiastic flag-wavers and on to the enthusiastic flag-burners, to the passers-by and vendors, not to mention the garden-partiers or those working at Tesco on national days, and of course to those masses of the nation who opt to exercise their national allegiances via the remote control in front of the television.*

## 7. Discussion

The exchanges over Facebook express some of the aspects of the multifaceted issue of national identity. They make clear that national identity is not unique nor malleable, as the top-down approaches to it suggest. On the contrary, “no matter how carefully designed or skillfully executed, the people who ultimately determine the success of these events are not their elite producers, but rather their ordinary consumers” (Fox 40).

“As part of official historical narratives appropriated by national elites, national days are usually officially recognized events that celebrate founding myths” (Elgenius 2018, 94), and do not attempt to deconstruct them. De Regt (2018, 1713) explains that it is conventionally accepted that such “a ritual inculcates the most important norms and values of a given society.” If there is contest about the authenticity of history represented or its meaning, as well as of the resulting national identity, it usually comes from grassroots movements or minority groups (cf. Sakki and Hakoköngäs 2020, and the various chapters of McCrone and McPherson 2009b). The case of the Bicentennial of the Greek Revolution deviates from this norm in that it is the state and its institutions that were about to propose a new narrative starting with a new symbolic emblem, and ‘the people’ were vociferous in their reject of such a proposal, supporting a two-century old historiography not only about the Revolution and its protagonists, but also its place in the history of the nation.

To this reversal of roles, most users were fast to respond demanding from the state to return to its traditional role and narrative. Though a national day may “involve a process by which the social bond ‘is not only reflected upon but actually constituted and reconstituted’” (Coudry in Skey 2006, 147), jubilees are the worst time to replace invented traditions with new ones. In any case, as McCrone and McPherson (2009a, 214) have shown, “struggles over national dates and events are not some petty squabble, but deadly serious issues over whose narrative it is anyway.”

## Notes

1. We didn’t collect comments to other comments. While the posts and comments collected are public, we will not disclose any information regarding the users posting them, nor their profile images or any other data available online to their profiles.
2. The video is available on the channel of the Committee in Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ATUYvLHFuk>

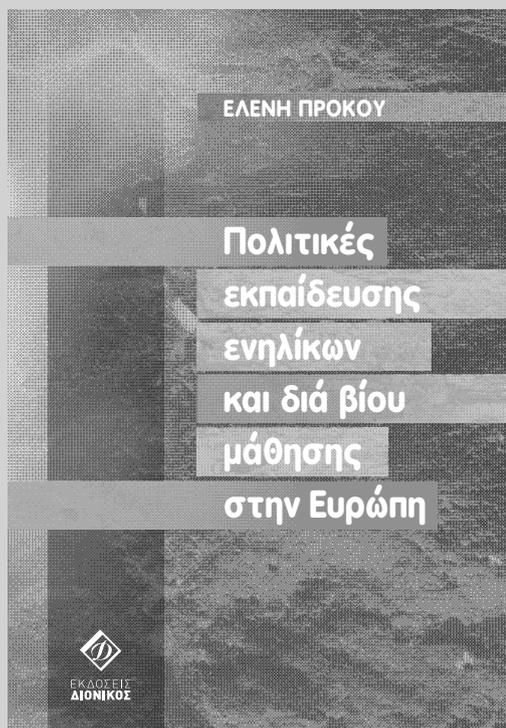
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## Biographical Note

**Stratoudaki Hara** is Senior researcher at National Centre for Social Research (EKKE). Studied Sociology at Panteion University, and Social Work at the Higher School of Social Work and received her PhD from Panteion University. Her thesis was focusing on Aspects of National Identity. Has participated in several research projects. Her current research has a focus in the fields of nationalism and national identity, Sociology of Institutions, values and stereotypes, as well as immigration, xenophobia and racism. Her recent publications include papers and chapters on National Identity and National Pride in contemporary Greece. Most recent publications: Demertzis, N. and Stratoudaki, H. (2020). Greek Nationalism as a Case of Political Religion: Rituals and Sentimentality, *Historical Social Research* 45 (1). Stratoudaki, H (2021). National pride: value orientations and content when exiting the crisis. In S. Koniordos (ed.), *Values, Cultural Patterns and Social Orientations in Contemporary Greece*. Athens: Gutenberg. [in Greek]; Stratoudaki, H. (2021). Markers of national identities at the end (?) of crisis. In Nagopoulos N. (ed.), *Social sciences today: dilemmas and perspectives beyond crisis*. Mytilene: University of the Aegean. [in Greek]; Stratoudaki, H. (2020). Markers of Greek national identity: The discourse of the blogs. In S. Koniordos (ed.), *Political phenomenon in transition: Challenges for Democracy, the State and Society*. Korinth: Dept. of Political Science and International Relations, University of Peloponnese. [in Greek] .E-Mail: h\_strat@otenet.gr



Ελένη Πρόκου

## Πολιτικές εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων και διά βίου μάθησης στην Ευρώπη

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.

# Identities dynamics and Foreign Policy Orientation in the Southern Ukraine and in Odessa City in the Context of Ukrainian Post-Revolutionary Shifts

Oksana Lychkovska – Nebot, *Odessa National I.I. Mechnikov University, Ukraine,*  
Tetiana Kryvosheia, *Odessa National I.I. Mechnikov University, Ukraine*

## Δυναμικές ταυτοτήτων και προσανατολισμός εξωτερικής πολιτικής στην Νότια Ουκρανία και στην πόλη της Οδησού στο πλαίσιο των μετεπαναστατικών μεταλλάξεων

Oksana Lychkovska – Nebot, *Εθνικό Πανεπιστήμιο της Οδησού.Ι.Ι. Mechnikov*  
Tetiana Kryvosheia, *Εθνικό Πανεπιστήμιο της Οδησού, Ι.Ι. Mechnikov*

### ABSTRACT

This article shows the features of the constituent identification practices of southern Ukraine and Odessa city, and states some changes that have occurred over the past 7 years since the Revolution of dignity in 2013-2014. The main characteristics of Odessa's Identity we have revealed consist of 2 trends. First one is a high self-organization potential of the population, the presence of a high level of business activity, as well as the desire and the ability to protect themselves, their loved ones, their rights. At the same time, distrust towards institutional structures is traditionally observed, and as well as, there are close networks of informal contacts that help to survive and "address problems". Secondly, the creation of new informal associations of civic activists who since 2014 have taken active part both in social networks and in the real social space of the city and become real germs of civil society in the Odessa region.

**KEY WORDS:** Identities, Foreign Policy, Southern Ukraine ,Odessa City, Ukrainian Post-Revolutionary Era.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η έρευνα αυτή δείχνει τα χαρακτηριστικά των πρακτικών ταύτισης στη Ν. Ουκρανία και στην πόλη της Οδησού και αναφέρει μερικές αλλαγές που επήλθαν τα τελευταία 7 χρόνια μετά την λεγόμενη Επανάσταση της Αξιοπρέπειας το 2013-14. Τα βασικά χαρακτηριστικά της «ταυτότητας» της Οδησού είναι όπως διαπιστώσαμε δύο: το πρώτο συνίσταται στην υψηλή δυνατότητα αυτό-οργάνωσης του πληθυσμού, στην παρουσία υψηλού επιπέδου επιχειρηματικής δραστηριότητας καθώς και στην επιθυμία και ικανότητα προστασίας των δικαιωμάτων τους, στάσεις που συνοδεύονται από δυσπιστία απέναντι στις θεσμικές δομές και που οδηγεί στο να απευθύνονται σε δίκτυα ανεπίσημων επαφών για επίλυση διαφόρων προβλημάτων. Το δεύτερο χαρακτηριστικό είναι η δημιουργία ενώσεων νέων πολιτικών ακτιβιστών που από το 2014 και μετά έχουν συμμετάσχει ενεργά τόσο σε κοινωνικά δίκτυα όσο και στον κοινωνικό χώρο της περιοχής και έχουν αποτελέσει τις βάσεις μιας νέας κοινωνίας των πολιτών.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Εθνικές ταυτότητες, εξωτερικής πολιτική, Νότια Ουκρανία, πόλη της Οδησού, μετανάστευση.

## 1. Introduction

The peculiarity of the social and cultural situation that has historically developed in Ukraine, according to various researchers, looks like a space where for many centuries various internal borders have emerged and mixed: between linguistic and ethnic groups, states, religions, political and cultural systems, areas of different economic ways, etc. This made it a pronounced contact zone with a very diverse range of socio-cultural phenomena. Due to its geographical location at the junction of the Eurasian Steppe and two massifs of European ("Byzantine" and "Latin") cultures, the territory of Ukraine has really become a kind of "crossroads" between Asia and "Orthodox" and "Latin" Europe.

And, it is quite obvious that the current stage of Ukraine's history, as never before, requires consolidating efforts. Changing worldviews, discrediting the values of the old ideology, the lack of integrating ideas have become the causes of the identification split and a kind of "crisis" of identity. Among the factors deepening this crisis we can state ideological confrontation; preservation of post-Soviet identity; the emergence of regional sub identities with different value dominants and integration vectors. The Russian-Ukrainian war further raised the issue of forming a common identity of Ukrainian citizens. According to historical studies and modern researches, Ukrainians often do not form a single civil society - one that has a single historical mythology, common values and symbols, one-way political aspirations.

Euromaidan 2014 demonstrated the strength of the lines of demarcation in the value-symbolic space of society. But Ukrainian society is largely deprived of such unifying incentives as ideology, common values, outlined state interests, so their consolidating role is often not fulfilled. Although the concept of "civil society" is present in political rhetoric, its content is often quite vague, as is the perception of "political nation". The deficit of civic identity is too poorly compensated by local varieties of cultural identities. Different ethnic, religious and linguistic identities often act as factors that shake the foundation of civic identity.

It should be noted that the risk context of civic identification policy is caused by the following factors: differentiation of language practices and attitudes to the status of the Russian language; assessment of historical (and times of independence) heritage; features of the limited (on the border between civilizations) position of Ukraine. Therefore, today it is extremely important to study all those changes, in particular, in identity practices, which would not only see the new, but also would create practices to overcome negative identity, political and social divisions, would create unique practices of transcultural orientation to cultural transcendence, would focus on dynamics not only and not so much as dynamics of regional demarcations, but, first of all, of regional interactions.

Odessa, a Black Sea transport and cultural hub, is traditionally a place that attracts representatives of multiple nationalities, religions, and social classes. This is the basis of public sympathies/conflicts, political confrontation, economic activity, and cultural industries, which make the image of Odessa as an "exceptional" city defined by a "bizarre uprising against homogeneity, hostile to any efforts to national construction". Opportunities, in this sense, in line with some opportunism, invention, trenching, resistance, and adaptability are its unique that defines the spaces of Odessa identity.

This article shows the features of the constituent identification practices of southern Ukraine and Odessa city, and states some changes that have occurred over the past 7 years since the Revolution of dignity in 2013-2014, as well as we analyze the dynamics of geopolitical orientations

of southern Ukraine and Odessa, based on specific features of such identities. In our study, we focused on the socio-cultural and geopolitical dimensions of identity, which we believe have the most significant regional differences.

## 2. Identities as values shifts in Odessa after the Euromaidan

Sociological studies carried out in late 2013 - early 2014 and in 2018 by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine helped identify the value preferences of active participants in Euromaidan in comparison with the value profile of the "average" Ukrainian. Thus, safety ranks first in the hierarchy of value preferences in Ukraine in general. Then follow benevolence and universalism (the values of social equality, the well-being of all people and the environmental protection). Speaking about regional identity profiles, it stands to mention that the greatest differentiation between the regions of Ukraine presents the value of participation in religious life, the value of state independence of Ukraine, the value of participation in political life. Both in 2014 and in 2018, the first two values became the leading priorities that determined the noticeable differences between the Western and Central regions from the Southern, Eastern regions and Donbas. Value indices of religious life and independence of Ukraine (calculated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is completely insignificant, and 5 is of great importance) indicate that these values are more represented in the West and the Center of Ukraine and the least significant in the East and South. In the Southern region and Odessa, the most significant were the values of interesting work (4.27) and independence in affairs and judgments (4.12), and the least significant was participation in political life (2.82).

The data of sociological studies conducted in Odessa in 2014, 2017, 2018 confirm All-Ukrainian studies of identities and value profiles.<sup>1</sup> In 2014, 45% of residents of Odessa are ready to personally participate in solving the most important problems for the city as follows: poor road conditions (54%), urban pollution (52%), substandard health services (47%), lack of jobs (37%), and a challenging criminal situation (34%), and another 5% are ready to invest their money in addressing these problems. In the case of conflict situations that may arise while solving these problems, the population of Odessa is inclined to trust only themselves and their closest friends and relatives - 54%, only they themselves can improve their material situation and economic security - 74% of Odessa citizens think this way, and 17% and 14%, respectively, count in this case on the government and the president of the country. About 44% of Odessa residents trust various local commercial organizations in resolving local problems. A high level of self-organization can also be confirmed by the focus of Odessa residents on personal communication (50%) in the search for information, and 29% who use different social networks, which today are active agents of social activity and social participation, could also be added here.

This trend continued in the subsequent period. Answers to the question "What in your opinion can unite the Odessa residents today?" in the 2017 studies, the subjects noted that the most significant for them is still "creating and maintaining a high standard of living" (49.3%); respondents also express the desire to unite "for the sake of joint actions aimed at urban improvement" - 34%. At the same time, the importance of work continues to be one of the value priorities of Odessa residents ("creating enough jobs with decent pay" - 30.6%). In addition, a quarter of respondents are ready to jointly support the idea of "the city revival" - 24.3%.

At the same time, the 2018 sociological studies demonstrated the intensification of contradictory trends and some disappointment in the post-revolutionary development of the country. On the one hand, when answering the question "Do you think life in Odessa has changed in general over the last year?" The majority of Odessa residents answered that life "rather improved" - 37%, and 10% said that it "significantly improved". At the same time, only a quarter of respondents (23%) considered that life "worsened" or even found it difficult to answer this question. However, the answers to the question "Subjectively, have the events of Euromaidan changed Ukraine?" indicate some disappointment and ambiguous trends in the mass consciousness of the Odessa residents: "definitely changed for the worse" - almost half of the respondents chose this answer option - 44% and a quarter indicated that Euromaidan "rather changed for the worse" - 25%. Only 10% indicated that "changes for the better" had occurred and 13% did not see any changes for themselves.

In fact, the 2015 focus group studies of Odessa Maidan and Antimaidan revealed that both parties have much more in common than differences. The main "dividers" are the events of May 2, 2014, and the attitude to the ways of achieving goals (identical in both groups - personal well-being, Ukraine's economic recovery, peace in the country, security, a decent life for every citizen, and social security for most vulnerable groups). Here we should note that most of the respondents were ready for dialogue but at the same time they realized that positive changes would not occur soon.

The same should be said about the importance of local identity - precisely for the sake of Odessa, for the sake of its peaceful and stable life, people were ready to organize a kind of "third force", considered as promising by both parties. The unanimous opinion about the future of the city at the time of focus groups was as follows: provided that they focus on the internal problems of the city, provided that the events of May 2 in Odessa will not be used as a kind of brand for rousing hatred, provided that all people - from the ordinary citizen to the highest-ranking officials - will unite their efforts, the dialogue is possible and will serve as an instrument for the survival of Odessa as a peaceful and Ukrainian city.<sup>2</sup>

Importantly, representatives of the Maidan in Odessa not always overvalue the Ukrainian language (contrary to the prevailing stereotype), just as their opponents do with the Russian language. Thus, studies have shown that not only representatives of the Odessa "Maidan" are quite tolerant of the language problem but, in contrast to the prevailing stereotype, representatives of the Odesa "Anti-Maidan" unanimously believed that the state language should be the same - Ukrainian. In this case, of course, according to informants, the rights of other language-speaking citizens should not be infringed. In general, the language issue is considered in many ways as a pragmatic factor. Informant N. says during a focus-group study, that "If my state develops economically, there will be no language problem at all, and if I have to learn English for this, for example, it makes no difference to me".

Despite some inconsistencies in judgments, when it comes to direct assessments, Odesa residents, however, as well as Ukrainians in general, have largely become more proactive and more prone for changes. Moreover, they are ready to make these changes by themselves. Here we clearly see the refusal of the "old" for the "new". The same trend arises in the opinion of Ukrainians in the presidential election in 2019: 73% did not vote for V.A. Zelensky but tried to cut off the recent past, having positive expectations from the future.

### 3. South regional identities and geopolitical orientations

Sociocultural identity and value orientation largely determine the geopolitical orientations of citizens. Accordingly, the changes that have occurred in various aspects of the socio-cultural sphere over the past 10 years, and especially under the influence of the Maidan and Russian aggression against Ukraine, have affected the geopolitical trends of Ukrainians.

After Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of Russian aggression in the Donbas, a significant reorientation of citizens to the EU and a huge drop in support for Russia as a main partner occurred. According to the All-Ukrainian study conducted by the sociological service of the Razumkov Center, 11% of respondents considered relations with Russia as priority in 2014.

The development of relations with the EU has an obvious advantage in the South (36%). However, at the same time, relations with Russia continue to remain priority for 13% in the South. It is worth noting that a rather significant share of respondents (24-28%) in the South-East regions found it difficult to answer this question. At the same time, supporters of European integration have only a relative advantage in the South (41%); here are also most of those who have not yet picked their side (20%). At the same time, the relative majority (54%) in the South in 2014 did not consider European integration an idea that could unite all regions of Ukraine.

Since 2014, the orientation toward joining NATO has been prevailing in Ukrainian society as the best way to guarantee the national security of Ukraine. In 2014, there has been an increase in NATO commitment in all macro-regions of Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> As of June 2017, in the south of Ukraine already 20% (in April 2012 - 7%) were adherent to the Alliance. It should also be mentioned that the growth of support for membership in the Alliance occurred against the backdrop of disappointment in the idea of non-alignment and a military alliance with Russia and other CIS countries. From 2012 to 2014, non-alignment was the most supported security option for Ukraine - 42%, but after the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in the Donbas, the share of non-aligned status-oriented individuals decreased to 31% in June 2017. However, there are significant regional differences regarding non-alignment. It still continues to be considered as a way to ensure the security of Ukraine in the South (37%).

Between April 2012 and June 2017, support for the aim is to analyze the features of the constituent identification practices of southern Ukraine and Odessa and to record some changes that have occurred over the past 7 years, as well as to show the dynamics of geopolitical orientations of southern Ukraine and Odessa, based on specific features of such identities.

In our study, we focused on the socio-cultural and geopolitical dimensions of identity, which we believe have the most significant regional differences. Armed union with Russia and other CIS countries dropped in all macro regions of Ukraine, more significantly in the East (from 38% to 13%) and the South (from 31% to 11%).

The Southern Region has no common understanding of what NATO is for Ukraine: 19% of the population consider NATO as a defense, almost as much - 18% - as a threat, 25% think NATO is neither a defense nor a threat, and 37% could not express a certain position. Only 12% of those polled think that they are well aware of what NATO is, 55% know something but they think it is not enough, and 22% know almost nothing, and self-assessment of NATO awareness is the same in all regions of the country.

There is no ambiguity in the estimates of Odesa residents who is the main culprit of maintaining the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. The 2018 survey<sup>4</sup> resulted in the following answers: "the current power of Russia" - 24.4%, "the current power of Ukraine" - 34.8%, "the former power of Ukraine" - 14.8%, "USA" - 9.1%, "DPR/LPR" - 4.7%, "European Union" - 2.5%, difficult to answer - 9.8%.

Thus, we can say that the South adheres to a relatively moderate position: about half of the respondents here prefer non-bloc status, and a relative majority advocates finding ways to reconcile with Russia. Almost half of the residents of the East want peace at any cost, while in the West and in the Center the vast majority of respondents are ready for peace only on terms acceptable to Ukrainian society. A considerable part of the inhabitants of the South support both the first and the second variant.

The 2018-2019 sociological surveys confirmed the ambiguity of the geopolitical focuses of Odessa residents. For example, if a referendum on Ukraine's accession to the European Union were held in May 2018, the Odesa residents would respond in the following way: 44.6% against joining the EU, 40.3% for joining the EU, and 15.1% would not vote.

If a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO were held in May 2018, the results would be as follows: 53.7% would vote against joining NATO, 26.6% would join. 19.8% would not take part in the referendum. The results of the spring 2019 poll in Odessa and the region are as follows: 32% would vote against joining NATO, 36% would join, 32% would not come / find it difficult to answer.

## 4. Odessa's regional identities and geopolitical orientations in focus

The regional peculiarities of Odessa as a whole confirm the general trend but it is still important to emphasize some features and differences we have been able to identify with the help of a focus-group study.<sup>5</sup> The respondents mostly see the European identity the European way of development of Ukraine. In terms of the Customs Union, Russia is a "symbol of the past". Citizens who, conditionally, choose Russia, in fact, choose the illusion of stability, the return to the Soviet Union "leaving everything as it was before and not worse". The future of Ukraine in the EU is, above all, associated with freedom of movement, educational opportunities, and human development. Also, the focus-group participants think it possible to re-establish relations with Russia. "It is necessary to simply make a leap, to enter a new space of the EU and then we can build full-fledged relations with the Russian Federation, this is our neighbor, ours link a lot in history and culture, mentality". In general, the respondents agreed that the issue of joining NATO should be resolved only through a referendum. Respondents see the main concerns in violation of positive expectations, for example: "Ukraine will suffer financial losses", "we are used as a territory and we will become a zone of contradictions, because we have an unreformed army", "we will not enter as long as there are unresolved issues - for example borders. And Crimea is not an unresolved issue as well as Donbas. Joining NATO in such a situation means a new war. Therefore, the only way is a referendum, but not now". Answering the question of what Ukraine's foreign policy should be like, most of the respondents / focus-group participants concluded that Ukraine should maintain a neutral position with all countries and remain a non-aligned state, while all

other strategies lead to a loss. At the same time, we can state that despite ambiguity and often contradiction of the foreign policy views of the Odessa citizens, there is a steady tendency of shift of positions towards European integration and joining NATO.

## 5. Conclusion

Speaking about micro social factors of Identity profile that has developed in the Odessa region, it seems necessary to identify those vectors, those "lines of watershed" that became the center of the socio-political expectations and attitudes of the Odessa residents, which, however, are generally comparable to that of the "average" Ukrainian: the main rift, in our opinion, runs along the line of "old-new". If we talk about the social characteristics of the electorate the "old-new" vector correlates with, then this is not only the age of voters, but also their social resource, that is, level of education, income, profession, attitude to property, and attitude to the world of work, that is, a hired employee or having his own business, as well as such integral indicators as the degree of social activity in general and the level of social embeddedness / marginality, that is, the younger the age is, the higher the social resource, the greater the social activity, and with responsible, less social marginality, the stronger the attraction to new are and vice versa. Another interesting fact is that such social characteristics as the language of communication and regional affiliation in this case are secondary, or, in other words, mediated by what we called earlier. The 2014 in-depth focus-group studies with representatives of the Odessa Maidan and Anti-Maidan show that linguistic affiliation is nothing more than an "ideology", "the top of the iceberg" that hides other social problems.

Summing up the main characteristics of Odessa's Identity or Odessa's subcultural profile, we should note, firstly, the trend that was characteristic of the mass consciousness of the Odessa region: a high self-organization potential of the population, the presence of a high level of business activity, as well as the desire and ability to protect themselves, their loved ones, their rights. At the same time, distrust towards institutional structures is traditionally observed, and at the same time, there are close networks of informal contacts that help to survive and "address problems". This trend, of course, does not testify to the development of civil society but allows us to talk about the availability of sufficient resources and high readiness to create informal and non-governmental organizations and associations, and to create them as part of an individual initiative and without any institutionalization. Secondly, it, first of all, considers the creation of new informal associations of civic activists who since 2014 have taken active part both in social networks and in the real social space of the city and become real germs of civil society in the Odessa region.

## Notes

1. 2013 - 2018 Researches of social and political attitudes of Odessa residents, under the guidance of Kryvosheia T.I., Lychkovska O.R., and Yatvetska A.V., associate professors, Department of Sociology Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University, using questionnaire interview, face-to-face technique, sample size - 1000 respondents, limiting error - 3.6%.
2. The focus-group research was conducted in September-December 2015 by associate professors of the Department of Sociology Kryvosheia T.I. and Yatvetska A.V. as part of a

dialogue project implemented by the Odessa Regional Mediation Group, as well as in the framework of the project of the Ukrainian Peace building School <https://peace.in.ua/zvit-schodo-osobyvostej-konfliktiv-po-liniji-majdan-antymajdan-u-odesi/>

3. 10,956 respondents aged 18 and over were personally interviewed. The theoretical sampling error does not exceed 1%. [http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/article/2014\\_ukr\\_2013-2014\\_ocinky\\_proгноzy.pdf](http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/article/2014_ukr_2013-2014_ocinky_proгноzy.pdf)
4. 2013 - 2018 Researches of social and political attitudes of Odessa residents, under the guidance of Kryvosheia T.I., Lychkovska O.R., and Yatvetska A.V., associate professors, Department of Sociology, Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University, using questionnaire interview, face-to-face technique, sample size - 1000 respondents, limiting error - 3.6%
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## Biographical notes

**Lychkovska-Nebot Oksana** is Doctor (PhD) of Sociology, Professor Associated of Sociology Department of Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University (Ukraine). Actually she is also a head of ISEWE (Intercultural Spaces of Eastern & Western Europes) - Centre of Intercultural Studies & Research Network, Paris, France. Author of more than 80 scientific papers (1996-2020). Member of ISA, AISLF and SAU (Sociological association of Ukraine). Most recent publications : La construction et la déconstruction de la crise sociopolitique dans le discours médiatique humoristique ukrainien ( le cas de V. Zelensky : de la dominance médiatique vers le pouvoir politique) Représentations sociales et discours médiatiques. La « crise » comme narration contemporaine. Sous la direction de Christiana Constantopoulou / Logiques Sociales. Collection dirigée par Bruno Péquignot. - Paris : L'Harmattan, 2020. – P. 173-183.; Participative media practices in Ukrainian social media: constructors of personal values and new identities versus ways of political manipulations?// French Journal for Media Research. Minorities and social networks/Minorités et réseaux sociaux XIX ISA World Congress of Sociology- Power, violence and justice. Reflections, Responses, Responsibilities (AISLF et RC14) - Toronto Canada July 15-21, 2018 <http://frenchjournalformediaresearch.com/lodel-1.0/main/index.php?Digital+Media+Narratives+at+the+Era+of+Postmodernity+Theatricalization+of+Politics+and+Hybrid+War> // Center for Open Access in Science <https://www.centerprode.com/ojss.html> Open Journal for Sociological Studies, 2017, 1(2), 43-50. <http://www.centerprode.com/ojss/ojss0102/coas.ojss.0102.02043l.pdf> ; Pouvoir contemporain et deux types de journalisme dans l'espace médiatique et politique ukrainien // French Journal for Media Research. 7/2017. Mises en scènes du politique contemporain. - <http://frenchjournalformediaresearch.com/index.php?id=1109> . E- Mail: oksanalychkovska@gmail.com

**Kryvosheia Tetiana** is Doctor (PhD) of Sociology, Professor Associated of Sociology Department of Odessa National I.I. Mechnikov University, Head of Sociological Projects of NGO Promotion of Intercultural Cooperation (PIC), Freelance sociologist, Odessa, Ukraine. Member of SAU (Sociological association of Ukraine), UEA (Ukrainian Evaluation Association). Most recent publications:Problems of Dialogue in the Reform of Education on the Example of Odessa Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia Regions /2019/ <https://www.civic-synergy.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Problemy-dialogu-u-reformi-osvity-na-tryklyadi-Odeskoyi-CHernivetskoyi-ta-Zakarpatskoyi-oblastej.pdfm> .Sociological Study to Identify the existing Processes of Working with Social Conflicts in Odessa Region, Ukraine / May-September 2019 [http://ngopic.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/report\\_revised-PRINT\\_.pdf](http://ngopic.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/report_revised-PRINT_.pdf) / .Audit of Reforms: Public Analysis of Changes in the Regions after Visa Liberalization / May-September 2017/ <https://www.prostir.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/%D0%97%D0%B2%D1%96%D1%82/>. E Mail: tatianakryvosheya@gmail.com



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# National Identity issues in the electoral materials from the 2014 and 2019 European Parliament Election Campaigns

Valentina Marinescu, *University of Bucharest*

Bianca Fox, *Nottingham Trent University*

## Θέματα εθνικής ταυτότητας στις αναλύσεις εκλογικών εκστρατειών για το Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο από το 2014 έως και το 2019 κατά το Σύνταγμα των Ελλήνων;

Valentina Marinescu, *Πανεπιστήμιο Βουκουρεστίου*

Bianca Fox, *Πανεπιστήμιο Nottingham Trent*

### ABSTRACT

The mediatization of politics could challenge established political processes and has the power to transform the relation between political parties and candidates, on the one hand, and voters, on the other. Mass media effects on political processes have been for a long time the focus of interest for academics. This article analyses the content of electoral materials used during two European Parliament election campaigns (2014 and 2019) focusing in particular on the coverage of values related to national identity. Interestingly, the quantitative analysis showed that the importance placed on issues related to national identity depended largely on the time when a particular country became a member of the European Union and differed considerably between countries located in different parts of Europe.

**KEY WORDS:** European politics, National Identity, European Parliament Election Campaigns 2014-19, electoral materials.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η μηντιακή διαμεσολάβηση της πολιτικής είναι πρόκληση για τις καθιερωμένες πολιτικές διαδικασίες και έχει την δύναμη αφενός να αλλάξει την σχέση μεταξύ πολιτικών κομμάτων και υποψηφίων και αφετέρου των εκλογέων. Οι επιδράσεις των μαζικών μέσων στις πολιτικές διαδικασίες αποτέλεσαν για πολύ καιρό το κέντρο ενδιαφέροντος των ακαδημαϊκών. Το συγκεκριμένο άρθρο αναλύει το περιεχόμενο του εκλογικού υλικού που χρησιμοποιήθηκε σε δύο προεκλογικές εκστρατείες για το Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο (2014 και 2019) με επίκεντρο την κάλυψη αξιών που συνδέονται με την εθνική ταυτότητα. Η ποσοτική ανάλυση έδειξε ότι η σημασία που δινόταν σε θέματα εθνικής ταυτότητας εξαρτήθηκε πάρα πολύ από την χρονική περίοδο κατά την οποία μία χώρα έγινε μέλος της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και ήταν πολύ διαφορετική σε χώρες που βρίσκονταν σε διαφορετικές περιοχές της Ευρώπης.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Ευρωπαϊκή πολιτική, εθνική ταυτότητα, εκλογικές εκστρατείες, Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο, περίοδος 2014-2019.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the influence of mass media is increasing, touching all aspects of modern life (Lundby, 2009; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). When one reflects on 'the process of mediatization', one has to agree with Strömbäck and Esser (2014) that here we can speak about a 'long-term process through which the importance of the media and their spill-over effects on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors have increased' (Strömbäck and Esser 2014, 6). As the existing literature stresses (Kriesi, 2014), this mediatization of politics could challenge the established political process and has the power to transform the relation between political parties and candidates, on the one hand, and voters, on the other. On that basis mass media effects on political processes have been for a long time the focus of interest for academics in order to understand some political processes such as elections (Esser and Strömbäck, 2014).

The present article analyses the content of electoral materials used during two electoral campaigns for the European Parliament (2014 and 2019) from a specific perspective: the coverage of values related to national identity.

## 2. Theoretical background

Comparative data of the two European Parliament campaigns (2014 vs. 2019) showed that in terms of national cultural identity there were some differences at the level of European Unions citizens' aggregate public opinions (European Commission 2020). Thus, between March 2014 and June 2019 there was an 11.1% increase in the percentage of respondents who declare that for them the EU means 'cultural diversity'. At the same time, there was an increase of only 1.12% of respondents who stated that on a personal level the EU means 'loss of our cultural identity' (see Table 1).

**Table 1. What does the EU mean to you personally?**

		Cultural diversity (%)	Loss of our cultural identity (%)
2014	March	19.95	11.68
	November	28.11	15.25
2019	June	31.05	12.80
	November	27.65	11.85

Source: European Commission 2021.

According to the literature (Esaïasson, 2011) the election campaign and elections have the potential to give legitimacy to the political system and, in addition, the fact that a voter supports certain candidates or certain political parties in the electoral competition will offer him or her a superior satisfaction at the end of the campaign irrespective of the result obtained by the political actor for whom he or she had voted. Much more, at the end of the electoral campaign, as a result of his or her vote, his or her relationship with 'democracy' as a value will be superior in comparison

with the feelings that were recorded at the beginning of the same campaign (Esaïsson, 2011). According to the study of Kostelka and Blais (2018) voting participation affects the satisfaction of citizens, more precisely the electoral elections increase the feeling of satisfaction with democracy among those who vote and especially in relation to parties and candidates that win the elections.

The importance of the relationship between the identity dimension of European Union support and the vote of citizens in the case of European election campaigns has become extremely important with the movements recorded in public opinion (Hobolt and De Vries 2016). In the existing literature it is considered that, on the one hand, there is a relationship of mutual dependence between national and European identity, more precisely, they support and strengthen each other (Citrin and Sides, 2004; Klandermans, 2014). However, a number of studies (Carey, 2002) believe that a strong sense of national belonging can weaken support for European integration, the latter being seen as a threat to nation states. Moreover, Hooghe and Marks (2005) and Krouwel and Abts (2007) went further and argue that the existence of a strong national identity can lead to a reduction in the importance and trust of citizens in the European project.

### 3. Methodology

The present article is based on a research project coordinated by Rome Tre University, Italy. Every five years, more than 100 scholars from all EU partner countries work together to analyse the European Union election campaign in each country. The aim of the project is to collect and analyse, comparatively, the electoral materials from twenty-eight countries involved in each European electoral campaign (European Elections Monitoring Center 2019).

The present study used material collected during the 2014 and 2019 European election campaigns. The sample used for analysis has a volume of 1446 materials (1023 electoral posters and 443 spots) in 2014 and 12556 documents in 2019 (1016 electoral posters, 457 spots and 11083 social media posts).

The methodology of collecting and analysing data used in this chapter was a quantitative one, namely quantitative content analysis. In all European countries, the instrument for collecting data was a quantitative grid of analysis that was used by all the researchers involved in the project (European Elections Monitoring Center, 2019). The grid was structured on several dimensions/axes, such as, for example, the typology of materials analysed, the verbal and non-verbal communication used in the electoral materials, the political symbols used, the balance between the use of national and European references, the use of humour or negative advertising, or the type of emotion triggered by each electoral material. We focus our analysis on the following main variables: national identity, nationalism, and national values. As independent variables we have the main European regions (e.g. Continental Europe, East Europe, South Europe and North Europe) and main group of countries from the European Parliament (Founding countries, the first enlargement of the European Union from 1973; the second and the third enlargements from 1981-1986; the fourth enlargement from 1995; the enlargements of the European Union starting with 2004 until now). Our analysis was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What were the main national- related issues used in electoral materials during the 2019 European Parliament election campaign?; and

RQ2: What was the relevance of national identity in 2019 compared to the 2014 European Parliament election campaign for different regions of European Union?

## 4. Analysis of the results

As our analysis showed, there were variations in the focus on national elements in posters and commercials in the two years analyzed particularly in the case of countries from various regions of the European Union. Thus, we recorded increases in the use national-related issues in posters from Continental Europe (an increase of 6.8%), Eastern Europe (an increase of 11.1%) and Northern Europe (an increase of 12%) but also a decrease in the case of South Europe (28.6%) in the two electoral campaigns. In the case of commercials, the differences seem significant to us, our results indicating especially decreases in the use of this type of elements (with a maximum of 40.5% in the case of East Europe) (See Table 2).

**Table 2. Focus on national issues in posters and commercials in different regions of the European Union– 2014 vs 2019**

	2014		2019	
	Poster (%)	Commercial (%)	Poster (%)	Commercial (%)
Continental Europe	11.1	14.6	17.9	9.2
East Europe	33.6	51.9	44.7	11.4
South Europe	39.3	47.4	10.7	30.6
North Europe	19.3	37.3	33.3	32.6

The moment when countries became members of the European Union also influenced the way in which elements aimed at national identity were used in posters and commercials in European electoral campaigns. Thus, for posters, the largest decrease in the use of national issues was registered in the countries that were part of the second and third enlargement (1981-1986) of the European Union (Greece, Spain and Portugal) with a decrease of 47.8% while Austria, Finland, and Sweden (the fourth enlargement of the European Union) recorded a 3.5% increase in the use of national issues in posters (see Table 3). Similarly, note that in the case of commercials there were significant variations, the use of national issues varying from a 22.6% decrease in the case of countries that joined the European Union after 2004 (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia) to a 41.3% increase in the case of the countries of the first enlargement (Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom) (See Table 3).

**Table 3. Focus on national issues in posters and commercials in each group of the European Parliament – 2014 vs 2019**

	2014		2019	
	Poster (%)	Commercial (%)	Poster (%)	Commercial (%)
Founder 1957	14.1	18.9	11.4	12.5
1st enlargement 1973	9.1	14.3	5.4	55.6
2nd & 3rd enlargements 1981-1986	58.6	47.5	10.8	50
4th enlargement 1995	11.3	3.7	14.8	28.6
From 2004 until now	33	55.2	24.5	32.6

In the case of the analysis grid used in the analysis we also included a series of elements that were subsumed to the general idea of 'national identity' ('Peace', 'Honesty'; 'Justice', 'Solidarity', 'Traditions', 'Multiculturalism/cultural differences', 'National identity', 'Religion'). Our analysis indicated that when using these values we can speak of the existence of significant differences in the case of the electoral campaign for the European Union Parliament from 2014 versus the same electoral campaign that took place after five years in 2019.

Thus, in the case of posters, we registered higher uses of the variables 'Justice' and 'Solidarity' and 'Religion' while for 'Peace', 'Honesty' and 'Traditions' decreases were recorded at five years distance. For commercials, the situation was somewhat different, with increases in topics related to 'Peace', 'Justice' and 'Solidarity', and decreases in issues related to 'Honesty', 'Traditions' and 'Religion' (See Table 4).

In the case of the data from the 2019 election campaign, we also introduced the items 'Multiculturalism / cultural differences' and 'National identity', and our analysis indicated that 'National identity' was used in the case of 3% of posters and 2.4% of commercials (See Table 4).

**Table 4. Values found in posters and commercials – 2014 vs 2019**

	2014		2019	
	Poster (%)	Commercial (%)	Poster (%)	Commercial (%)
Peace	1.8	2.7	1.1	9.7
Honesty	2.5	2.5	0.7	1.7
Justice	1.8	1.4	3.6	2.7
Solidarity	1.8	2.3	6.2	6.8
Traditions	2.8	2.5	0.8	2
Multiculturalism/ cultural differences	-	-	0.3	1.7
National identity	-	-	3	2.4
Religion	1.4	2	6.8	0.7
Others value issues	10.9	7.9	2.8	3.1

Our data show some differences between the groups of member countries of the European Union as regards the use of the values subsumed to 'National identity' used in electoral posters. Thus, for the countries of Continental Europe the most significant increase was registered in the case of values related to 'Solidarity' (an increase of 14.9%) and 'Justice' (an increase of 5.3%) while for the countries of Northern Europe only 'Justice' as value increased in its use by 2.2% between 2014 and 2019. Southern European countries did not use 'Honesty' in their posters (a decrease of 7% compared to 2014), 'Peace' (a decrease of 0.9%) and/or 'Traditions' (a decrease of 1.4%). At the same time, they use other values more in 2019 as compared to 2014, such as: 'Justice' (an increase of 1.2% between the two election campaigns) and 'Solidarity' (an increase of 0.8% in 2019 compared to 2014). As regards Eastern European countries, our comparative analysis indicates that 'Peace' and 'Honesty' were the values that were most often used in the 2019 posters as compared to 2014, while 'Traditions', 'Justice' and 'Solidarity' were less used in 2019 than five years ago. The distinct value 'National identity' from the electoral campaign of 2019 was used more by the countries from Eastern Europe (8.1%) and Northern Europe (1.2%). 'Nationalism' as a specific ideology was an item identified in 2019 in all regions of the European Union, the variations between groups of different countries being minimal (See Table 5).

**Table 5. Main values used in posters in different regions of Europe - 2014 vs 2019 (%)**

	2014				2019			
	Conti- nental Europe	East Europe	South Europe	North Europe	Conti- nental Europe	East Europe	South Europe	North Europe
Peace	1.8	0.4	-	4.5	2.6	0.5	0.9	-
Honesty	0.9	2.6	7	0.8	0.9	1.4	-	-
Justice	0.6	3	3.3	0.8	1.8	5.9	4.5	3
Solidarity	1.8	1.3	1.9	2	16.7	-	2.7	0.6
Traditions	0.9	9.1	1.4	0.8	0.9	2.7	-	-
Multiculturalism/cul- tural differences	-	-	-	-	0.9	-	-	-
National identity	-	-	-	-	-	8.1	-	1.2
Religion	2.4	2.6	-	-	-	-	-	
Populism	-	-	-	-	0.4	-	-	0.6
Nationalism	-	-	-	-	0.4	0.5	0.9	0.6
Others value issues	7.2	14.7	13.6	9.8	2.6	0.9	5.4	4.1

The same variations between different groups of countries were registered in the case of the use of values subsumed to 'National identity' in commercials for the 2014 European electoral campaign compared to commercials used in the same electoral campaign five years later. Continental European countries discussed topics related to 'Justice' (an increase of 4.5%), 'Traditions' (an increase of 2.5%), 'Solidarity' (an increase of 9.1%) more. The same countries made

a smaller appeal to 'Religion' as a value (a decrease of 4.4% in 2019 compared to 2014) in the same timeframe. Moreover, in the same period, the countries of Northern Europe did not use 'Peace' (a decrease of 4.9%) in the 2019 campaign compared to the 2014 but they emphasized in their commercials other values, such as 'Solidarity' (an increase of 11.8%), 'Justice' (an increase of 4.1%) and 'Traditions' (an increase of 1.6%). For the Southern European countries, the most important increase was registered in the use of the values of 'Justice' and 'Solidarity' (each of them registered an increase of 1.5%) while the Eastern European countries appealed more to 'Solidarity' (an increase 2.2%) and 'Traditions' (an increase of 1%) in the commercials from 2019 as compared to those from 2014. The specific value of 'National identity' was used uniformly by the groups of countries included in the analysis in the electoral campaign for the European Parliament from 2019: 2.3% for Continental Europe; 2.3% for Eastern Europe; 2.4% for Southern Europe and 2.6% for Northern Europe. 'Nationalism' as a value was found only in some commercials presented in the 2019 electoral campaign. Much more, the appeal to 'Nationalism' values did not show significant differences among the groups of countries, the variation ranging from 2.3% in the case of Continental Europe to 1.2% in the case of Eastern Europe (See Table 6).

**Table 6. Main values used in commercials in different regions of Europe – 2014 vs. 2019**

	2014				2019			
	Conti- nental Europe	East Europe	South Europe	North Europe	Conti- nental Europe	East Europe	South Europe	North Europe
Peace	4.5	1.2	1.2	4.9	-	1.2	0.8	-
Honesty	2.2	3.7	3.5	-	2.3	3.5	0.8	-
Justice	-	2.5	1.8	1	4.5	-	3.3	5.1
Solidarity	4.5	2.5	1.8	1	13.6	4.7	3.3	12.8
Traditions	2.2	3.7	2.9	1	-	4.7	0.8	2.6
Multiculturalism/ cultural differences	-	-	-	-	-	2.3	0.8	5.1
National identity	-	-	-	-	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.6
Religion	5.6	3.7	0.6	-	-	1.2	0.8	-
Populism	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nationalism	-	-	-	-	2.3	1.2	1.6	-
Others value issues	9	9.9	6.4	7.8	6.8	-	1.6	10.3

When we analyzed the use of the same set of values subsumed to 'National identity' in posters collected from the two electoral campaigns we recorded variations between the countries that became members of the European Union in different 'waves' of integration. Thus, founder countries used more the values of 'Solidarity' (an increase of 18.8% in 2019 as compared to 2014), 'Peace' (an increase of 1.5%) and 'Justice' (an increase of 2.1%) while the countries from the first enlargement made a greater appeal to 'Justice' (an increase of 14.2%) to the detriment

of other values that were no longer used in their posters. In the case of the second and third enlargement countries, the values most often identified in the 2014 posters versus those used five years later also varied, with an increase in 'Peace', 'Justice' and 'Solidarity'-related issues and a decrease in the case of 'Traditions'. Posters used by countries from the fourth enlargement put a greater emphasis on 'Justice' and minimized the use of 'Peace' and 'Solidarity'-related values in the period of time analysed. In the case of the countries that became members of the European Union after 2004, the most important movements were registered in the case of the values of 'Justice' (an increase of 4% between the two electoral campaigns), 'Religion' (an increase of 1%), 'Honesty' (a decrease of 4.2%) and 'Traditions' (a decrease of 3.4% between the two election campaigns). The distinct value of 'National identity' was most frequently used in posters from Eastern Europe (8.3%), and it was not used in the posters from the countries of first, second and third enlargement (See Table 7).

**Table 7. Main values found in posters for each country group of the European Union - 2014 vs 2019 (%)**

	2014					2019				
	Founder 1957	1st enlargement 1973	2nd & 3rd enlargements 1981-1986	4th enlargement 1995	From 2004 until now	Founder 1957	1st enlargement 1973	2nd & 3rd enlargements 1981-1986	4th enlargement 1995	From 2004 until now
Peace	1.3	1.1	-	3.1	2.1	2.8	-	3.2	1.1	0.4
Honesty	1.3	-	-	0.6	5.5	1.1	-	-	-	1.3
Justice	0.7	1.1	5.7	-	2.6	2.8	14.3	9.7	1.1	6.6
Solidarity	2.3	-	2.3	1.3	1.8	21.1	-	3.2	1.1	0.9
Traditions	1.3	1.1	1.1	-	6	-	-	-	-	2.6
Multiculturalism/cultural differences	-	-	-	-	-	1.1	-	-	-	-
National identity	-	-	-	-	-	1.1	-	-	1.1	8.3
Religion	2.6	-	-	-	1.6	-	-	-	-	2.6
Populism	-	-	-	-	-	0.6	-	-	1.1	-
Nationalism	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.2	2.2	-
Others value issues	7.8	8	10.3	7.5	15.4	3.3	-	-	6.7	3.5

When the two electoral campaigns for the European Parliament were compared, our data indicated that these variations were registered also in the commercials used by countries grouped according the moment of their accession to the European Union. 'Peace', 'Traditions' and 'Religion' were the values that were less used by founder countries in 2019 electoral campaign as compared to 2014. At the same time 'Justice', 'Honesty' and 'Solidarity' (with a significant increase of 14.6 %) were the most commonly identified values in commercials of founder countries. In the case of the countries of the first enlargement 'Solidarity' was the value that recorded a

significant increase (11.1%) while 'Justice' recorded a sharp decrease and actually ceased to be used in 2019 (as compared to 9.7% total mentions in commercials from those countries in 2014). 'Peace' (an increase of 1.6%), 'Honesty' (an increase of 1.6%), 'Justice' (increased 3.9%) and 'Solidarity' (a 0.3% increase) were the values that registered a greater use in the electoral campaign for European Parliament in the countries from the second and third enlargement group. In the case of the countries in the fourth enlargement, we registered a total disappearance of the elements included in the value of 'National identity' for the commercials used in 2019 as compares with the same type of media materials used by those countries during the 2014 campaign. For countries that have become members of the European Union starting with 2004, our analysis indicates an increase in using the 'Solidarity' (7.2%) and 'Traditions' (1.7%) as values and decreases in the use of values related to 'Peace' (0.8%), 'Honesty' (1.9%), 'Justice' (1%) and 'Religion' (0.5%). 'Nationalism' as a distinct value was registered in 2019 only in the case of founder countries (3%), the second and third enlargement (3%) and of the countries that became members of the European Union after 2004 (0.8%). 'National identity' was used in 3% of commercials of the founder countries, in 11.1% in the commercials of the countries from the first enlargement, in 4.9% of the commercials of the countries of the second and the third enlargement and only in the case of 1.7% of commercials of the countries that became members of the European Union after 2004 (See Table 8).

**Table 8. Main values found in commercials for each country group of the European Parliament - 2014 vs 2019 (%)**

	2014					2019				
	Founder 1957	1st enlargement 1973	2nd & 3rd enlargements 1981-1986	4th enlargement 1995	From 2004 until now	Founder 1957	1st enlargement 1973	2nd & 3rd enlargements 1981-1986	4th enlargement 1995	From 2004 until now
Peace	3.6	-	-	11.1	1.6	-	-	1.6	-	0.8
Honesty	1.8	-	-	-	4.4	3	-	1.6	-	2.5
Justice	-	9.5	1	-	2.7	9.1	-	4.9	-	1.7
Solidarity	3.6	-	3	3.7	1.1	18.2	11.1	3.3	-	8.3
Traditions	2.7	-	2	-	3.3	-	-	-	-	5
Multiculturalism/cultural differences	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.1	-	-	3.3
National identity	-	-	-	-	-	3	11.1	4.9	-	1.7
Religion	4.5	-	-	-	2.2	-	-	-	-	1.7
Populism	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Nationalism	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3.3	-	0.8
Others value issues	6.3	-	7.9	18.5	8.2	9.1	-	-	-	4.2

## 5. Conclusions

Our article shows how 'National identity' as a value and as a set of distinct elements ('Peace', 'Honesty'; 'Justice', 'Solidarity', 'Traditions', 'Multiculturalism/cultural differences', 'National identity', 'Religion') was used in different ways during the European Parliamentary elections from 2014 and 2019. Thus, our analysis indicated that the relevance of 'National identity' depended largely on the type of media in which it was used. Continental Europe, Eastern Europe and Northern Europe used this value more during the 2019 electoral campaign as compared with 2014, while Southern European countries resorted to it to a smaller extent in the same timeframe. At the same time, the moment when the countries became members of the European Union influenced the use of this value in posters and commercials both in 2014 and in 2019.

As regards the relevance of the elements subsumed to the value of 'National identity' for the posters and commercials used both in 2014 and 2019 European parliamentary campaigns, we can say that in this case our analysis indicated the dynamics towards centrality of some elements (the most important being the case of 'Solidarity') and the total disappearance of others (for example 'Traditions' and 'Religion') both for posters and commercials.

An important aspect identified in the analysis was the way in which various groups of countries used 'Nationalism' and 'National identity' in the case of 2019 electoral campaign. Our data showed that in this case the type of media did not matter so much (that is, if media materials were posters or commercials). A greater importance in this case had the time when a particular country became a member of the European Union (for example, if it was part of the second and third enlargement or the 'wave' of enlargement after 2004), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the geographical location of the country in a specific region of the European Union (whether it is a country in Southern or Eastern Europe).

The present study has a number of limitations, the most important being the exclusive focus on a limited set of dependent variables included in the analysis (e.g. type of media, geographical position of the group of countries within the European Union, membership of the European Union). However, we believe that our analysis indicates a series of significant shifts of the place and relevance for 'National identity'-related issues as a core value in the European parliamentary campaigns for 2014 and 2019. Thus, our study can bring a deeper understanding of the dynamics of political communication at continental and not just national level.

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## Biographical notes

**Marinescu Valentina** is Professor Habilitated at the Department of Sociology within the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest, Romania. She teaches methods of research in communication sciences at the BA and MA level. Her main research interests are: communication and media studies in Eastern Europe. Her recent publications include: Pocol, C. B., Marinescu, V., Amuza, A., Cadar, R. L., & Rodideal, A. A. (2020). Sustainable vs. Unsustainable Food Consumption Behaviour: A Study among Students from Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova. *Sustainability*, 12(11), 4699; Marinescu, V., & Balica, E. (2021). New media clues and old journalistic habits: Representing the refugees in Romanian media. *Journalism*, 22(4), 1048-1066; Pocol, C. B., Marinescu, V., Dabija, D. C., & Amuza, A. (2021). Clustering Generation Z university students based on daily fruit and vegetable consumption: empirical research in an emerging market. *British Food Journal*; Marinescu, V., Fox, B., Cristea, D., Roventa-Frumusani, D., Marinache, R., & Branea, S. (2021). Talking about Sustainability: How the Media Construct the Public's Understanding of Sustainable Food in Romania. *Sustainability*, 13(9), 4609; Balica, E., Marinescu, V., & Balica, M. (2020). Was Anastasia Victim of Partner Violence? Media Coverage of Femicide in Romania and Moldova. *Journalism Practice*, 1-22; Fox, B., & Marinescu, V. (2021). Social Media and Electoral Processes: An Exploration of Facebook Adoption During the 2019 European Parliament Election Campaign in Romania. In *Global Perspectives on the Impact of Mass Media on Electoral Processes* (pp. 1-17). IGI Global; Marinescu, V., Razec, I., & Dumitrache, T. (2021). Online Communication

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**Fox Bianca** is Senior Lecturer in Nottingham Trent University since 2021 after having held academic positions at the University of Wolverhampton and University of Huddersfield. Her research interests lie primarily in the area of youth studies, with a focus on technology use and mental health, digital literacy and digital inclusion. Her recent publications include: Fox, B. (2021). Screen media for Arab and European children: policy and production encounters in the multiplatform era: Naomi Sakr and Jeanette Steemers, Switzerland, Palgrave Pivot. *Transnational Screens*, 1-3.; Fox, B., Marinescu, V., Cristea, D., Roventa-Frumusani, D., Marinache, R., & Branea, S. (2021). Talking about Sustainability: How the Media Construct the Public's Understanding of Sustainable Food in Romania. *Sustainability*, 13(9), 4609; Fox, B., & Marinescu, V. (2021). Social Media and Electoral Processes: An Exploration of Facebook Adoption During the 2019 European Parliament Election Campaign in Romania. In *Global Perspectives on the Impact of Mass Media on Electoral Processes* (pp. 1-17). E-Mail: bianca.fox@ntu.ac.uk

# Digital Identities: Social Media, Youth and Sense of Belonging

Konstantinos Theodoridis, *University of Patras*

## Ψηφιακές Ταυτότητες: Μέσα Κοινωνικής Δικτύωσης, Νεολαία και η Αίσθηση του «Ανήκειν»

Κωνσταντίνος Θεοδωρίδης, *Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών*

### ABSTRACT

The impact of social media on the formation of contemporary identities is emerging as a key issue in social sciences. Young people's self-presentation practices and selfie pictures are approached as a means of navigating their everyday lives. Utilising qualitative data collected both in Greater Athens, Greece and North West of England, UK, this study examines the role of digital media in an attempt to understand how young people negotiate their identities in an increasingly complex and uncertain world. The data were produced during focus group discussion and photo-elicitation interviews as part of a triangulated research project that tried to shed light on the construction of young people's identities. Based on the findings, it is suggested that social media provide a space in which young people try to find some sense of belonging, however, it can be argued that this process ties young people to the very logic of individualism and market-based competition.

**KEY WORDS:** Digital Identities, Social Media, Youth, Sense of Belonging, Greece.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η επίδραση των μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης στη διαμόρφωση των σύγχρονων νεανικών ταυτοτήτων αναδύεται ως βασικό πεδίο έρευνας στις κοινωνικές επιστήμες. Στο παρόν άρθρο οι πρακτικές αυτοπροβολής των νέων, ιδιαίτερα οι φωτογραφίες τύπου "selfie", προσεγγίζονται ως μέσα που καθοδηγούν την καθημερινή τους ζωή και συμπεριφορά. Χρησιμοποιώντας ποιοτικά δεδομένα που συλλέχθηκαν στην Ελλάδα (Περιφέρεια Αττικής) και στο Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο (Βορειοδυτική Αγγλία), η έρευνα εξετάζει το ρόλο των ψηφιακών μέσων επιχειρώντας να κατανοήσει τους τρόπους με τους οποίους οι νέοι άνθρωποι διαπραγματεύονται τις ταυτότητές τους σε έναν περίπλοκο και αβέβαιο κόσμο. Τα δεδομένα που παρουσιάζονται προέκυψαν από πολυμεθοδολογική προσέγγιση (τριγωνοποίηση) μέσω ομάδων εστίασης και συνεντεύξεων με τη χρήση εικόνων σχετικά με ερωτήματα αναφερόμενα στη διαμόρφωση των νεανικών ταυτοτήτων. Με βάση τα ευρήματά μας, υποστηρίζουμε ότι τα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης διαμορφώνουν έναν χώρο μέσα στον οποίο οι νέοι αναζητούν την αίσθηση του «ανήκειν» ερχόμενοι αναγκαστικά σε επαφή με τον ατομικισμό και τον ανταγωνισμό τους οποίους προωθούν οι επιταγές της οικονομικής αγοράς στη νέα εποχή.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Ψηφιακές Ταυτότητες, Μέσα Κοινωνικής Δικτύωσης, Νεολαία, Αίσθηση του «Ανήκειν», Ελλάδα.

## 1. Introduction

This paper investigates the role of social media in relation to young people's experiences within a digital world. The contribution of digital media in the negotiation of young people's identities has originated as a focal point for theoretical consideration among scholars. In this sense, although there is an increasing part of literature investigating the role of social media in young people's lives and the impact of "selfies" as a cultural phenomenon (Lim, 2016), little attention has been given in the literature to the significance of social media consumption as a means of producing (and consuming) the self. A core assertion of this work is that, although young people's engagement with the selfie has been related to issues of pathology within popular culture and discourse, when exposed to a detailed empirical and theoretical examination reveals important insights about young people's strategies for self-presentation and what this means for digital identities.

In academic conversations, the role of online self-management and young people's thoughts, experiences and intentions behind such decisions have been less examined to an extent. It is perhaps because of the fragmented social media environment that we have not seen many attempts bringing together and investigating the impact of youth social media consumption to contemporary identities. It is the latest communication technologies that provide a whole new world in relation to consumer culture and shopping, new ways of self-imagination and multiple routes for identity expression (Rattle, 2014). In this sense, the effects of social media and new technological devices in young people's lives are about a transformation in their quest for reassurance and a sense of belonging. Social media and digital technology blur the boundaries between production and consumption (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010) and it is within this socio-cultural context that we need to understand young people's negotiation of multiple anxieties and sense of security.

In an attempt to initiate and advance the existing research interest about digital identities in our contemporary societies, this paper intends to provide a basis for an academic dialogue about the role of social media consumption in young people's everyday lives. Drawing on previous work on youth identities and social networking sites, the first part of the paper explores youth identities in a detailed way taking into consideration the wider context of both digitalisation and uncertainty. In the second part of the paper, emphasis is given to the "selfie culture" as the quintessential example of self-presentation in the digital world. The next part of this contribution presents the methodological approach of the research project. Before concluding and summarising the main points of this paper, key findings of the research are presented illustrating the complexity of managing the self in digital society.

## 2. Youth identities, social media consumption and uncertainty

Many commentators suggest that young people are situated in a position more than ever before to engage in forms of identity experimentation beyond previously well-established considerations of fixed transitions to adulthood (Furlong, et al., 2011). In this context, Bennett (2018) argues that youth identities are based on a do-it-yourself (DIY) doctrine rather than more traditional resources of identity construction, such as class, religion, etc. Hence, there is an argument to suggest that social media consumption has a significant impact on the everyday lives of young people. While the role of traditional forms of identity construction has gradually

diminished, young people have ostensibly focused on social media platforms as a primary means of self-identification and self-actualisation. Hodkinson (2017) in his attempt to understand the challenges young people have to deal with today and their everyday realities, he focuses on the teenage bedroom metaphor as a lens to examine social networking sites as an individual and social space. Hodkinson sees social media platforms as an individual space that resembles the intimate home. Even if it is still open to consideration whether social media platforms can offer the safe environment that a home may provide, what can be suggested is that social media consumption and its potentiality for self-management provide a primary arena in which young people can proceed with identity formation and get, at least on the surface, a feeling of stability.

During the first decades of the twenty-first century, global crises have severely impacted societies and individual life trajectories. The effects of the 'Global Financial Crisis' that shocked the global economy in 2008 are still evident today. In addition, the current and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2019 and its socio-economic consequences have intensified the feeling of uncertainty in young people's everyday lives. In this context, the conceptualisation of the 'risk society' may help us to consider the enormous challenges that young people have to face in contemporary societies (see Beck, 1992). In this way, authors have tried to understand the societal processes in which youth subjectivities are being formed (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). It is argued that in our contemporary societies the subject is confronted with a decline in the role of traditional resources of identity formation (Beck and Lau, 2005). Individualised processes have gained significance in young people's attempts to form a coherent biography (Leccardi, 2005). In this sense, approaching young people's experiences through the lens of the notion of the 'project of the self' (Giddens, 1991) still remains fundamental for understanding social processes. For instance, Farrugia (2010) describes the symbolic burden for homeless youth who are considered as the embodiment of 'failure' in individualised life projects due to the perceived incompetence and recklessness. Hoolachan et al. (2017) have described the restricted housing opportunities for young people, the increasing dependency on parents' financial support and how youth can be identified today as a 'generation rent'. Young people have experienced the worst face of the financial crisis especially in Greece. In particular, youth unemployment rates in Greece reached almost 50% in 2013 (ELSTAT, 2015). The situation appears to be slightly better after the peak crisis years with unemployment for Greek young people between 15 and 29 years old reaching 28.2% in 2019 and 29.3% in 2020. However, this is still more than double the EU average (27 countries) in 2020 which was 12.5% (Eurostat, 2020). Under such conditions the youth transitions to adulthood and the school-to-work routes for the younger generation have become increasingly uncertain.

Young people are not only obliged to deal with the structural challenges that uncertainty intensifies but also with the proliferation of choices that the digital space enables at an individual level. Such options might be reflected in the increasing number of social networking sites that cultivate new ways of understanding youth social engagement. In this sense, Robards and Bennett (2011: 314) discuss new processes of tribalisation in the digital sphere as a 'temporal wandering whereby like-minded individuals eventually find each other'. This reflects the broader transformations that have impacted young people's experiences due to their daily engagement with the social media world. Young people's everyday interactions, the way they construct their lives and the approaches to express their views and preferences are increasingly digitally mediated (Mesch, 2009). The crucial moment in the way in which young people negotiate their identities can be summarised in the development of a DIY culture (Bennett and Guerra, 2018) that

influences the contemporary notion of the self. In this way, it is argued that youth experiences are increasingly fragmented and temporary; individuals can pick and choose from a vast array of options that the social media world presents and engage in forms of self-expression.

One of the problems is that social scientific approaches to social media and identity have tended to exaggerate the risks for young people and, at the same time, ignored the significance of the meanings young people ascribe to their own actions. It is important to highlight the complex ways in which social media identities are managed by young people in the digital world and the cultural effect of digital capitalism on youth experiences. In this context, theoretical and empirical considerations about identities and, in particular, the relationship between social media consumption and identities become paramount. There is thus a need for focusing on unconventional methodological approaches that practically try to deal with the impact of social media consumption upon youth experiences. For that reason, this paper will emphasise the digital aspect in young people's quest for a sense of belonging, the ways digital identities are shaped by social media consumption and to what extent the digital space enables young people to negotiate a sense of balance in a continuously precarious world. This paper actually will advance with a theoretical and empirical investigation of the multiple ways youth move to the digital realm as a means of self-management and generating their own conditions in order to experience some semblance of stability. This process is best exemplified by the examination of the so-called selfie photo and its consequences for youth identities.

### **3. Beyond the selfie: Producing and consuming the self in digital society**

**M**y intention is to focus on one particular aspect of digital self as a way of analysing the production and consumption processes of the self in contemporary societies and how this may inform us about the manifestation of social transformations in relation to youth identities. Therefore, I will proceed with the examination of the "selfie" as a kind of modern and fashionable way of expression that appears to flourish in the social media sphere. The selfie phenomenon has exceptionally gained significance during the last decade due to the multiple applications that it has in various social media platforms. By selfie we mean the photograph that someone may capture using a smartphone camera and usually he/she uploads it on social media. For Miltner and Baym (2015: 1704), it is a picture 'in which people hold out a camera phone and photograph themselves'. Of course, this is not something entirely new. There is a link with the history of self-portraiture practices in the arts (Warfield, 2014). The process of taking a selfie, from the preparation stage until posting, can be considered as an experience and a means of communication with various audiences. The trend of taking and posting selfie pictures is not only significant in relation to changes in social media platforms, but especially about the consuming and producing processes of selfhood and what it means for young people to grow up in a digital society.

The "selfie culture" has been at the centre of attention as an interdisciplinary phenomenon for popular commentaries and academic scholarship. It is the power of the mobile technologies and especially the smartphone that has rendered this type of photography ubiquitous. The selfie is the reflection of a personal (at least most of the times) story and a means of capitalising on the self. The practice of taking a selfie is not confined within specific boundaries, such as entertainment and funny moments. Instead, it could be argued that it is a general practice that it might

affect even the political sphere (see Miltner and Baym, 2015). It is in this context that Miltner and Baym (2015: 1706) argue that 'taking selfies is part of being human in this technologically saturated age'. In a digital society the process of taking selfies intensifies the feeling of being a digital consumer (and producer). In this sense, social networking sites, and selfies in general, contribute to producing and consuming the 'networked self'. New technologies provide a digital environment for the presentation of self both publicly and privately (Papacharissi, 2011). It is a cultural arena of interconnectedness between individuals and audiences. Of course, this reminds us, to an extent, what Goffman (1959) described as front- and backstage and the process of presenting the self. However, the digitalisation of everyday life has made this a far more complex state of affairs.

For Senft and Baym (2015), selfies are about much more than just narcissistic expressions and a manifestation of the self. It is the cultural meanings of selfies that put identity at the centre of the discussion. It is the multiple opportunities to produce and manage the self that enhance the sense that identity becomes malleable. The social media sphere cultivates the conditions of a competitive market for attention in which young people are obliged to engage in a continuous quest for likes, friends and followers. In this way, selfies constitute an attempt for self-affirmation that it can be approached via the ways young people engage with digital media on a daily basis. It could be argued that in the digital society the process of producing and consuming the "self as a project" is intensified. In a digital world in which the relationship between identity and consumption is subject to a continuous procedure of reinvention, the role of social media platforms is fundamental. Selfie provides the means by which young people are able to express a sense of self of their own production. As Hess (2015: 1643) puts it, 'snapping that selfie articulates a sense of self that is read to be authentic but that also displays the uncertainty and fragmentation of self in contemporary societies'. The social media world is actually more about the creation of a space in which young people's identities are perceived as authentic.

In examining the notion of the selfie and its relation to narcissism, Murray (2020: 36) argues 'the selfie is one of the powerful means by which we validate ourselves as consumers/citizens'. The digital space provides a world in which our consumer choices become the centre of attention. It makes individuals to believe they are able to affirm their consumer choices via social media posts and to get as a result a more generalised sense of approval. In this way, it can be argued that the crucial role of social media in relation to consumption has been to reiterate its focal position at the core of young people's relationship with social change. It is in this context that the social media landscape appears, on the surface, to provide the individual with unlimited options, while creating a generalised impression that an 'entrepreneurial' version of the self (Bröckling, 2016) can make individuals more successful than ever. The main point here is that the social media sphere does not create more choices but enhances the feeling of a reinvented consumer society. Individuals, and especially young people, are not restrained to what they consume, but to what they choose to present and how they are seen to consume by their audiences (Theodoridis et al., 2019).

## 4. Methodology

The findings discussed in this paper are based on a qualitative study that was situated in two different countries, Greece and the UK. To be more specific, this research was located on the North West of England and Greater Athens and by gathering data in two different settings has provided an opportunity to proceed with a comparative analysis. This comparative project took place during the period 2016 and 2020 focusing on youth identities and the changing nature of consumption through the lens of social media in an age of precarity. The fieldwork was conducted with young people between sixteen and thirty years old and the sampling strategy was purposive (Patton, 2001). It is argued that youth cannot be defined by age boundaries and it is a social construction (Bourdieu, 1993). As such, there isn't a predefined age category that reflects in the correct way young people's experiences. In this way, by having participants from a wide socio-demographic group and age range, it has provided an interesting multiplicity of experiences.

A qualitative research design was considered as the most appropriate in an attempt to investigate young people's meanings. During the planning stage of this research project, I was mostly interested in the role of subjects in an attempt to understand the socio-cultural aspects of our contemporary society. In this way, this research design provided the means of understanding young participants' everyday experiences and allowing young people's ideas and views to be at the heart of the discussion (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). As a result, my young participants were able to discuss both about the anxieties and the difficulties they face on a daily basis, as well as, about their ways to negotiate their presence (and absence) on the social media terrain and what this means about their transitions to adulthood. This exploratory approach to study youth lives has provided a "beyond the surface" approach and access to their thoughts and feelings at a deeper level (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

In order to maximise and ensure an in-depth understanding of young people's navigation of everyday lives, I employed multiple methods for my empirical approach. Through proceeding with methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2009 [1970]), it gave me the opportunity to validate the data. More specifically, I conducted eleven focus group discussions and twenty photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) both in Greece and the UK. After the completion of both stages, I observed young people's Instagram profiles and posts and all the material was collected during a two-month period. During the focus groups, I decided to include both respondents who had social media profiles and those who did not have. Practically, I managed to receive broader responses and also initiate a thought-provoking conversation and debates between users and non-users. The selection of focus group discussions was derived from the main goal behind this research project to shed light on issues of meaning (Morgan, 1997) in a socio-cultural context and, in this sense, it was considered as an appropriate method.

For the second and third stage of the research (photo elicitation interviews and online observation), the only criterion for participation was to maintain an Instagram profile. The incorporation of creative methods that engaged with the visual element were significantly helpful and effective to initiate further meanings and interesting insights (see Rose, 2016). The photo-elicitation interview (PEI) included both verbal and image-related information and it can enrich data collection as it 'is a collaborative process whereby the researcher becomes a listener as the participant interprets the photograph of the researcher' (Loeffler, 2004: 539). During the last stage of the research, emphasis was given on my young participant's Instagram posts and social media activities. It is the social media landscape and its image-related content that necessitates to engage with visual research techniques (Pink, 2007; Hine, 2015). The total sample of the re-

search was seventy-two young people and, in particular, thirty-one were recruited from Greater Athens and forty-one in North West of England. The different educational (e.g. college students, undergraduates) and professional background (e.g. employed, unemployed) of my participants has played a great role in ensuring a level of diversity in such terms. In addition, my intention was to maintain a gender balance and have an equal number of male and female participants at all research phases. The findings that I will discuss in the next section are based on the focus groups and the photo-elicitation interviews.

## 5. Managing the self(ie) in the consumer capitalism

**S**elfie provides the means by which young people have the possibility to produce a world of their own imagination. The do-it-yourself way of thinking is enabled due to the social media platforms and the new digital technologies. The virtual world is not only constructed as a form of liberation and emancipation, but it reflects a pressure for conformity to the specific requests of the social media logic. Chris a twenty-one-year-old who lives in Athens, compared his own experiences with the past and how things have changed. He described the feeling of coercion that exists to young people to capture a selfie picture for Instagram and their social media profiles and how this process reflects exactly what is happening during a night out in clubs and bars (at least before the beginning of the pandemic). He explained how young people take snapshots and short videos in order to enrich the content of their profiles. In this sense, it is a popular form of self-narration that captures moments of entertainment and, at the same time, it is the presentation of a self-selected visual spectacle.

Individual choices are validated through the social media world. This is a more complex process than what it used to be in the past. To be more specific, it is not only the personal selection of an object or an experience that is validated, but also the choice for sharing it online and its visual representation. It is a transition from the validation of consumer choices to the validation of the representations of consumer choices. As Murray (2020) puts it, there is a sense of gratification that derives from the endorsement of people's attitudes as consumers. In the digital world of the twenty-first century, the social media offer new ways of validation through "likes", "shares", "retweets", "friends" and "followers". For instance, Adam, twenty-three years old, during the photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) described how he decided to post a selfie picture in which he had dyed his hair and he thought it was "cool" to share it. In relation to the selfie, the sense of coolness is especially crucial as it has become so essential to the reproduction of a fantasy world of consumers' own creation. This is a world in which the young consumer has to constantly reinvent himself/herself for the sake of coolness.

Digital identities are negotiated in the context of the relationship between the self and the sense of belonging. The virtual world and reactions to selfies came to add a feeling of coming together with other people and an audience. What I am explaining here can in part be supported as what one of my young participants mentioned during an interview. In our discussion about selfies, Syka, who lives in Manchester, said:

*I think it's to get attention. It's an attention thing. I think you get an approval and it's like, it's showing off. (28, UK, PEI)*

Within the socio-cultural conditions of neoliberalism, the culture of competition is intensified. In this context, social media platforms represent the new contemporary "marketplace" of

identities. In this way, selfies constitute the key means of self-affirmation and for the presentation of young people's personal brand. As Marwick (2015) summarises this, young people are somehow intrigued to engage in self-branding practices. Indeed, perception has become essential in how they seek attention and build relationships with their peers. The self has effectively become a brand. It is now "marketed" in the online environment, and therefore subject to a more perplexing process of presentation in comparison to what was a pre-social media world.

It is in the above discussion that the management of the self has been intensified. This process necessitates more effort and time from young people in order to belong in this networked society. Jeremy was explicit about the mentality of managing the self, and related this to how young people pick and choose what they prefer to include (and to exclude) from their social media profiles:

*I guess it's like a status thing. I suppose it's an easy way of dictating what your status is to other people. Because you can just pick and choose the good bits. So, if I want representations, I guess it's like when people buy a really, really big fancy car, but then they live in a tiny, tiny flat. They're trying to outwardly represent that they're doing really well, but...it might not be the whole story. (28, UK, PEI)*

The above process involves young people's strategies to negotiate their identities through the representation of their everyday lives. In this way, they seek to curate their online personas and they put emphasis on how others perceive their social status. In this context, what has become fundamental is not who they really are, but what they do and share on their profiles. This "pick and choose" culture can be better understood through the lens of the do-it-yourself (DIY) approach that Bennett (2018) has discussed in the context of youth and music industry. Thus, social media profiles represent a virtual arena in which everything is about the stylisation and the success of the individual.

Young people engage with social media as a means of creating their online "brand" and managing their strategies in their quest for attention in the competitive social media "marketplace". In this way, young people are obliged to be seen as perfect and with something new to their audiences. In so doing, young people seek some semblance of belonging through what can be described as a virtual connection. The point here is that through social media young people can receive a reassurance about their choices at times of uncertainty. As Charles said:

*I think generally in terms of status and whether posting certain things improves your social status. I think it feels like it does and I think if you get a like or a little love heart or so I guess you feel like a person is really invested something in you. (27, UK, focus group)*

Of course, one thing to consider in this context is that even though young people's interaction with others on social media can offer a sense of stability on the surface, it is not so difficult to understand that the need of being successful reproduces and intensifies the very instability that young people try so hard to deal with. As Belk (2013) suggests, the digital transformation impact human interactions and the notion of the self. More specifically, the digital society propels young people to consider themselves as liberated from the boundaries of physical space and limited financial (and other) resources, but also it ties them in a perpetual quest for authenticity that is essentially impossible to achieve.

This discussion about the social media landscape describes how the ability of digital media to define how young people produce and consume the self is becoming more and more complicated. Social media platforms intensify not only communication, but also the management of the self. Perhaps this is best explained by the way my young participants described how the social media posts can be considered staged:

*If you check someone's profile and check the posts, you will see how all of them have a good feeling and an ideal image, staged. (Dimitris, 29, Greece, PEI)*

What Dimitris describes is the core idea of self-management and the processes how young people negotiate their digital identities in the contemporary society. This enormous effort to manage the self is a continuous attempt to satisfy the imagined audience. In our conversation about the details and what is especially important in the process of posting a selfie, Dimitris said:

*Let's say the moment, that it is in the ideal place, with the ideal person, the ideal time, with the suitable background that it might not be in reality.*

It could be argued that this is the expansion of the presentation of the mundane moments of everyday life so that the audience embrace this feeling of perfection. Self-management and self-branding practices provide the means to young people to negotiate their identities in the digital space. However, this comes with a price. The production and consumption of the digital self asks from young people both time and effort.

## 6. Conclusion

**I**n order to understand the implications of the above, we need to contextualise this discussion in the wider context of the neoliberalism and its relation to the construction of the 'entrepreneurial self' (Bröckling). This reflects an approach that necessitates the individual to be always flexible and ready to adjust to requests of the market economy. Thus, as it was evident in the discussion of the findings, the onus is on young people to be somehow "managers" of themselves due to the competitive conditions within the social media "marketplace". The discussion of selfies in this paper has put emphasis on the complex ways social media and new technologies have generated a reimagination of youth identities through a digital lens.

The main point here is that the production and consumption of youth identities are increasingly digitally mediated in multiple ways. It is interesting how the digital element is becoming the means in identity formation in our contemporary societies. On the one hand, this can be understood as a process that emancipates the individual and opens up new horizons and opportunities for self-expression. On the other hand, this apparently liberating process reproduces the very neoliberal principles that oblige young people to participate in a continuous contest for affirmation. To put it differently, young people have to engage in a digital experience that is not delivering its promises for providing a sense of stability. Instead, the world of social media demands from young people to reinvent themselves in a search for approval, and in this way, it enhances the very instability that young people try so hard to dismantle.

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## Biographical note

**Theodoridis Konstantinos** is Adjunct Lecturer at University of Patras, Greece. He has received his PhD from the Department of Sociology at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. His research interests developed to a more critical examination of consumption during the economic crisis in Greece and his research explores young people's identities and the changing nature of consumption as a social and cultural phenomenon through the lens of digital space and social media. He has published book chapters and papers in peer-reviewed journals, such as in the Handbook of Transitions into Adulthood in the 21st century, the Greek Sociological Review and the Oxford Handbook of Consumption. Latest publications: Theodoridis, K. and Miles, S. (forthcoming, 2022), Changes in youth cultures and lifestyles. In C. Leccardi and J. Chesters (Eds.), Handbook of Transitions into Adulthood in the 21st century. Edward Elgar Publishing; Sakellariou, A. and Theodoridis, K. (2021), "Every month that goes I am thinking even more to emigrate": Young people's perceptions, attitudes and decisions about immigration during the economic crisis, Greek Sociological Review, 7, pp. 99-126; Theodoridis, K. and Miles, S. (2019), Young people and consumption: The changing nature of youth consumption in an era of uncertainty and digital experience. In F.F. Wherry and I. Woodward (Eds.), Handbook of Consumption. New York: Oxford University Press. E Mail: kostheo@upatras.gr

# “We” and the “others” as anthropological dimension and the modern idea of “national belonging”. Concluding thoughts

George Contogeorgis, *Panteion University, Athens*

## «Εμείς» και οι «Άλλοι» ως ανθρωπολογική διάσταση και η σύγχρονη ιδέα του εθνικού ανήκειν. Συμπερασματικές Σκέψεις

Κοντογεώργης Γιώργος, *Πάντειο Πανεπιστήμιο, Αθήνα*

### ABSTRACT

The main goal of this essay is to examine the concept of nation as the identity phenomenon par excellence in forming the image of oneself and, consequently, the image of the “other”. Hence, I will explore the political stake raised by this phenomenon in as much as it is at the origins of the emergence of a project for a cultural polysemy of collective identities with regards to the former monoculturalism and the emerging doctrine of multiculturalism.

**KEY WORDS:** Anthropological dimensions, national belonging, others.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Βασικός σκοπός αυτού του άρθρου είναι να ερευνηθεί την έννοια του έθνους ως κατ' εξοχήν φαινομένου ταύτισης στην δημιουργία της εικόνας του εαυτού και επομένως και στην εικόνα του «άλλου». Γίνεται αναφορά στον πολιτικό λόγο που προσπαθεί να αναλύσει αυτό το φαινόμενο τόσο γενικά όσο και ειδικότερα στην σύγχρονη εποχή και ως θεμέλιο μιας πολιτιστικής πολυσημίας συλλογικών ταυτοτήτων (σε αντίθεση με παλιότερες μονοπολιτισμικές εκφράσεις).

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Ανθρωπολογική διάσταση, εθνικό ανήκειν, “οι άλλοι”.

## 1. The idea of “nation” and its meanings in modernity

The concept of nation defines the cultural community upon the foundation of which societies politically organize themselves as States. From this perspective, for the “nation” to exist, the following are necessary:

(a) the cultural fact, a sense of belonging to a community whose members share the same values and sense they have a parental relationship (ethnicity); and (b) the political project, the will of the cultural community to coagulate itself, in terms of freedom, into an autonomous political entity, as the State. The main school of thought teaches us today that the nation represents a previously unseen phenomenon, a phenomenon invented/built by the modern State, and not an original social phenomenon.

These two assumptions of modernity are wrong because the idea of belonging is a social phenomenon inherent for the anthropocentric societies, namely for the free people who recognize themselves through their own autonomous identity. One could even argue that as a historical phenomenon, the "nation" appears in the Hellenic era of the city-states. So then, it should be noted that the concept of the "other" is to great depths different both in anthropocentric and despotic societies. In despotic cosmos the (collective) identity refers to the affiliation to a third, owner or holder of autocratic power. This means that the "nation" (in the sense of belonging) is neither a modern phenomenon, nor a specific construction of the modern State.

In this sense, in modern times the nation has emerged within anthropocentric cells that were developed under the despotic/absolutist State, in a deep relationship with the Hellenic literature. Compared to the nation at a small scale, the nation at a large scale of "anthropocentric cosmosystem" is profoundly different. Hellenism, that embodied the "anthropocentric cosmosystem" at a small-scale, built its collective (and political) identity on the fundamental society of the city-state or, later, on the cosmopolis. On the opposite, because the modern world, has been founded on a large scale, the modern idea of nation has served as a collective project for the foundation of the society of the State.

This difference for the national political project is fundamental in terms of the image of the construction of the other and, at the same time, for the relationship to be established between the cultural community and freedom. In the ancient Greek world, at national level, it is the other who is in charge with the global political project. In the statocentric phase the national freedom of Greeks goes through the freedom of the city-states, and later, within the ecumenical phase, through the freedom of both the city-states and the metropolis located within the cosmopolis. For the moderns the political project of the nation was assumed by the unitary State and, more precisely, by the political power of the State. In modernity the argument of nation was used, in the first instance, to remove the old regime and to deliver the political sovereignty to the legal personality of the State. In the second instance, it was used so that the doctrine of cultural homogeneity put a stop to other cultural communities to formulate their own political project. And, finally, it was used to dispose of the old regime and restore the unity of society in terms of anthropocentric parameters. It can be "translated" as the doctrine: "one State, one nation, one language" etc. As political liberalism and socialism are required to impose cultural uniformity, the monoculturalism calls for social culture. The "other" is considered as an enemy of the nation and, basically, of the unitary State. Hence, in the best conditions the "other" is submitted to a cultural minority status, if it is not erased on behalf of the "national purity".

This political option can be explained by the fact that, starting with Europe, the transition from despotism to anthropocentrism considered as a priority the creation of a collective identity built on freedom, as well as the elementary anthropocentric presupposition, the individual freedom. Both the national and individual freedoms are, of course, compatible with a political system embodied in the State, or identified by this one, as in the old regime. In fact, in the nation State that succeeded the absolutist regime the relation between the social and the political levels does not change its nature, the society being limited outside the system, in the private space. Thus the nation, considered as a construction of the State, has served as an argument for the property of the State on the system in order to legitimize its political sovereignty upon the society. Outside of an asserted awareness, the will of the society is far away from being the purpose of politics; but, this is the nation of the State, a distinct or even opposed to the society concept. Henceforth, the nation of the State allows the holders of the State / system to define its will by proclaim-

ing itself both mandatory and mandate/principal and representative. However, the ideological development of the concepts (as for example the vote, the citizenship, the alternation of parties in power, the liberty) or the supremacy of adjectives over the concepts (i.e. the so called direct or indirect, participatory and non- participatory democracy) allowed the categorization of an elective monarchy system with an oligarchic basis in the typology of democratic systems.

Arguing that the modern political system is both democratic and representative, provided that the two systems are incompatible with each other and that, in any case, the modern political system is none of the above, is as talking about a miracle. However, this assertion is not without consequences, first of all because it teaches that the modern world has no alternative choice except authoritarian system, and its future is present time. Therefore, it escapes to the consideration of moderns that as part of this system, the global society, including any individual who could be considered as a citizen, takes the place of the "other" vis-à-vis to the holder of the economic and political system. They are excluded from the political system, with which the relationship, under the tutelage of the State, is one of affiliation and not of a partnership. The difference between the citizen of the state and the citizen of political system is only typological.

The above remarks show that the question of the "other" is more synthetic than it is usually thought. The fact that modernity considered the other in terms of his uniqueness, prevents, in reality, the awareness of the proto- anthropocentric nature of his biology.

## 2. How "exclusion" has become an essential topic of modern thought

**O**ur approach on the notion of the other exudes from the cosmo-systemic epistemology, from a cosmosystemic restoration of cosmo-history, which is based on its own nature, the freedom. A freedom that is defined as autonomy, related to individual, social and political levels. I emphasize this specification, because modernity, with the exception of individual liberty, defines social and political freedom in terms of "rights". However, "rights" define the area of individual freedom, where one is not free, that is to say autonomous. It happens in this way in the modern socio-economic and political space where the system belongs to a "third" as an autonomous power.

Having the right to protest by demonstration or strike proves that the other is excluded from the economic and political system, he does not participate in the decision-making process, and, finally, he is not free/autonomous. Unawareness of this phenomenon shows that the system of values of our time prefers a socio-economic and political system that limits the social "other" to the situation of a simple minority. Thus, in the present state, collective / national freedom stands against the "other" national and, at the same time, it does not accept that the nation is a plural phenomenon, composed of several groups / identities. At the same time, it ignores the issue of the responsibility of the nation raised by political freedom. Just the opposite, the concept of plural nation, such as the responsibility of the nation, refers to another type of State: in a politically plural State and beyond to a disconnection of the political system to the legal personality of the State. From the unitary State we get to the plural/polysemous state, from the State / system we get to a State / servant of the society, which henceforth embodies the political system. This new perspective of the nation and state ends by removing the status of the minority / the excluded

“other”. Hence, the “other” cultural group becomes a political partner, while the social / people accessing to the political category of the society of citizens, and the individual citizen acquires partnership status in the political system.

In the past the nation of the State served as a given sense of progress, but it has already become a valuable argument to prevent the enlargement of the social and political space of freedom. We have even gone so far as to prevent (Hobsbawm among others) the opponents of the sovereignty of the State over society (namely the State's one-dimensional property of the political system) that their questioning will lead to the disappearance of the nation. It is clear that the possibility of a transition from the nation of the State to the nation of society terrifies (even the oligarchic intelligentsia).

We have considered the problem of the “other” as part of the fundamental society of the modern State, not being influenced by external factors. Nevertheless, the developments of the last decades, as basis of transition to a later stage in proto-anthropocentrism, determined new phenomena, that have profoundly changed the internal framework of the States. We refer to the emancipation of some parameters, such as the economy and communication vis-à-vis the State, and to their profound effects in advanced societies and in the Third World. The State knew the weakening of its external sovereignty and, as a consequence, its connection with the political purpose of the society. From now on, the purpose of the State is primarily oriented towards the interests of the markets, the nation being considered as a potential provider in terms of cohesion of society against the power. Similarly, to the internal “other” joins the external “other”, the migrant, who claims a place in the common house of the national citizen.

The decision concerning the status reserved to the newcomers is related to some questions that we need to answer. First of all we need to search for the solution to the social problem not on the spot –in the original national framework – but by studying the relocation in the host country. This phenomenon completely overturns the certainties on which the traditional ideologies were based. Thus the substitution of the class struggle by a project of Christian philanthropy gradually deserved the interest of the market proponents to relieve the social tensions from the countries of origin. At the same time, the presence of the “other” (of the foreigner) puts the citizen in a multileveled uncomfortable position regarding the cultural cohesion, the working citizen, the framework of law and welfare, the redistribution of resources, the citizenship and even the connection between the political forces and the purpose of the State.

However, the remaining question is whether the economic migrants and citizens meet at the level of “*metoikos*” that transforms work in a simple commodity. There is an issue, amongst others, that shows that the actual approach is not able to answer to the new challenges. And by that I mean that modern approaches are unable to foresee a new balance between the social, economic and political levels depending on many significant factors, associated with the break with the static way of our times.

It is not a coincidence that the market forces stand against the cohesion of a social body based on the nation, emphasizing the idea of the old regime that makes it depend on its belonging to the state. They accuse the majority – namely the society of citizens – and especially freedom, of being an enemy that is opposed to the rights of minority / of the “other”. We advance the so-called constitutional patriotism which, however, is identified with the State that exercises any perspective of a participation of society in the decision-making system.

This argument that boasts multiculturalism against the former monoculturalism hides a truth and a project: the truth is that it is power that mobilizes all coercive arsenals against the

excluded, including the society, on behalf of the nation of the State. The project belongs to the existent oligarchy that attempts to molecularize the society of citizens – its cultural foundations – in order to prevent it to redirect its values, to claim the sharing of the political system with the State. Because, on final analysis, the transition of the “other” from the status of minority to the status of autonomous “other” requires an establishment in the system in terms of partnership. This is the promise of transition of the political system from the current monarchical oligarchy to representation and, in the long term, to democracy. And, prior to that, it is the promise of transition from the nation of the State to the nation of society.

### 3. Conclusion

The concept of nation of society recommends the approach of collective identities as a phenomenon that expresses the conscience of society, and, on the other side, as a culturally polysemous phenomenon in the sense that it consists of various cultural subgroups. In spite of this, this plural nation asks for its own capability to accommodate the different, in a political framework going from the State as a unitary political system to a plural State.

This quality of the nation, which expresses the consciousness of a plural society, could not be satisfied either by the project of political/constitutional patriotism, or by the project of multiculturalism. The latter risks to lead to an explosion of the social, and as a consequence, of the State. The first has an incomplete character, being fed by several special factors (socio-economic and others), and, in the end, there is not a system that involves the unanimity. Now we can make the choice between the parliamentary oligarchic system and its authoritarian deviation. In the future, citizens might have more choices between the various forms of representation or of democracy. Nonetheless, the system (socio-economic and political) determines the status of the social, its members included. This is a fundamental element that is able to induce the individual or a group to leave the country or to oppose to its followers. It weighs heavily with the consciousness of the society, but it cannot substitute it.

We consider that our generation, facing its deadlocks, will be quickly brought to choose between a state of many nations or societies (the society of citizens, the society of work, etc.), where the majority of its members will be submitted to the status of “*metoikos*”, and the state of cultural polysemy of the collective identities in a politically plural State, which responsibility will belong in part (representation) or in all (democratic) to the society of citizens.

All things considered, the issue of the status of the “other” which opposes to the polysemy of the national, understood as a social phenomenon (a consciousness of society), to monoculturalism or multiculturalism, replies to the “biology” of the social and to an evolutionary typology which is inherent to the “anthropocentric cosmosystem”. It answers both to the question of social cohesion and to the request of the “other” to be accepted in a plural political framework based on freedom and not on the rights of the excluded. It places itself, ultimately, in the perspective of a restoration of balance, which once again will transform the society into the purpose of the State policy.

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## Biographical note

**Contogeorgis George**, Docteur d'Etat (University of Paris), Professor of Political Science at Panteion University of Athens. Rector of Panteion University (1984-1990), Secretary General of the Hellenic Association of Political Science (1975-1981), member of the High Council and Research

Council at the European University Institute of Florence (1985-1994), twice President-General Director of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (1985, 1989), Minister, Ministry of the Presidency. Member of many scientific associations, Founding member of the European Network of Political Science (EPSNET) and member of the Administrative Committee. He has taught at many universities such as IEP of Paris, Universities of Brussels, Montpellier, Louvain, Quebec, Toulouse, IEP Lille, IEP Bordeaux, La Rochelle, Rome, Tokyo, Florence, Geneva, Barcelona, Madrid, Salamanca, Granada, Beijing, etc. Director of Research of the French CNRS. Most important Recent Publications: *L'Europe et le Monde*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2011. "Il fenomeno autoritario in Europa" and "La dittatura militare in Grecia (1967-1974). Questioni di approccio del fenomeno autoritario", in Giuliana Laschi (dir), *Memoria d'Europa*, Ed. Franco Angeli, Milano, 2012. *Partitocracy and Dynastic State*, Athens, 2011. *The Oligarchs*, Athens, 2014. E-Mail: [gdc14247@gmail.com](mailto:gdc14247@gmail.com)

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νήσος

## "Ensuring Continuity in Education for Refugee - Continugee". A report of the 1st Learning Teaching Training Activity

**O**n 28 July 2021, the 1st Learning, Teaching, Training Activity (LTTA) of the Project "Ensuring Continuity in Education for Refugee - Continugee" took place. Continugee is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 2. The partners of the project are National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA Greece), the Scientific Society for Social Cohesion and Development (EPEKSA Greece), University of Urbino Carlo Bo (Italy) and University (Fachhochschule) of Kiel (Germany).

The aim of the project is to create a partnership which will focus on the continuity of education for migrant and refugee children and adolescents, from the reception areas / countries to the places / countries of permanent settlement, and develop a needs-based curriculum and an in-service training program, and implement it in schools and education institutions of participant organizations, taking into consideration the local conditions and aiming at maximizing the European value along with refugees linguistic and cultural background of such interventions.

The "Continugee 1st LTTA" was held as an online event, due to the COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions. It was organised by the team of the University of Urbino Carlo Bo, coordinated by Professor Eduardo Barberis who welcomed all partners and gave the floor to the National and Kaspodistrian University of Athens team. In his short address, the Professor Napoleon Maravegias, Scientific Coordinator of the Project and the NKUA Team, referred to the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the development of the project, which fall under three categories: First, travel restrictions, urged the partners to communicate online, even at Transnational Project Meetings. Meetings in person are always preferable, especially in the beginning of such projects, because they provide partners with an opportunity to meet both scholarly and socially and discuss in depth the project issues. Second, the Pandemic hindered the financial and management processes of the project, as most employees of the financial services of the partner institutions have been working from home. This slowed down interactions between partner institutions and made coordination even more difficult. Third, refugee children were heavily affected by the Pandemic, as for many months they were taught via emergency remote teaching, in the difficult circumstances of the Camps or in their homes. This created a whole new situation for teachers, making the continuity of their education even more difficult. However, professor Maravegias pointed out the excellent cooperation of the Greek National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme, which allowed the Project to move forward and to being implemented to the maximum level possible.

In his brief address, the coordinator of the second Greek partner, Emeritus Professor, Theodoros Sakellaropoulos, President of EPEKSA Governing Board, explained the reasons that led EPEKSA to participate in this research project. First, because the theme of the project, the transnational perspective on the education of refugee children, falls within the social and educational initiatives supported by EPEKSA. In addition, the project offers EPEKSA the opportunity to EPEKSA to contribute its expertise on projects for social cohesion and intercultural development and collaborate with experts and researchers from leading European universities, contributing with a team of scientists to the development of the project, building on.

The LTTA also hosted the Coordinator of Key Action 2 of the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme, Anastasios Barmpas, who, in his brief salutation, highlighted the interest of the Greek National Agency for the project, as “Continugee” addresses such an important issue, as the integration of young migrants and refugees into the education systems of countries of first reception and final settlement. He also underlined the importance of the project, for the acquaintance of young migrants and refugees with European values.

The LTTA continued with presentations from the partners on the Intellectual Output 1 of the Project, the State-of-the-Art Review.

The NKUA contribution was presented by NKUA Assistant Professor Yiannis Roussakis. The NKUA was the leader of IO1, and Prof Roussakis started by referring to the aim of IO1, which was to overview and review educational policies, pedagogical and teaching practices and approaches for the integration of refugee children and adolescents in the formal education systems of the participant countries, of other countries and international organisations. The State-of-the-Art review was carried out using a desk research / systematic review strategy, including National Case Studies / Reviews from the Partners’ countries and notes on exemplary cases from other countries / regions within and outside EU and International Organisations

The NKUA team, among others, reviewed the Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals, and especially how its educational provisions were adapted to the local circumstances and needs of several EU member states. He argued that in Greece the educational rights of migrants are violated in practice, because of inadequacies in the legal framework and reluctant administration responses. He also reported that the research revealed that, overall, migrant and refugee children school experience in Greece and other European countries is subject to considerable levels of discrimination. They leave school having experienced low school attainment and performance, multiple discrimination, and segregation. This makes the need for change an imperative, not only in Greece but also in most EU member states.

Assistant Professor of Panteion University (Athens), Nikos Kourachanis, representing EPEKSA, shed light upon the aspects of Greek education policies for refugee children. He stated that the main issues of concern found during the review can be categorized under four (4) central clusters. The operational-administrative issues, the pedagogical-educational problems, the synergies and cooperation initiatives and practices, and the training of teachers. He argued that access of refugee children to formal education is not always obligatory, leading to a substantially low degree of integration of refugee children into the Greek educational system.

Prof. Kourachanis also stated that refugee education is characterized by significant early school leaving and dropout rates in Greece. Subsequently, the children of refugees and migrants in Greece are susceptible to various hazards, and it is estimated by UNICEF that they have lost an average of two years and six months of schooling due to conflict episodes, violence, and displacement even before their relocation. He also highlighted the fact that a severe lack of training and expertise regarding the teaching personnel of refugee children exists in the Greek educational system, due to the limited working experience of teachers regarding both intercultural education and the efficiency when working with a multicultural class.

Moving on to the proposals, Prof. Kourachanis concluded that the analysis of the existing scientific literature showed that refugee education in Greece can be in the right direction only if certain conditions are met. Firstly, if the Greek language is authentically and in depth instructed to refugees and minors. Secondly, if there is constructive communication between education stakeholders and, lastly, if the parents of refugee children are enabled to be more actively in-

volved into their children school life. To achieve this, the local communities need to respond and collaborate with the state, as there are instances that these minorities feel unwanted.

Christos Zisis from the Fachhochschule Kiel presented the aspects of educational policies for refugee children, implemented by the German state. He reported that the Länder Ministries of Culture and several individual schools are working on school reforms, new curricula and teaching methods for either principal or often pragmatic reasons. Still, a general and systematic implementation of intercultural principles and equal opportunities is far from being realized. Even if migration issues are considered, the dualism between 'them' and 'us' still seems to dominate the process. Many social researchers and critical educators would plead for integration policies that not only focus on the individual migrants but put high emphasis on the institutions of the 'majority society' and the support of individual figures in their intercultural competence.

Consequently, he stated that, apart from implementing social equal opportunities, there is a need for better and compulsory intercultural teacher training and supportive supervision, criteria for school quality, monitoring and evaluation processes with practical consequences for schools and individual educators.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Zisis stated that there is a clear need for inclusive, participatory and democratic education which combats structural racism, institutional racism, discrimination and stereotypes. Not only intercultural education, but critical to racism and anti-racist education.

Professor Eduardo Barberis from University of Urbino Carlo Bo stated that the literature and data review aims at the development of a conceptual framework to be used for describing, understanding and analyzing policies and practices of education for the refugee children, focusing on the issue of European values and the European way of life and on the arrangements for the continuity of educational provision.

The review of the Italian case is based on the categories used in the policy and scientific debate analyzed in the literature review, and on data included in scientific articles and books, reports, statistical sets, institutional reports produced between 2014 and 2021 in Italy and/or on the Italian case.

Reviewing the Italian case, he argued that refugees and subsidiary protection holders have similar rights and are eligible for public and private funded scholarships. Humanitarian protection holders are allowed to be in the country for a shorter period than refugees and subsidiary protection holders. They are also entitled to a limited set of rights in relation to government scholarships, for which they are not eligible. Asylum seekers have not yet received international protection but have submitted an asylum claim and are waiting for a decision from government.

Concluding his presentation, he mentioned that the Italian educational institutions have different levels of readiness – but suffer a general stress caused by structural problems, such as:

- School segregation for social class and immigration status is quite widespread, and almost not debated as a policy issue.
- Schools are understaffed – and with limited or no specific training for the inclusion of foreign students and asylum seekers.
- Anti-immigration stances have been growing in recent years, creating a context in which integration and education are hard to achieve.
- There are biases and prejudices (often implicit ones) in the education system, with a negative impact on its efficacy.

The first LTTA of Continugee Project highlighted the issues of education of young refugees and migrants in EU and especially in partner countries, Greece, Italy and Germany. Presentations of countries State-of-the-Art reviews indicated that there is an urgent need to work for restructuring the educational systems of reception and permanent residence countries to achieve social and educational integration of migrant and refugee children. The project partners committed themselves to working together towards a plan for a quality education, worthy of European values and traditions, for migrant and refugee children.

*Yiannis Roussakis, Stavros Pantazopoulos*

**Yiannis Roussakis** is Assistant Professor of Education Policy and Teacher Education at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), Department of Educational Studies (EDS). He holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Education and Education Policy (University of Athens), M.Ed. in Pedagogy (University of Crete), B.Sc. in Physics and B.Ed. in Primary Education.

**Stavros Pantazopoulos** teaches at Panteion University as Special Scientist. He is also a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Peloponnese. He has received his Ph.D. in social policy from Panteion University, holds BA in history and archaeology and MA in historic demography and MSc in cultural organisations management. His research interests lie in the fields of social policy and social demography.

## Von Anfang an eine relativ ungünstige Position. Und dann noch -wahrscheinlich - ein schlechteres sozialökonomisches System. Ein kurzer wirtschaftshistorischer Abriss der jüngeren ostdeutschen Vergangenheit

**D**er sozialökonomische Wiederaufstieg Ostdeutschlands nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg war vielfach determiniert. Es gab Aufbauwillen in der ostdeutschen Bevölkerung (wie in Westdeutschland auch). Beide deutsche Teilgebiete, später -staaten, hatten aber unterschiedliche Besatzungs- bzw. später Führungsmächte. Für beide deutsche Teilgebiete erwies sich von Vorteil, daß die Anti-Hitler-Koalition in der Nachkriegszeit zerbrach und der sog. Kalte Krieg ausbrach, mehrmals sogar bis nahe an einen heißen Krieg.

Der hätte Deutschland (Ost und West) wahrscheinlich schwer getroffen. Aber der Kalte Krieg hatte für beide deutsche Teilgebiete letztlich positive Effekte. Die jeweiligen Führungsmächte (bis 1949 Besatzungsmächte) benötigten ihre deutschen Teilgebiete Ost wie West jeweils als Bollwerk gegen die andere Seite im Kalten Krieg. Das änderte jeweils ihre Haltung zu Deutschland, jedenfalls "ihren" Teilgebieten, mit wichtigen zeitlichen Unterschieden allerdings.

Die alliierten Führungsmächte hatten dabei unterschiedliche objektive Interessen und auch Optionen. Zunächst schwenkten die USA auf eine für ihren Teil Deutschlands günstige Haltung um. Der Marshall-Plan war dafür sichtbarster Ausdruck und realwirtschaftlicher Faktor. Hilfe für den deutschen Wiederaufbau war jetzt angesagt. Westdeutschland sollte zum politisch beeindruckenden Schaufenster des Westens insgesamt in Richtung Osten werden. US-Amerika hatte dafür gute wirtschaftliche Voraussetzungen. Die USA hatten keine Kriegszerstörungen. Aber sie hatten für ihre wieder auf Friedensproduktion (in relativ großem Maße) umgestellte Wirtschaft ein ernsthaftes Markt- bzw. Absatzproblem. Warum in dieser Situation nicht nach Deutschland liefern?

Die Sowjetunion hatte andere Interessen und auch Optionen mit (ihrem) Deutschland. Das Land hatte gewaltige Kriegszerstörungen (zweimal Opfer des im Osten besonders brutalen Kriegsablaufes). Da war (ost-)deutsche Unterstützung für den Wiederaufbau (Reparationen!) sehr willkommen. U.a. in diesem Zusammenhang (aber auch rein politisch betrachtet) gab es auf sowjetischer Seite noch eine gesamtdeutsche Option. Die mögliche Neutralisierung ganz Deutschlands, seine "Finnlandisierung". Dieser politisch-ökonomische Ansatz schlug fehl. Die Sowjetunion mußte sich auf Ostdeutschland/die DDR konzentrieren/beschränken.

Die sowjetische Umorientierung auf die neue Rolle (Bollwerk, Aushängeschild) ihres ostdeutschen Teilgebietes dauerte deutlich länger als die US-amerikanische für deren Teilgebiet (die Lage der beiden anderen westalliierten Besatzungszonen bzw. Teilgebiete war ähnlich (mit einigen spezifischen Abweichungen) dem US-amerikanischen Gebiet). Hilfe hier (im Westen), weiterhin Reparationen dort (im Osten bis Ende 1953).

Mittlerweile hatten sich beide deutsche Gebiete (West und Ost) unterschiedlich entwickelt. Der Westen Deutschlands konnte seiner "Schaufenster-Funktion" schon sehr viel besser gerecht werden. Es begann, gerade auch aus ökonomischen Gründen, eine zunehmende Bevölkerungs-Abwanderungsbewegung von Ost- nach Westdeutschland ("Abstimmung mit den Füßen"), die den ökonomischen Abstand zwischen West und Ost weiter verstärkte.

Allerdings sahen vor allem äußere Beobachter den Wiederaufbau in Deutschland West und Ost nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg jeweils als "Wunder". Das West-Wunder war allerdings noch größer!

Es gab dennoch immer wieder einige bemerkenswerte Gegenteilstendenzen. Meine Mutter bspw. lebte 1946 für mehrere Monate in Südwestdeutschland, relativ gut. Aber noch in diesem Jahr kam sie nach Wildau, in den armen Osten, zurück. Ihre Mutter, meine spätere Großmutter, schlug die Hände über dem Kopf zusammen. Wildau hatte damals noch keine Position in der Führungsgruppe der Kommunen von Gesamtdeutschland. Aber meine Mutter hatte einfach Heimweh, nach Wildau, nach Ostdeutschland.

Ostdeutschland selbst hatte noch bis 1970 versucht, den wachsenden Rückstand zum Westen wieder aufzuholen. "Überholen, ohne einzuholen", war damals eine oft genannte und bespötelte, bei tieferem Nachdenken aber durchaus kluge Parole. Im Zeichen der Kybernetik sollten die Selbständigkeit und die Eigenverantwortung der Betriebe und damit ihre Innovationsfreudigkeit und -kraft erhöht werden. Um eine mögliche Entwicklung in Richtung, wie man heutzutage sagen würde, zum "chinesischen Modell", ging es in der DDR bis 1970.

Aber 1971 war damit Schluß! Es kam zu einer Wiederannäherung Ostdeutschlands an die Sowjetunion. Erich Honecker und Leonid Breschnew fielen sich in die Arme. Und die Abhängigkeit der DDR von der Sowjetunion wurde wieder verstärkt, letztlich zulasten der DDR.

Zugespißt könnte man sagen, 1971 schon wurde 1989, der Zusammenbruch der DDR, beschlossen. ("Was der VIII. Parteitag beschloß, wird sein.") 1971 begann ein langer Weg bergab. Und die Schaufenster-Funktion der DDR in Richtung Westen wurde (und konnte) auch von der östlichen Führungsmacht nicht mehr, wie notwendig, wirksam unterstützt (werden).

Schwer zu beantworten bleibt vor diesem Hintergrund die letztlich unumgängliche "Systemfrage". Nach meiner bisherigen Einschätzung war die westdeutsche "soziale Marktwirtschaft" ein flexibleres und innovativeres System, das dem hoch- bzw. überzentralisiertem ostdeutschen System (Wirtschaft und Politik) überlegen war. Das ostdeutsche System hatte auch manche Vorzüge. Insgesamt, unter dem Strich, war Westdeutschland nicht nur durch die US-amerikanische Starthilfe überlegen, sondern hatte auch ein stärkeres, effektiveres System.

Trotzdem stellt sich heute wieder die Frage, wie weiter? Die reale Geschichte wird weiterhin Überraschungen für uns bereit halten. Schauen wir mal.

*Dr. sc. Uwe Malich, Wildau, Germany*

## Μαρία Καραμεσίνη

### *Γυναίκες, φύλο και εργασία στην Ελλάδα*

*Αθήνα, Εκδόσεις Νήσος, 2021*

**Σ**το βιβλίο *Γυναίκες, φύλο και εργασία στην Ελλάδα*, η Μαρία Καραμεσίνη έχει συγκεντρώσει, με κατάλληλες παρεμβάσεις και προσθήκες, παλαιότερα και νεότερα κείμενά της, καθώς και κείμενα γραμμένα για το βιβλίο αυτό. Καλύπτει μια μεγάλη και σημαντική περίοδο για τις εξελίξεις σχετικά με την εργασία των γυναικών και τις έμφυλες διακρίσεις και ανισότητες στην ελληνική αγορά εργασίας. Το βιβλίο οργανώνεται σε τρεις ενότητες/μέρη για κάθε μία από τις οποίες εξετάζει, εκτός από τις συνθήκες στην αγορά εργασίας, και τις πολιτικές που σχεδιάστηκαν και εφαρμόστηκαν σε συγκεκριμένες συγκυρίες. Η πρώτη ενότητα καλύπτει την περίοδο από τη δεκαετία 1980 (με αναφορές από τη δεκαετία 1960) μέχρι το 2008 και την πρόσφατη πολύπλευρη κρίση. Η δεύτερη ενότητα ξεκινάει από το 2008 και φτάνει μέχρι την τυπική τουλάχιστον "έξοδο από τα μνημόνια" (2019), ενώ το τρίτο μέρος διαφοροποιείται θεματικά, εστιάζοντας στη μη αμειβόμενη και τη συνολική εργασία.

Μέσα από τη διαδοχή των κεφαλαίων του βιβλίου παρακολουθούμε το δύσκολο δρόμο των γυναικών στην Ελλάδα προς την οικονομική ανεξαρτησία και τη διεκδίκηση ισότιμων όρων ένταξης στην αμειβόμενη εργασία. Τα κεφάλαια ικνηλατούν τις άμεσες και έμμεσες διακρίσεις που έχουν να κάνουν με τις αμοιβές, την ποιότητα της εργασίας, το συνταξιοδοτικό σύστημα· αξιολογούν μια σειρά πολιτικές για την απασχόληση και την ισότητα, στην απασχόληση αλλά και πέρα από αυτή· εντοπίζουν τις άνισες επιπτώσεις της λιτότητας και των Προγραμμάτων Οικονομικής Προσαρμογής· αναλύουν τη σχέση αμειβόμενης εργασίας και φροντίδας και τα επίδικα στις πολιτικές "συμφιλίωσης" των δύο.

Από το πλούτο των ιδεών και επεξεργασιών του βιβλίου, στη σύντομη παρουσίασή μου θα ήθελα να επισημάνω τρία σημεία:

1. Το πρώτο αναφέρεται στις μεταλλαγές της φεμινιστικής οικονομικής θεωρίας για την κρίση και το φύλο (Εισαγωγή, κεφ. 6 και αλλού). Μέσα από μια μελέτη των στοιχείων της αγοράς εργασίας στη διάρκεια μεγάλων κρίσεων του 20ού αιώνα [(1929), 1973-75, 2007-08], η Μαρία Καραμεσίνη υποστηρίζει πως η πρόσφατη χρηματοπιστωτική (και θα πρόσθετα πολύπλευρη) κρίση των ετών 2007-08 υπήρξε αφορμή για την επικαιροποίηση και ανανέωση της φεμινιστικής οικονομικής θεωρίας, αλλά και για σημαντικές αλλαγές στο λεγόμενο καθεστώς ή συμβόλαιο φύλου. Ως απάντηση στην κρίση φροντίδας, η ανανέωση της θεωρίας αρθρώνεται γύρω από την ανάδειξη μιας "οικονομίας φροντίδας", κατ' άλλες ερευνήτριες μιας "μωβ οικονομίας", σημαντική συνιστώσα της οποίας είναι η συνολική θεώρηση της εργασίας και η υποστήριξη κοινωνικών επενδύσεων (στην υγεία, την παιδεία, την κοινωνική κατοικία, την πρόνοια για τα παιδιά, τους ηλικιωμένους, τα άτομα με ειδικές ανάγκες) με προφανείς επιπτώσεις στην απλήρωτη εργασία των γυναικών στο πλαίσιο της οικογένειας. Ιδιαίτερα επισημαίνονται οι ανισότητες στη βάση της εθνότητας και της κοινωνικής τάξης, όπως και η διαφορετική σχέση των γυναικών με την αμειβόμενη εργασία και οι προσδοκίες ανάλογα με το μορφωτικό επίπεδο και την ηλικία.

2. Το δεύτερο σημείο έχει να κάνει με την λεπτομερή και τεκμηριωμένη παρουσίαση των πολιτικών που αναπτύχθηκαν στα χρόνια της κυβέρνησης ΣΥΡΙΖΑ. Στο κεφ. 9 αναδεικνύεται το αποτύπωμά τους στην κλαδική ανακατανομή γυναικείας και ανδρικής απασχόλησης, στο μισθολογικό

χάσμα, στις εργασιακές σχέσεις και την ποιότητα της εργασίας, στη μείωση της αδήλωτης εργασίας, στην αποκατάσταση των συλλογικών διαπραγματεύσεων, στη διάσωση του συστήματος της κοινωνικής προστασίας, στην βελτίωση της παιδικής φροντίδας και την καταπολέμηση της παιδικής φτώχειας - και σε μια σειρά άλλα πεδία πολιτικής. Οι πολιτικές αυτές πολύ λίγο προβλήθηκαν δημόσια παρά τη μεγάλη κοινωνική και οικονομική τους σημασία, ενώ κοντεύουν να ακυρωθούν ολοκληρωτικά μέσα στη νεοφιλελεύθερη "κανονικότητα" που ζούμε από το καλοκαίρι του 2019.

3. Το τρίτο σημείο αναφέρεται στη μη αμειβόμενη εργασία και εδώ θα σταθώ λίγο παραπάνω. Στα κεφάλαια του τρίτου μέρους, η Μαρία Καραμεσίνη συγκεντρώνει και αναλύει υλικό για την επίδραση της χρηματοπιστωτικής κρίσης και της πανδημίας στην εργασία φροντίδας. Στο κεφ. 10, σε συνεργασία με τη Μαρία Συμεωνάκη (2019), αναλύονται τα δεδομένα της πρώτης και μόνης Έρευνας Χρήσης Χρόνου (ΕΧΧ) που πραγματοποιήσε η ΕΛΣΤΑΤ το 2013-14, σε δείγμα 3371 νοικοκυριών. Από τη λεπτομερή ανάλυση των στοιχείων για τα άτομα ηλικίας 25-54 ετών σε ετεροφυλόφιλα νοικοκυριά, προέκυψε η άνιση εμπλοκή ανδρών και γυναικών στην οικιακή εργασία και φροντίδα. Τα ευρήματα επιβεβαιώνουν την κοινή αντίληψη ότι οι γυναίκες δαπανούν σημαντικά περισσότερο χρόνο στην οικιακή εργασία και φροντίδα (με μικρές διαφοροποιήσεις ανάλογα με την ύπαρξη ενός ή περισσότερων παιδιών, όπως και ανάλογα με το μορφωτικό επίπεδο και την κατάσταση απασχόλησης των ενήλικων μελών του νοικοκυριού). Όμως η κοινή αυτή αντίληψη τεκμηριώνεται με συγκεκριμένα ποσοτικά στοιχεία (ώρες και λεπτά μέσα στην κάθε μέρα και εβδομαδιαία) που δύσκολα πλέον μπορεί κανείς να παραβλέψει.

Το κεφ. 11 εξετάζει τις έμφυλες διαφορές στη συνολική εργασία (αμειβόμενη και μη), τοποθετώντας την Ελλάδα στο διεθνές πλαίσιο. Εδώ επισημαίνεται ο νέος ορισμός του ΙΛΟ, όπου περιλαμβάνονται "παραγωγικές δραστηριότητες παροχής υπηρεσιών προς ίδια χρήση ή με εθελοντική εργασία στο πλαίσιο του νοικοκυριού" που υιοθετήθηκε από τον ΟΗΕ στο νέο Σύστημα Εθνικών Λογαριασμών και στην Ατζέντα για το 2030, με στόχο την καταπολέμηση της φτώχειας και τη μείωση των ανισοτήτων. Η αναγνώριση και αναδιανομή της απλήρωτης εργασίας φροντίδας είναι σημαντική συνιστώσα της Ατζέντας, ενώ αποτιμάται και ως % του ΑΕΠ, παρά τους δισταγμούς των οικονομολόγων να της αποδώσουν οικονομική αξία. Η διενέργεια Έρευνών Χρήσης Χρόνου (Time Use Surveys) αποτυπώνει και πάλι με ποσοτικά στοιχεία (δυστυχώς όχι διαθέσιμα διαχρονικά για την Ελλάδα) όσα γνωρίζουμε ή υποθέτουμε για την άνιση συμμετοχή ανδρών και γυναικών στην απλήρωτη εργασία φροντίδας.

Τέλος, στο κεφ. 12, που αναφέρεται στην περίοδο της τρέχουσας υγειονομικής κρίσης, η Μαρία Καραμεσίνη καταθέτει εκτιμήσεις για τους διαφορετικούς τρόπους με τους οποίους το παρατεταμένο λοκντάουν επιδρά σε διαφορετικούς κλάδους της οικονομίας, στην αμειβόμενη και την απλήρωτη εργασία, καθώς και στην ποιότητα και τον όγκο της συνολικής εργασίας, ενώ πλήττει με διαφορετικούς τρόπους άνδρες και γυναίκες διαφορετικών εθνότητων, ηλικιών και κοινωνικών τάξεων. Εκτιμάει δε ότι η περίοδος αυτή συνέβαλε στη συνειδητοποίηση του ρόλου του κοινωνικού κράτους και ανέδειξε τη σημασία της φροντίδας. Επανέρχεται έτσι στη θεωρητική πρόταση για μια οικονομία φροντίδας, όπως την έχει αναπτύξει μια μεγάλη ομάδα φεμινιστριών οικονομολόγων, με τον τίτλο "Μωβ Συμφωνία".

Όσες και όσοι γνωρίζουν την Μαρία Καραμεσίνη, εύκολα θα συμφωνήσουν μαζί μου ότι εξαντλεί τις δυνατότητες των στατιστικών δεδομένων τα οποία συγκεντρώνει και επεξεργάζεται για να παρακολουθήσει τη δύσκολη πορεία ένταξης των γυναικών στην αγορά εργασίας και τις προσαρμογές σε μεταβαλλόμενες συγκυρίες. Είναι βέβαιο ότι έχει συντελεστεί μια "αθόρυβη επανάσταση", όπως την αποκαλεί, γύρω από τις αντιλήψεις για τη σχέση των γυναικών με την αμειβόμενη εργασία και την εμπλοκή τους σ' αυτήν: η εργασιακή ζωή θεωρείται πλέον συνεχόμενη

και μακράς διάρκειας και συνδέεται με την επένδυση σε σπουδές και την απόκτηση δεξιοτήτων. Εγκαταλείπεται η λογική της περιστασιακής δουλειάς και του συμπληρωματικού εισοδήματος σε περιόδους ανάγκης, ενώ η σταδιοδρομία και επαγγελματική εξέλιξη αποτελούν προτεραιότητες μεταξύ των νεότερων και πιο μορφωμένων γυναικών. Οι όποιες αλλαγές δεν είναι ανεξάρτητες από ευρύτερες εξελίξεις, που έχουν να κάνουν τόσο με αναδιαρθρώσεις στην οικονομία, για παράδειγμα με την ανάπτυξη του δημόσιου τομέα και τη θηλυκοποίηση του τομέα των υπηρεσιών, όσο και με τον έλεγχο της γονιμότητας σε συνάρτηση με τις επιδιώξεις στην επαγγελματική ζωή, ή την ανάληψη μεγάλου μέρους της οικιακής εργασίας και φροντίδας από μετανάστριες μετά το 1990.

Όμως τα στατιστικά στοιχεία έχουν τα όριά τους, όπως επισημαίνει και το βιβλίο, καθώς συλλέγονται με διαφορετικά ερωτήματα, ορισμούς και προτεραιότητες από εκείνα τα οποία συγκροτούν την προσέγγιση μιας φεμινίστριας οικονομολόγου. Έτσι, συχνά δεν επαρκούν για να διερευνήσουν όσα είναι σημαντικά για τις γυναίκες, με όλες τις διαφοροποιήσεις μέσα στην κατηγορία φύλου. Σε κάθε περίπτωση, η Μαρία Καραμεσίνη υιοθετεί, και με τη δουλειά της προχωράει, μια φεμινιστική προσέγγιση της οικονομίας, αξιοποιώντας κριτικά ένα ρεπερτόριο επεξεργασιών και μεθόδων της οικονομικής επιστήμης. Η συγκέντρωση στον τόμο αυτό κειμένων που έχουν γραφτεί και αναφέρονται σε μια περίοδο σχεδόν σαράντα χρόνων επιτρέπει να παρακολουθήσουμε συστηματικά και με μεγάλη λεπτομέρεια εξελίξεις, ανατροπές, πισωγυρίσματα και προχωρήματα στο θέμα της εργασίας των γυναικών και των σχετικών πολιτικών.

Για όλους τους λόγους που επεσήμανα στη σύντομη αυτή παρουσίαση, και για πολλούς ακόμη, το βιβλίο αποτελεί σημαντική προσθήκη στη βιβλιογραφία και συμβάλλει στην τεκμηρίωση και κατανόηση της συνολικής εργασίας των γυναικών στην Ελλάδα και την υπόλοιπη Ευρώπη.

*Ντίνα Βαϊού,  
Εθνικό Μετσόβειο Πολυτεχνείο*

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