



POWER2YOUTH

Multi-level Factors of Youth Exclusion and Inclusion in Greece

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Maria Mexi and Tristan Boursier¹

Abstract

This report contains a discussion of the main findings emerging from a study of the role of young people in the Greek anti-austerity mobilizations in 2011. After a brief discussion of how the recent economic crisis sharpened young people's social and labor market exclusion, we undertake an analysis of the main domestic factors - both policy (factors related to labour market and social inclusion) and organizational (factors to pertaining social and political engagement) - that provided the backdrop of young people's radicalization and their participation in the Greek Indignant movement. In the final parts, the particular characteristics and events of the May/July 2011 mobilizations are elaborated. The report concludes by delving into the transformative impact of the anti-austerity movement and its effects on the national context.

Keywords: Youth | Political movements | Greece | Economic crisis

INTRODUCTION

This report is developed in the context of Work Package 5, "Global Youth", which is part of the project Power2Youth. The aim of Work Package 5 is to add a comparative perspective to the project by looking into the experiences of socio-economic transformation in two European (Greece, Ireland) and one extra-European (Brazil) country with a view to assessing their relevance to the challenges facing the youth in the South Eastern Mediterranean (SEM) region.

The present report is the outcome of a study conducted on the case of Greece. The economic crisis starting in 2008 has led to rising unemployment and shrinking GDP in Greece, resulting in severe deprivation and social exclusion of large parts of the population. Over the early crisis years, economic hardship generated a set of grievances which a great number of Greek people sought to express in the unconventional realm, through mass protests and demonstrations. Most notably, in May/July 2011 a new movement was given rise, the Greek Indignants (or *Aganaktismenoi* in Greek), which organized large-scale, massive protests in several big cities across the country. Although the 2011 Indignant movement was not a youth movement *per se*, it was characterized by the participation of thousands of young Greeks who expressed their dissatisfaction with political elites and the two major (socialist and right-wing parties) that had led the country to the brink of economic catastrophe, failing to ensure a safe future for the young generation. Hence, the economic crisis in Greece was linked in with pre-existing political crisis, broadening critiques of the Indignants to the entire political system and fostering requests for "real (direct) democracy now". One of the biggest impacts

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of the 2011 Indignant movement was that it disrupted the old certainties of Greek politics that show the collapse of its two-party system and the emergence of new, both left and extreme-right wing, actors with an explicit anti-austerity agenda. Despite this immediate impact, the Greek Indignants were not able to bring forward an overwhelming shake-up of policies and institutions, and to change the course of their country. Today the movement participants, especially the young people, are still vulnerable, scorned, and unable to set their claims on domestic policy agendas.

The report is structured as follows. Section 1 provides a general overview of the socio-economic and political context within which the 2011 mobilizations occurred, followed by a close examination of the impact of the 2008 economic crisis in Greece. Section 2 offers a comprehensive presentation of the general situation of young people before and after the 2011 mobilizations, focusing also on how the economic crisis has sharpened their social and labour market exclusion and povertization. This is followed by section 3, which highlights the main domestic factors - both policy (factors related to labour market and social inclusion) and organizational (factors to pertaining social and political engagement) - that affected youth engagement and inclusion and provided the backdrop of their radicalization and their participation in the Greek Indignant movement in 2011. Next, in section 4, the particular characteristics and events of the 2011 mobilizations are elaborated. Finally, the report concludes by delving into the transformative impact of the Indignant movement and its effects on the national context. Data for this research were collected through: i) a review of the academic literature, including the study of national policy and historical documents, articles, reports and papers published in national and international academic journals, and ii) interviews with key informants.

1. COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Greek economy entered into a recession in 2008. Since then, Greece has negotiated three bailout memoranda of understanding with its creditors (known as “The Troika”, namely, the European Central Bank, the European Union, and the International Monetary Fund) which prescribed a series of harsh austerity measures involving salary and wage cuts, reductions in social spending, flexibilization of the labour market and privatization of public entities and services (Zografakis and Spathis 2011). The combined effects of the recession and the austerity measures applied over the early crisis years² can be summarized as follows:

- Between 2008 and 2012, the average total income of wage-dependent households fell by 13.5 percent. The reductions were higher for low income households (2,604 to 8,782 euros in 2008) ranging between 16.4 percent and 34.6 percent vis-à-vis the middle- (11,000 and 14,000 euros) and high-income households that experienced reductions between 9.3 percent and 11.7 percent.
- Between 2008 (2nd quarter) and 2014 (2nd quarter), the unemployment rate increased from 7.3 percent to 26.6 percent. The “new” generation of unemployed persons were previously dependent employees (743,000) and previously self-employed persons (355,000) in various sectors such as construction, agriculture, tourism and other

² For a detailed analysis see Giannitsis and Zografakis (2015: 37-38, 42).

- commercial and business activities).
- Between 2008 and 2014 (2nd quarter), the number of employees in low-paid part-time or temporary employment increased by 30.3 percent between 2008 and 2014 (2nd quarter), while underemployment increased by 144,400 persons (15-74 years old).
 - Between 2009 and 2013, public employees and employees in public utilities saw their salaries cut by 8.0 percent and 25.2 percent respectively. Also, the salaries of employees in the non-banking sector were reduced by 19.1 percent.
 - Between 2008 and 2014, the rate of youth unemployment (15-29 years-old) increased from 15.5 percent to 44.3 percent.
 - Between 2009 and 2013, extreme poverty significantly increased from 2 percent to 14 percent. Overall, as Giannitsis and Zografakis (2015: 65) emphatically point out: “the enormous economic and social re-ranking of broader parts of population within such a short period, which besides its economic importance has also serious social and political implications. Pauperization much more than inequality is the most radical outcome caused by the current crisis in Greece”.

Besides its immediate social impacts, the economic crisis soon came to be seen as a crisis of the political system, the pathologies of which - as Lyrintzis (2011: 2) writes - extend “back to the past decades and have to do with much discussed questions as the fiscal profligacy of the Greek state, clientelism and corruption, the populist practices of the Greek political parties, the inefficiency of the state machine and last but not least with the institutional and political problems within the EU and the euro-zone”. Since the collapse of the military junta and the restoration of democracy in 1974, two parties namely, the right-wing New Democracy (ND) and the socialist PASOK dominated the Greek political system. By building strong, interconnected patronage and clientelistic networks in the state and in the public sector (Sotiropoulos 2001), PASOK and ND were able to monopolize political power. As Pappas (2010) notes:

Already by the elections of 1981, the Greek party system had been transformed into classic two-partyism, meaning that the two major parties, PASOK and ND, would now compete against each other for the absolute majority of seats and the winner would be able to govern alone. Two-party dynamics fed sharp ideological polarization between the major power contenders and, consequently, the continuous politicization of the Greek state. To win at the polls, each party had to outperform its rival in number of state jobs and other patronage benefits offered to the people.

The relationship between patronage, party politics, and clientelism is instrumental in explaining why major policy reforms generally fail in Greece. As Lyrintzis (2011: 7-8) observes: “during the last twenty years Greece witnessed a series of ill-fated and/or ineffective reforms in all areas including education, transport, health, the labour market, local government and the social security system”. Policy reform inertia and clientelism continued to characterize Greek politics (though to a lesser degree) in the first years of the crisis when a series of reforms, which were part of efforts to modernize the state and the economy, were found difficult to implement. As stressed by Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou (2012):

Whether Greece can implement significant economic reforms is primarily a political issue and the outcomes achieved will depend largely on party politics. More specifically, there is a trade-off between providing economic solutions on the one

hand and retaining political accountability on the other. Most modern democratic systems tend to be characterised by an adversarial government and opposition dynamic, whereby each party represents the interests of their voters. In clientelistic systems, such as the Greek polity, however, this dynamic is lost. This is because the voter-party relationships tend to be mediated by corruption.

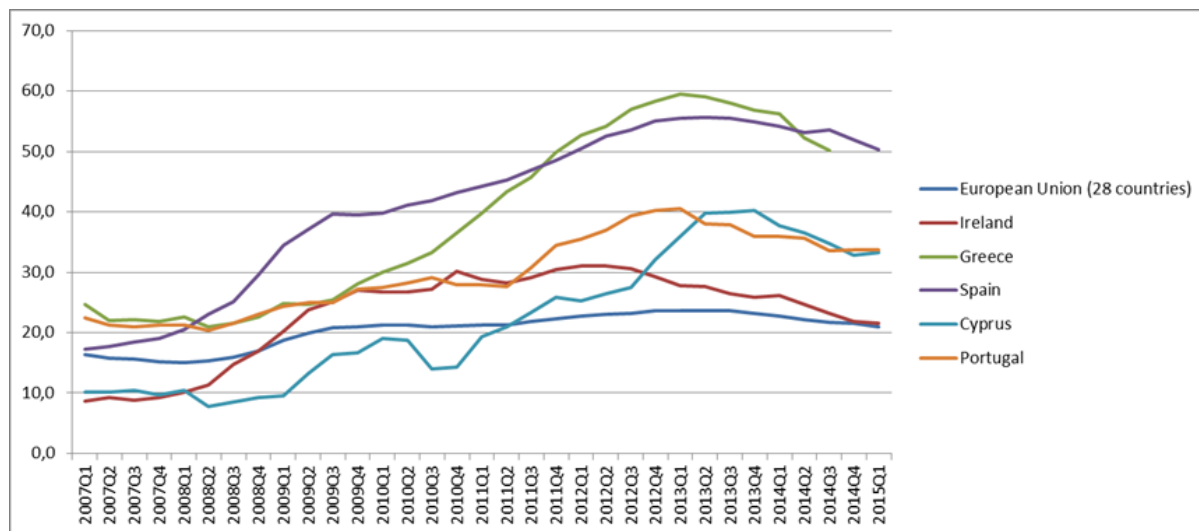
Almost two generations of Greeks have been raised with the perception that patronage and clientelism, which are structural elements of the Greek political culture, should be not only tolerated but even encouraged and rewarded. However, the economic crisis gradually made Greek citizens realize that the misuse of resources by politicians and systemic corruption were the main causes of the country's economic failure and the reason behind the implementation of a harsh austerity programme which was not going to end soon. One major effect of the above situation was disappointment, recognition of parties' and politicians' unreliability and lack of trust. Characteristically, according to Eurobarometer (Spring 2013), during the first crisis years, 90 percent of Greeks (not only the young generation) tended not to trust their government, and 89 percent tended not to trust the country's parliament. Also, in terms of confidence in political parties in the country, only 4 percent of Greeks trusted political parties and 80 percent of Greeks did not trust the European Union (European Commission 2013: 41-44). Feelings of disappointment, pessimism and despair played a role in spurring Indignants' mobilizations in 2011, which were soon escalated throughout the country and became much more aggressive and confrontational than those which had taken place before the crisis.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In Greece, "[r]oughly a tenth of the population (1.1 million people) is under 25 and another 1.5 million are aged between 25 and 34. [A large proportion of them are] well-educated, well-travelled and politically aware. But it appears that opportunities for them to make a positive contribution to Greek society in the years to come are going to be severely limited" (Malkoutzis 2011: 1). Young people (aged 15-29) in Greece have been more adversely affected by the crisis than in the other crisis-driven countries (Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus). This holds true for all indicators considered - employment, unemployment, long-term unemployment and NEET youth (neither in employment, education or training).

More specifically, before the 2011 mass mobilizations of the Indignant movement, youth unemployment had been increasing from about 30 percent in 2009 (when the crisis started) to about 50 percent in 2011. Also, since 2013, while in all crisis-affected countries (with the exception of Cyprus) youth unemployment started to decline, the decline is observed since 2014), in Greece it remained at a high level of 50.1 percent (Figure 1).

Figure 1 | Youth unemployment rate in crisis-affected countries (2007-2015)



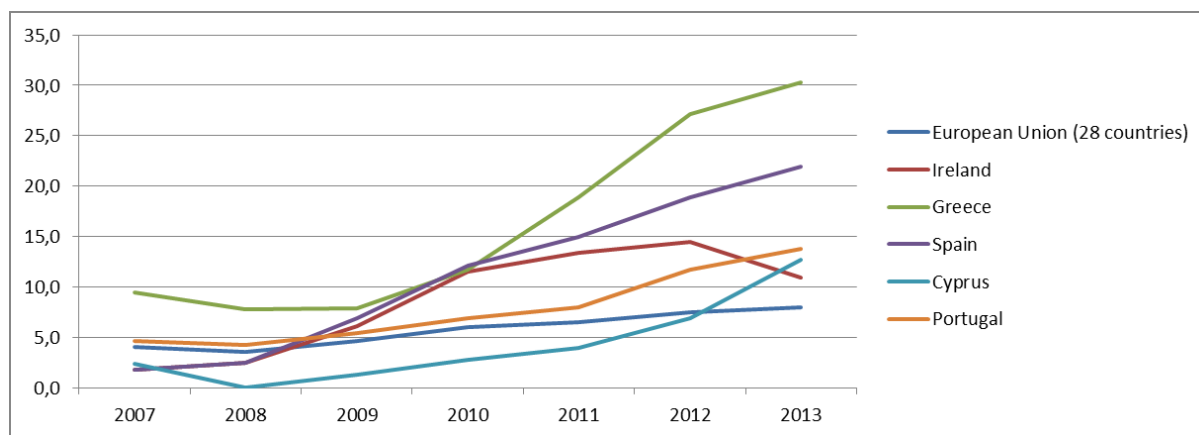
Source: Kraatz (2015: 2).

A European Parliament 2015 report states that, in general, while economic adjustment is ongoing,

young people tend to be disadvantaged when entering the labour market due to limited or no work experience, a mismatch between the skills young people possess and those demanded by the labour market, a lack of career management and job search skills or access to professional networks, as well as a higher share of temporary contracts (Kraatz 2015: 2).

Further, before the 2011 mobilizations, youth long-term unemployment had been increasing from about 8 percent in 2009 to about 20 percent in 2011, and it has continued to climb, reaching 30 percent in 2015 (Figure 2).

Figure 2 | Youth long-term unemployment rate in crisis-affected countries (2007-2015)

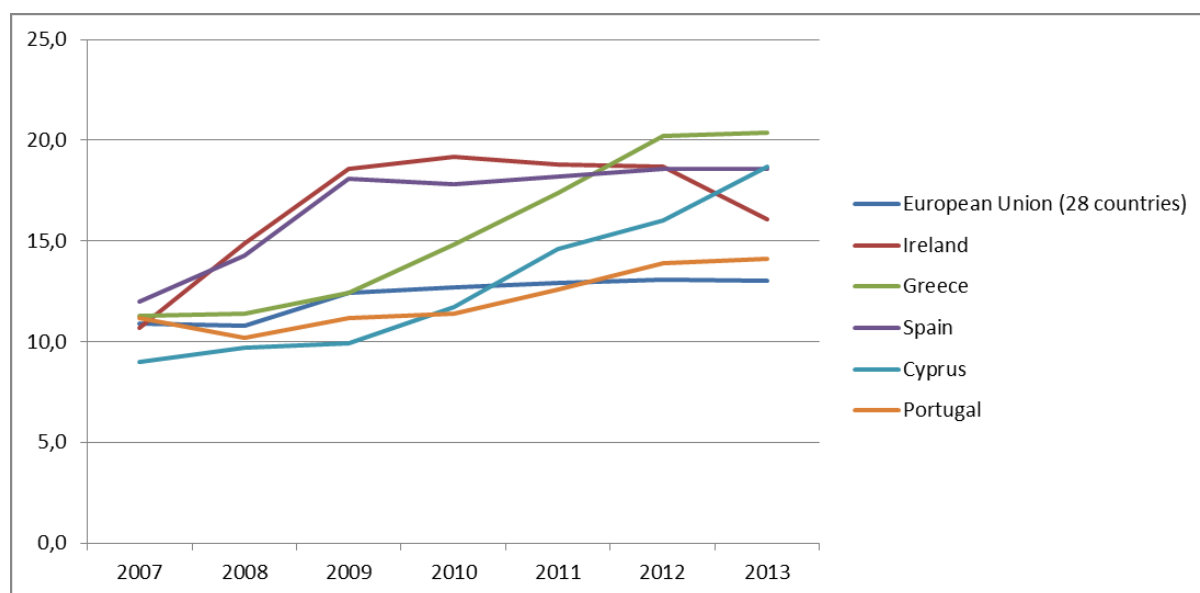


Source: Kraatz (2015: 3).

In terms of gender differentials, Greece is characterized by the highest long-term unemployment in the European Union, while “female activity rates and employment-to-population ratios are consistently lower and unemployment rates higher for females than for males in the Greek labour market” (Kraatz 2015: 5, see also Bell and Blanchflower 2015).

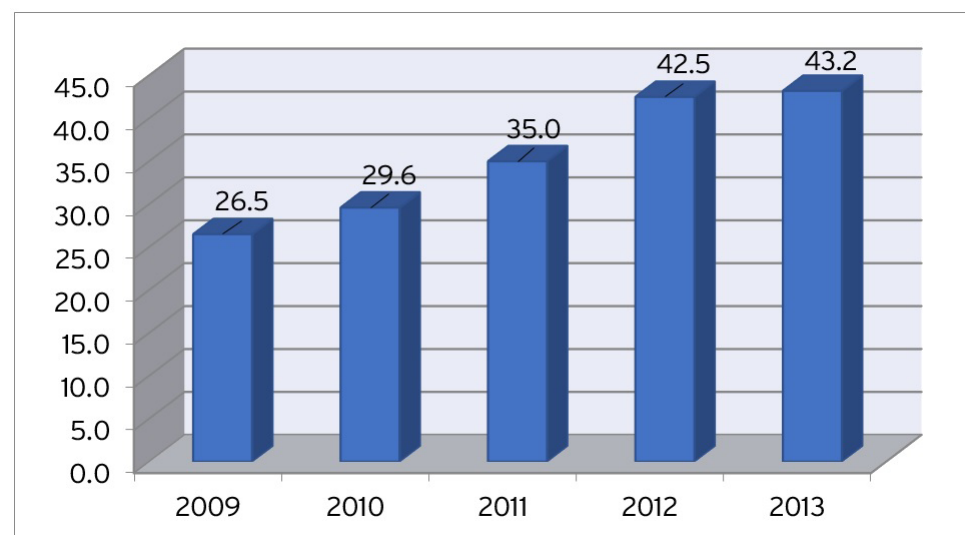
In addition, the rate of NEET youth encompassing involuntarily inactive, discouraged and unemployed young people has nearly doubled since 2007 when it was close to the EU average (Figure 3). It went up from 11 percent to more than 18 percent in 2011, and 20 percent in 2013. This is twice as high as the Europe 2020 target set at 10 percent (Kraatz 2015: 3-4).

Figure 3 | NEET youth rate in crisis-affected countries (2007-2015)



Source: Kraatz (2015: 4).

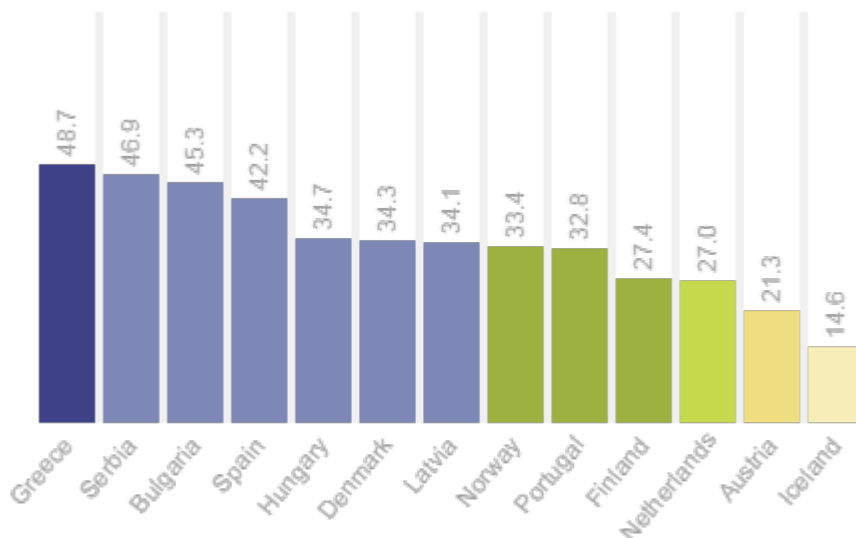
Figure 4 | Greece: Young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (% total), 2009-2013



Source: Eurostat.

What is more, since 2009 poverty the rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion among young people (aged 16-29) climbed from 26.5 percent to 35.5 percent in 2013 (Figure 4) and further to 48.7 percent in 2015 (Figure 5). Hence, Greece is currently the country with the highest rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion among young people in the European Union.

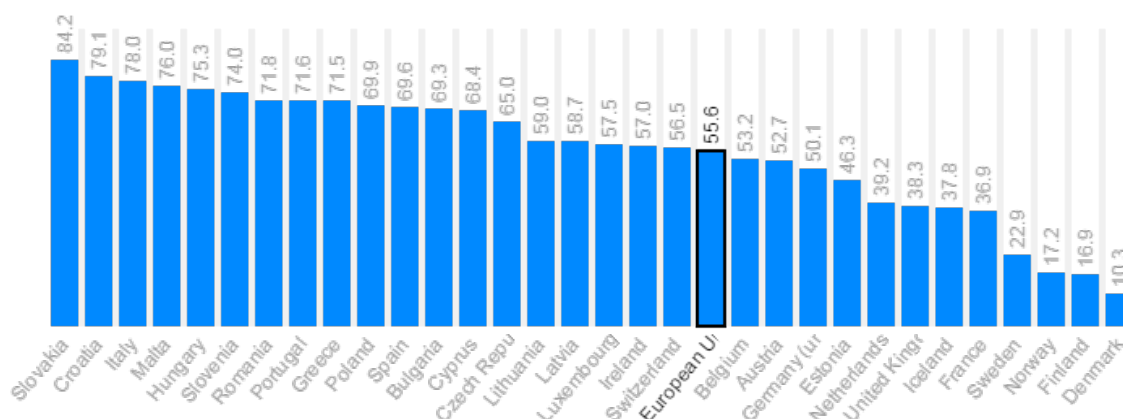
Figure 5 | Europe: Young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (% total), 2015



Source: Eurostat.

Greece is also one of the EU countries with the highest share of young people (aged 20-29 years old) living with their parents (Figure 6). In a context of severe public cuts which have led to the abrupt dismantling of the welfare state, "a strong family safety net [...] diminish the visibility of unemployment, underemployment and inactivity. Most NEETs live with their parents, brothers or sisters and many have health insurance provided by the company of their parents" (Kraatz 2015: 5).

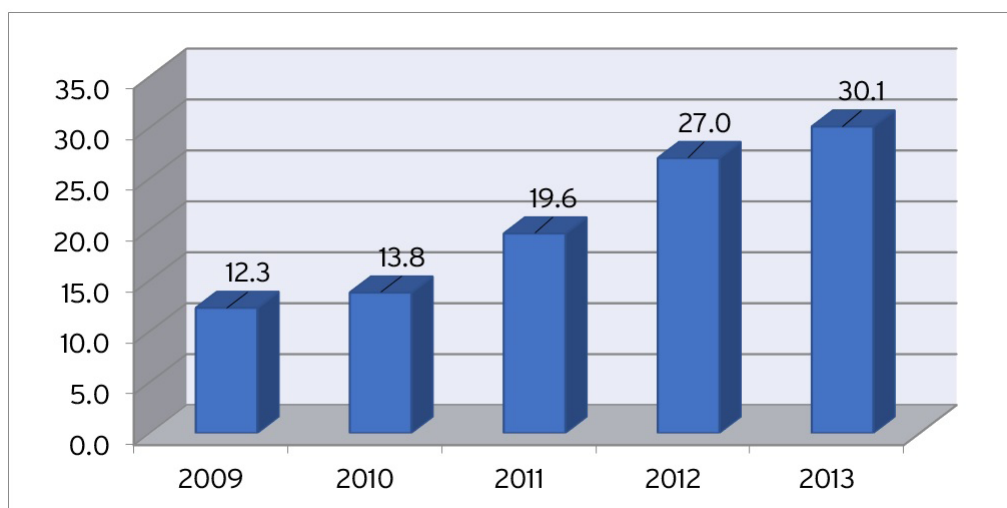
Figure 6 | Europe: Share of young people at risk of poverty, living with their parents (% total), 2015



Source: Eurostat.

To grasp the evolution of the indicator, the share of young people at risk of poverty and living with their parents increased from 12.3 percent in 2009 to 19.6 percent in 2011 and up to 30.1 percent in 2013 (Figure 7).

Figure 7 | Greece: Share of young people at risk of poverty, living with their parents (% total), 2009-2013



Source: Eurostat.

All in all, against the background of povertization, large groups of Greece's young population have been experiencing increasing precarity and labour market and social exclusion. Their precarious conditions in terms of their economic future has translated into heightened fear and loss of hope for the future that have pushed many of them to leave the country. As Volontè (2012) perceptively observes, Greece and Europe as a whole are facing the risk of losing an entire generation. This is patently true, as more than 200,000 talented young Greeks with university degrees and skills have left the country since the onset of the economic crisis (Chrysopoulos 2015, Smith 2015). Moreover, according to a 2010 research run by the University of Macedonia, the overwhelming majority of graduates (84 percent) who had left Greece the period 2009-2011 were not considering coming back (Malkoutzis 2011: 2). This is "the biggest brain drain in an advanced Western economy in modern times" (Smith 2015). Given this loss of skilled human capital, it is extremely difficult to "figure out how the Greek economy will be able to see light at the end of the tunnel and how recovery and development can be achieved" (interview with a Greek university professor).

The high emigration levels (or the "diaspora option") can be concisely explained as the result of the Greek economy's inability to keep pace with the knowledge of a highly educated and skilled emigrants (Labrianidis and Vogiatzis 2013, Khaleeli et al. 2013), which is reinforced - as we have seen above - by a number of persistent structural problems, such as patronage, clientelism, corruption, patronage, and policy reform inertia. These issues have generally been seen by young people as significant barriers to their social mobility and career development.

What really stands out though is that precarity and increasing exclusion have given rise to an acute intergenerational crisis, fuelling discontent and indignation among the young people

(Ishkanian et al. 2013). Young Greeks will hardly manage to carry the burden of an ageing population - exacerbated by the economic crisis and austerity measures - if they are not given the education, training, skills and labour market opportunities required to become economically active citizens (interview with a Greek university professor). As a result, over the early crisis years many young people came increasingly to share “a pervasive sense of powerlessness in relation to the issues that [we]re affecting their own economic and social prospects” (Berry 2012: 3), which provided the basis of their mobilization. As described in more detail below youth grassroots activism and political mobilization were strengthened and intensified particularly during the 2011 mobilizations of the Indignant movement. In those collective mobilizations, young demonstrators did not simply voice their opposition to austerity policies. They actively struggled for better education, jobs and a better future.

3. FACTORS OF YOUTH EXCLUSION IN A CONTEXT OF CRISIS

3.1 Policy Factors

Policy discourses in the Greek context have traditionally raised concerns about youth unemployment and youth at risk, while concerns about what constitutes effective policy responses became more prominent after the onset of the 2008 economic crisis. Combating youth unemployment was a policy priority already before 2008. A number of policy interventions were implemented such as active labour market policies targeting vulnerable youth, re-training and re-skilling programmes, counselling and guidance for starting a business in various sectors such as agriculture, commerce, ICT etc. Other measures included provision of job-search guidance and counselling for long-term unemployed (OECD 2013).

Policy interventions intensified after 2009 in a context of rising - as discussed above - youth unemployment. In 2010, the OECD encouraged Greece to take concrete measures to support youth in the labour market. In particular it urged Greek authorities to:

Raise labour market flexibility and tackle poverty. Improve activation policies. Target existing employment subsidies on the most disadvantaged youth. Reduce employment protection legislation and tackle the widespread dualism in the labour market, through the introduction of a single contract with moderate protection against dismissal. Ensure that the minimum wage does not act as a disincentive for hiring young people. Encourage more decentralized wage bargaining by avoiding administrative extension of collective agreements to parties not directly represented in the agreements. Reform the tax and benefits system to limit widespread poverty among the working population. (OECD 2010: 2)

Very few of the above proposed measures have come to be implemented by Greek authorities due to continued political instability, policy inertia as well as budget constraints. As Kraatz (2015: 9) notes with regard to active labour market policies (ALMP):

Looking at data on ALMP expenditures and staffing of the Greek PES confirms that budget constraints currently severely limit the scope of labour market measures and service modernisation. Total ALMP expenditure by PES was more than halved from 2011 to 2012, down from EUR 986.3 million to EUR 440.7 million and has not

recovered since.

Moreover, a number of structural idiosyncrasies of the Greek labour market pose certain barriers to the efficiency of policies. In particular,

Weak demand for labour together with a prevalence of micro- and small enterprises and a high share of informal employment hampers the effect of targeted ALMP measures, such as training or subsidies for employers. Low readiness on the side of employers goes together with high resource-intensity to serve them and to change perceptions. (Kraatz 2015: 8)

Given the absence of support mechanisms and effective policies,

young Greeks are mostly left to fend for themselves without a structured environment in which to identify vacant positions and apply for them. [...] The Greek Manpower Organisation (OAED) and the Ministry of Education's General Secretariat for Youth both run limited, often poorly-communicated, programmes aimed at smoothing the transition from studies to work. (Malkoutzis 2011: 5)

Moreover, Greece - in compliance with the bailout agreement and the austerity measures agreed with the Troika - adopted a number of measures with sometimes ambivalent effects for young peoples' employment prospects. For instance, the minimum wage for people younger than 25 years was reduced by 32 percent. Kraatz (2015: 4) stresses that: "The practice of setting a youth minimum wage at lower level than the standard is applied [in Greece as well as] in many countries, including in the EU, and has sparked a controversial debate on wage discounts for young people, ethical aspects and employment effects." Further on, as work and social protection are strictly connected in Greece, those young Greeks who have been left out of the labour market have also been excluded from certain social and health benefits (LIVEWHAT 2014a, 2014b). In particular, "as many social rights (e.g., sickness leave, parental leave or pensions) also are related to a person's employment situation, individuals in precarious work are lacking both adequate employment and social protection" (LIVEWHAT 2014b: 9). This lack of protection for the excluded young Greeks shows that the state has been unable to provide support even for a substantial issue like employment.

Based on recent policy impact analyses, none of the employment and training-oriented measures taken after the crisis has effectively worked, as youth unemployment, poverty and social exclusion have been uninterruptedly rising. Challenges remain and have become even more intensified (interview with a Greek policy-maker). As Kraatz (2015: 8) emphatically note: "strategies to combat youth unemployment in Greece have to cope with a double challenge: to set up capable systems, services and ALMPs in an economic context where resources are scarce and an impact is less certain". Finally, given that Greece is ageing, recent policy assessments (Kraatz 2015, European Commission 2014) have brought forward the difficulties pertaining to policy decisions on whether resources should be allocated to designing and implementing measures to address the needs of an ageing workforce or to cater for the younger workers who "live in conditions of increasing precarity, anger, and fear about what the future holds" (interview with a young Greek activist). This calls for a structured policy environment and well-targeted measures to facilitate:

better access to jobs and a respectable standard of living [...] This includes better guidance for young jobseekers, training programmes that reflect market realities, incentives and support for new entrepreneurs, schemes to attract Greeks to return from abroad and a restructuring of tertiary education to better prepare students for the demands of the Greek job market. (Malkoutzis 2011: 6)

3.2 Organizational Factors

There is a general consensus among the academic community that in the period from the establishment of a democratic political system following the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1974 and up to the 2008 economic crisis, civil society in Greece was feeble and weak (Mouzelis and Pagoulatos 2005, Sotiropoulos and Karamagioli 2006, Huliaras 2014, Sotiropoulos 2014, Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014a). Traditionally, Greek people have been characterized by low levels of attachment to civil society organizations (CSO), revealing - as Sotiropoulos and Karamagioli (2006: 64) write:

an overall picture of apathy and disengagement of Greeks from civil society. Only a limited segment of citizens are involved in civil society activities. The majority of Greeks do not participate in non-partisan political activities, nor engage in any voluntary work [...]. The depth of citizen commitment is not at all encouraging, in terms of the amount of time and investment the average individual is prepared to make. Certain groups, such as the poor, socially marginalised and young people are less well represented and involved in civil society than would be hoped.

This tendency has been confirmed in several studies conducted in the 90s and the 2000s. Characteristically, a pan-European study conducted in 2010 reveals that, while 22 percent of Europeans were involved in voluntary activities in Greece the respective number goes down to less than 10 percent (GHK 2010: 61). As for youth, Greek young people seem to maintain a strong interdependence with their families but not with the society at large. As a 2012 survey conducted by the Greek General Secretariat of Youth shows, 81.1 percent of young Greeks (who took part in the survey) had never taken part in civil society activities; it is noteworthy that only 3.2 percent had taken part in activities of a charity or philanthropic organization, and only 5 percent in activities of a trade union and a political party (Chrysostomou 2015: 4). In general, in Hadjiyanni's words (2010: 20): "Every social scientist studying civil society in Greece or documenting and measuring social capital at the societal level [...] agrees that civil society in Greece is cachectic, atrophic or fragile".

Throughout the literature, the factors identified as having prevented the creation of a strong civil society can be seen to vary. For some, party patronage and clientelism - that are inherent to the Greek political system, as discussed above - have put limits to the development of a strong civil society sphere. Sotiropoulos and Karamagioli (2006: 23) argue that:

First, Greek parties have managed to mobilize citizens in a way, and to an extent, that no other non-state organisation has been able to do since Greece's transition to democracy in 1974. [...] Second, interest groups and some CSOs, such as peace organisations and women's movements, used to be dependent on political parties for

personnel, infrastructure and other resources. [...] Third, participation in elections, which is one possible way to legitimise existing political parties in modern democracies has been consistently very high. Over the last 25 years the two strongest political parties, the conservative New Democracy (ND) and the socialist Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), have shared about 75-80% of the vote between them. As in most democratic societies, parties have collected, articulated and channelled the demands of society towards the Greek state, as no CSO has been able to do. While the Greek system of government is definitely democratic, the state's control over CSOs is quite high.

In a same vein, Mouzelis and Pagoulatos (2005: 93) stress:

All through the late 1980s political parties competed for the control of organised groups and trade unions. Later, as additional civic, non-governmental organisations timidly began to emerge, political parties continued to pursue the colonisation of the associational sphere. Thus, over the postauthoritarian period, the balance between the party system and civil society was skewed at the latter's expense.

The economic crisis was however a turning point for associational activity and civic engagement in Greece. Due to the adverse socio-economic effects of the crisis, voluntary participation in activities of alternative action organizations (AAOs) was increased. As suggested by a recent cross-national research conducted by the FP7 LIVEWHAT project (LIVEWHAT 2016: 1):

AAOs fall within the spectrum of the emerging social and solidarity economy (SSE). AAOs are all around us. They refer to varying forms of co-operative, associative and solidarity relations. They include, for example, cooperatives, mutual associations, NGOs, self-help groups, barter networks, food banks, free medical services, soup kitchens, new cooperatives, associations of informal sector workers, social enterprise and fair trade organizations and networks.

Interestingly, the research finds that more than half (56.2 percent) of the AAOs in Greece were formed after the crisis hit the country that is, from 2008 to 2015, in response to emergency needs of vulnerable groups affected by the intensity of the austerity measures. The findings of this study are confirmed by several other previous surveys conducted by scholars and analysts studying civil society in Greece (see e.g. Ritzaleou 2011, Kaika 2012, Bourikos 2013, Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014a and 2014b, Huliaras 2014) and by the results of a survey on the involvement of young people in newly emerging AAOs conducted by the Greek General Secretariat of Youth (2012). The survey shows that, by 2013 a large share (78.3 percent) of the young population that took part in the survey had participated in activities organised by AAOs and that 43.4 percent of the survey participants had not participated in similar activities before (Chrysostomou 2015: 4-5). Hence, the crisis has served as a "catalyst" in fostering youth social engagement oriented towards actions of solidarity and social inclusion. Yet, more than the welfare state or the civil society, the family still remains the prime provider of social support and inclusion in Greece - a characteristic which is typical of Southern European welfare states (Lyberaki and Tinios 2014).

Besides fostering social engagement, the crisis can be seen to have played a significant role in limiting youth engagement with traditional forms of political participation for instance, becoming a member of a political party and in spurring interest in activities located in the unconventional realm such as, political protests (Theocharis 2011). This can be associated with young Greeks' growing loss of faith in their political representatives and major political parties, which came to be seen as part of the status quo (interview with a Greek journalist). In the words of Malkoutzis (2011: 3):

The first clear indication of this rejection of the political system came in the local elections of November 2010 when the abstention rate reached just over 50 per cent. This unprecedented figure was seen by many commentators as a rejection by young Greeks in particular of the ideas and values of the existing political parties.

The popular discontent among young people found expression in the Greek Indignant movement. As described in more detail below, the 2011 demonstrations "had two core themes that attracted young people: rejection of the current politicians and parties and opposition to the austerity measures that have accompanied the financial assistance package from the Eurozone countries and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)" (Malkoutzis 2011: 4). Anger was directed not only against the political elites but also against the representatives of the trade unions, reflecting young Greeks' heightened discontent with their precarious situation in the labour market. While the political representatives had sacrificed the future of young generation on the altar of political ambition and greed, the trade unionists had failed to protect their rights in the labour market and to fight for their interests.

To conclude, the role of economic crisis was crucial in fostering youth participation in the realm of social and solidarity economy activities, thereby reversing deep-rooted social patterns related to weak associational engagement and political parties' patronizing relationship with civil society. It also triggered self-expression through unconventional political participation and influenced the rhetoric and claims of the 2011 "antisystemic" (Wallerstein 2014) Indignant movement. Yet, the dynamics of this change in youth activism (in both politics and civil society) have not been enough to give rise to a "supporting and contextual environment that promotes and sustains their impact further" (Tsaliki 2010: 154).

4. YOUTH MOBILIZATION AT CRITICAL TIMES

The previous sections provide an overview of the socio-economic and political context in Greece that preceded the 2011 mobilizations of the Indignant movement and gave rise to grievances which were subsequently fed into the protestors' claims and demands. The wave of mass mobilizations of the Greek Indignants fomented a set of escalating grievances and discontent whose impact on Greek politics is far from negligible. As has been rightly argued, "People with grievances seek to express them, and they do so by raising their voice or by exiting. They raise their voice to the extent that they are organized and have an opportunity to do so - in the electoral arena as well as in the direc[t]-democratic or in the protest arena" (Kriesi 2012: 518).

More particularly, since 2010, the Greek government as part of the First Memorandum of Understanding agreed with the Troika had taken a number of harsh austerity measures which, based on the promises of the PM George Papandreou, “would get Greece back on its feet” (BBC 2011). The new 28 billion-euro austerity plan spread frustration, anger and discontent among the Greek population, taking people to the streets in a series of mobilizations that culminated in May/July 2011. In particular, on 25 May 2011 “multiple calls-outs appeared in social media (especially on Facebook) calling on people to protest peacefully, without holding any party flags or banners” (Simiti 2014: 5). As Koronaïou et al. (2011) write: “The protests included strikes, marches, the occupation of the Syntagma square in the centre of Athens as well as the occupation of public buildings mainly by the public sector’s syndicates. Similar protests had taken place in other Greek cities too like Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Heraklion, etc.” “Some of these events were massive with more than 500.000 people protesting” (Giovanopoulos and Mitropoulos 2011).

Protestors were clearly inspired by the Arab Spring demonstrations, marches and sustained campaigns that took place in Tunisia and Egypt and particularly by the tactic of occupying central public spaces such as the Syntagma (meaning “Constitution”) square opposite the Parliament in Athens from 25 May until 7 August 2011 (interview with a Greek university professor). As Della Porta (2015: 23) notes, occupation of central public space was much more than just a tactic, it also involved creating a new (Classical Athenian) agora where protestors in daily assemblies debated a number of issues “from organizational matters to economic and social alternatives and constitutional reform” (Douzinas 2013: 135). At its peak, more than 10,000 protestors participated in the assembly in the Athens Syntagma square where protestors used the social media to communicate directly with Spanish protestors gathered in Puerta del Sol in Madrid (Giovanopoulos and Mitropoulos 2011). Such type of assemblies – as Castells (2012) argues – are defined by their grass-roots, self-organized, inclusive and diverse character, their lack of hierarchical structure and the use of social media for broadening the call for publics to mobilize.

Protestors participating in the assemblies of the Syntagma square demanded an end to austerity policy and criticized the functioning of representative democracy calling instead for: “Direct Democracy Now Equality – Justice – Dignity” (Giovanopoulos and Mitropoulos 2011: 280). As Simiti (2014: 7) notices, Greek Indignants, by calling for direct models of democracy, “distanced themselves from the Spanish Indignados’ call for ‘Real Democracy Now’” while their claims for

direct, unmediated forms of popular sovereignty (such as referenda) often expressed their belief in the unified will of the Greek ‘people’. For protestors this homogeneous body would render any genuinely representative government strong enough to defend the national interests and restore the country’s lost pride. Thus claims for genuine democracy entailed often demands for a stronger and more effective state (Simiti 2014: 9).

During the protests many slogans directed against the political and media establishment were used (Tsaliki 2012: 3, Simiti 2014: 9), for instance: “Burn, burn this brothel, the Parliament/ Thieves! – *moutza*” (this was directed against political representatives across the spectrum who were seen as thieves; also, the protestors used the *moutza* – the gesture of the extending

palm - which is a traditional gesture of insult. The *moutza* was directed by the protestors of the Syntagma square towards the Greek Parliament). "Terrorism won't go through" (meaning the austerity policies had been arbitrarily imposed by the Greek government and the Troika on people and this was seen as an act of terrorism). "Traitors/Sell-outs, the country will never die", "Traitors, Traitors! Justice, Justice!", "Take the traitors to Goudi" (this was directed against the mainstream politicians who were perceived as traitors who deserved a death punishment as the officials held responsible for the Greek military defeat in Asia Minor in late 1922 - they were executed in Goudi, an area in Athens). "Mega, Antenna = dictatorship; we want democracy" (this was directed against the two major tv channels in Greece, which were seen as part of the status quo, holding close ties with the politicians and the banks).

Also, many of the Indignants' slogans were drawn from, or adapted to, slogans which were used during past demonstration. For instance, the 2011 protestors employed some of the slogans which were used by students during the victorious Athens Polytechnic uprising against the military junta in 1973, such as: "Junta was not over in 1973, we are going to finish it here in this square" and "Bread, education, freedom, junta was not over in 1973". These slogans were used by the 2011 protestors to symbolize the continuous struggle of the Greek youth against authoritarian and oppressive regimes over the years (Koronaïou et al. 2011). In some other instances, the Indignants' mobilizing messages were drawn from milestone events of Greece's glorious past. Hence, the protestors used posters and banners displaying the heroes of the Greek revolution in 1821. The message coming out of this was that the bailout agreement constituted a humiliating defeat for Greece (ceding sovereignty to the Troika and especially to Germany) and that the country had to revolt against the Troika and corrupt mainstream politicians just like the oppressed Greeks revolted against the Ottoman Empire (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013).

Within these caveats, as it has been widely argued, the Greek Indignants was a movement characterized by acute ideological divisions (for more details see Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013) spanning the left-right political divide, while also encompassing elements testifying to the resurgence of right-wing extremism in Greece (Ellinas 2013, Fragoudaki 2013). For Simitis (2014: 21):

This remarkable coexistence of oppositional political forces would not have been possible without significant prior shifts in Greek political culture, which illustrate rigorous questioning of post-1974 representative democracy and the rise of new political cleavages in the Greek party system.

Such critical processes of questioning led to - as explained below - upsetting a 30-year-old domination of the Greek *two-party* political system.

On the one hand, there were those drawing on left-wing claims for social justice, equality and direct democracy; on the other hand, there were the extreme-right protestors, who saw Greece's imminent bankruptcy as an issue of national disgrace; they "protested holding Greek flags, while portraying foreign lenders, Parliament, parties and politicians as dangerous forces that had led to the humiliation of the Greek nation" (Simitis 2014: 9). Interestingly, what brought these two conflicting groups of protestors together was "their common opposition to the memorandum and official political institutions" (Simitis 2014: 7). Hence, fighting back

against austerity and “reclaiming democracy” seem to be the two major mobilizing themes of the Greek Indignant movement and what substantially shares in common with the movements that brought people into the streets in Madrid, Cairo, or London in 2011-2012 (Ishkanian et al. 2013).

Besides ideological divisions, the 2011 protests attracted a socially diverse groups of protestors who belonged to a broad range of social strata and age groups: 12.9 percent were university students, 13.2 percent were self-employed, 13.7 percent were unemployed, 13.7 percent were public servants, 14.6 percent were pensioners, and the majority 23.8 percent of protestors were private employees. Moreover, 60 percent of the protestors had bachelor’s degrees, and 8 percent had a post-graduate degree. In terms of age composition, the majority 27.4 percent belonged to the 35-49 age group, while 25.3 percent belonged to the 25-34 age groups (Chiotis 2011, Kollia 2012, Simiti 2014: 16-17). Moreover, based on a Public Issue survey conducted between 7 to 10 June 2011, 59 percent under 25 said they took part in the protests (Public Issue 2011, Malkoutzis 2011: 3). Thus, the Greek Indignant movement was a movement “in which ordinary people of all educational backgrounds and ages” participated (Rüdig and Karyotis 2014: 508) or, put it differently, “a broad social and inter-generational alliance [...] firmly grounded in material conditions, since austerity measures affected the greater part of Greek society” (Simiti 2014: 17).

Although the Indignant movement was not a youth movement *per se*, young Greeks were one of the groups with an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards the May/July 2011 mobilizations: 70 percent of Greeks under 25 said in the Public Issue survey that the protests were for them a very significant political event (Public Issue 2011, Malkoutzis 2011: 3). One central idea that may help understand mobilization of the Greek young Indignants in 2011 is precarity, which has been a key driver of youth mobilization in Europe over the past decade. Precarity as a mobilizing concept is linked to an entire social condition for Greek and European youth, who face uncertain futures. This uncertainty revolves around rising youth unemployment, lack of decent work opportunities, weak social protection, and uncertain macroeconomic prospects. Before the economic crisis, Greek youth was called the “generation 700 euros”: 25-35 year-olds holding under-paid temporary jobs and having to come to grips with persistent job insecurity. Over the years, young Greek’s precarious situation gradually escalated feelings of anxiety and anger against political and financial elites; it also brought youth together into a single collective entity on the basis of which it became possible to mobilize when waves of austerity cuts in the crisis era made their future look even bleaker. If these issues were already at the centre of youth lived experiences before the economic crisis, the crisis situation contributed to intensifying their relevance and salience (interview with a Greek researcher) and linked them to earlier local struggles for social and political change (Hadjimichalis 2013).

CONCLUSION

In contemporary Greece, young people live in conditions of adversity, precarity and difficulty, which have provided the basis for their political mobilization in earlier years. The rapid deterioration of socio-economic conditions since the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, followed by sustained policy incapacity to mitigate the negative effects, has been one of the main reasons underlying the 2011 protests of the Indignant movement. This has translated into dissatisfaction with and rejection of the political system and the functioning of (representative) democracy. The young Indignants in Greece were the most vulnerable segments of Greek society who were “angry at being locked out of their lives” (Chakraborty 2011). Douzinas (2013: 137) has argued that the 2011 protestors “was not an abstract social category but a material coming together of people in public spaces; a crowd with a common political desire, which was the radical change of the political system”. Kriesi (2012) has argued that the mobilization potential of the Greek Indignants did not come out of nowhere, but it pre-existed in long-established patterns of patronage, clientelism, nepotism and corruption that mostly characterized the political system. As Kriesi (2016: 68) writes:

In any given society there are more or less latent mobilization potentials linked to the structural conflicts, which predate the crisis and which pre-structure the way the crisis mobilization will play out. The mobilization potential newly created by the crisis adds to this already existing stock of grievances that has already been present at the time of the intervention of the shock of the crisis. In different ways, the crisis may serve as a catalyst for protest mobilization.

This means that the 2011 Indignants’ mobilizations need to be understood within a wider historical framework capturing the evolution of Greek politics and society, involving “the de-legitimization of the political system in general, the increasing disengagement from formal political processes and young Greeks’ growing readiness to adopt forms of radical activism” (Koronaïou et al. 2011).

Indeed, increasingly, for the young Greeks especially as well as for public opinion as a whole, the economic crisis was transformed into a political one. It was not just an issue of revoking the “Memorandum” austerity packages imposed by the Troika, but an issue of punishing the corrupt political elites who had led the country to the brink of economic catastrophe. As Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou (2015) have argued:

As the crisis progressed, Greek citizens increasingly lost their trust in the system. [...] As the state became increasingly perceived as unable to limit the socioeconomic impact of the crisis on individual citizens, the legitimacy of the system was called into question. What was discredited was not only the ability of the government to formulate sound economic policy, but the very foundation of Greece’s post-dictatorship era.

Such frames led to radicalizing young protestors not only toward the far-left (those who demanded social justice and equality) but also toward the far-right (those who demanded that Greece reclaim its lost national sovereignty) of the political spectrum, thereby pointing to a “two-way radicalization” of youth in Greece (Koronaïou et al. 2011).

In the aftermath of mobilizations, most scholars and analysts seem to agree that the Greek Indignant movement has had a crucial role in transforming the two-party party system that had dominated Greek politics for 30 years. Simiti (2014: 14) has argued that the movement “set in motion political changes that altered the established political landscape”. In particular, in 2011, the socialist government under George Papandreou that had signed the bailout agreement with the Troika in 2010 was forced to resign under fierce popular pressure. The country was under political turmoil. A new technocratic government was then formed (from November 2011 to May 2012) with the mandate to carry out the bailout agreement with the Troika and pave the way for new national elections. The 2012 elections (conducted twice, in May and then again in June, as no political party was able to form a government in the first place) show the electoral disintegration of the two parties of the old establishment (PASOK lost more than 30 percent of its 2009 electoral votes and ND lost 15 percent) and the rise of new actors, such as SYRIZA which had a clearly anti-austerity and anti-bailout agenda. SYRIZA, a new party established in the 00s (vis-à-vis ND and PASOK which were founded in the 70s and the 2000s respectively) became the largest opposition party after the 2012 June elections and the governing party after the 2015 January and 2015 September elections.³ Aslanidis and Marantzidis (2011: 138, 152) have claimed that: “The populist discourse of the indignados was crucial in unleashing and legitimizing a torrent of feelings of injustice, pointing to the political caste as betraying the people, relinquishing national and popular sovereignty to foreign centers of power.” This discourse eventually “contributed moral and affective arguments to disgruntled voters, facilitating their defection from decades-old entrenched political affiliations. Therefore, the indignados’ role is crucial in understanding the monumental volatility of the May 2012 ‘earthquake’ election.”

Nevertheless, despite its significant impact on the party system, the 2011 movement was not able to sustain its momentum. As it has been argued, the movement’s “failure to inhibit the flow of austerity bills” (Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016: 126) together with its “inherent limitations (lack of a specific political agenda, organisation and representation) as well as its harsh suppression by the police” (Koronaïou et al. 2011) caused it to fade away. Given its lack of sustainability, the movement does not seem to have brought about an overwhelming radical social change (interview with a Greek journalist). Precarity, insecurity, social exclusion, remain strong for most parts of the Greek youth population. Subject to these caveats, it may be argued that

[w]hile the Indignants movement was able to find a synergy with young Greeks in terms of what they do not like (corrupt, unaccountable politicians and lower pay, more taxes and greater insecurity), it was less successful in reflecting what they would like instead. In this sense, the Indignants failed to move from protest to politics. (Malkoutzis 2011: 4)

Indeed, none of the current political parties (new or old, left, centre, or right wing) have so far put forward compelling policy agendas that are inclusive to young people’s needs and voices (and other voices at risk of marginalization).

³ For a detailed analysis of the events of that period and their impacts on the party system see Kriesi (2012, 2016).

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Interviews

Interview with a Greek university professor, June 2016

Interview with a Greek journalist, June 2016

Interview with a Greek policy-maker, June 2016

Interview with a young Greek activist, June 2016

Interview with a Greek researcher, July 2016

Interview with a Greek university professor, July 2016



POWER2YOUTH is a research project aimed at offering a critical understanding of youth in the South East Mediterranean (SEM) region through a comprehensive interdisciplinary, multi-level and gender sensitive approach. By combining the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres and a macro (policy/institutional), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level analysis, POWER2YOUTH explores the root causes and complex dynamics of the processes of youth exclusion and inclusion in the labour market and civic/political life, while investigating the potentially transformative effect of youth collective and individual agency. The project has a cross-national comparative design with the case studies of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Turkey. POWER2YOUTH's participants are 13 research and academic institutions based in the EU member states, Norway, Switzerland and South East Mediterranean (SEM) countries. The project is mainly funded under the European Union's 7th Framework Programme.

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