

Greece

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Introduction

Since 2008 Greece has been experiencing an unprecedented economic crisis. The deep recession and the harsh austerity policies implemented since then have influenced all aspects of social life, as large parts of the population have suffered great loss of income, while Greek youth have witnessed one crisis after another from rising unemployment, poverty, insecurity, fear and anger to pessimism regarding the future. One of the most crucial effects of Greece's economic crisis has been the enormous economic and social class re-ranking of large parts of the population (going from middle to lower class), which—besides its socio-economic importance – has had significant implications for the Greek society at a cognitive level. Almost two generations of Greeks have been raised with the perception that political corruption, patronage and clientelism should not only be tolerated, but 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 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. Other "side-effects" have to do with the rise, as Alevizou (2015) points out, of "new ecologies of (alternative) political creativity and civic agency. These have been channelled by larger, but also smaller-scale mobilisations, local assemblies as well as grass-roots and solidarity initiatives, nurturing a culture that desires social change". Yet, while informal, community-based acts of solidarity have been rising, there is evidence that other forms of solidarity, enshrined in the Constitution and fulfilled through the functioning of a social welfare state, have suffered certain setbacks amid austerity backlash.

This chapter is divided into three parts.¹ The first section offers an overview of the socio-cultural foundations of solidarity capturing the rising forms of civic engagement and social solidarity as a result of the State's inefficiency to address mounting social needs. The second section looks at the constitutional entrenchment of the principle of solidarity and its use by the domestic courts in the framework of recent austerity measures. The last section deals with the ways 'solidarity' is applied to different legislative fields and its implications for vulnerable groups, while drawing an agenda for future research.

Solidarity Action and Civil Society

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 commercial and business activities).

1 Special thanks to Professor Maria Kousis and Stella Zambarloukou for their insightful comments on earlier outputs of the research.

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

- 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”. The economic crisis was however a turning point not only for coming to realise the pathologies embedded in the Greek political culture, but also for associational activity and civic engagement, which up to that point was generally considered feeble and largely atrophic.

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 weak (Mouzelis and Pagoulatos 2003; Sotiropoulos and Karmagioli 2006; Huliaras 2014; Sotiropoulos 2014; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014a, 2014b). Traditionally, Greek people have been characterised by low levels of attachment to civil society organizations (CSO), revealing – as (Sotiropoulos and Karmagioli 2006, 64) write:

...an overall picture of apathy and disengagement of Greeks from civil society. Only a limited segment of citizens is 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 revealed that, while 22 percent of Europeans were involved in voluntary activities in Greece, the respective number went down to less than 10 percent (European Commission 2010a, 61). As for youth, Greek young people seem to maintain a strong interdependence with their families but not with 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 organisation action, and only 5 percent in activities of a trade union and a political party. In general, in Hadjiyanni's words (cited in Huliaras 2014, 4): "Every social scientist studying civil society in Greece or documenting and measuring social capital at the societal level [...] agrees that [Greek] civil society 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 in the Greek political system, as discussed above – have put limits on the development of a strong civil society sphere. Sotiropoulos and Karamagioli (2006, 23) argue that:

.. Greek parties have managed to mobilise 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... 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. ... 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 the same vein, Mouzelis and Pagoulatos (2002, 7) 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 post-authoritarian period, the balance between the party system and civil society was skewed at the latter's expense.

Due to the adverse socio-economic effects of the crisis, voluntary participation in alternative, formal and informal, solidarity-driven initiatives, actions, groups and organisations was increased. Journalists and scholars (Bourikos 2013; Douzinas 2013; Huliaras 2014; Pantazidou 2013; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014a, 2014b; Kousis et al 2016; Simiti 2017) intensely talk about a rise of citizen groups which cooperate, organise and manage many activities, such as alternative exchange networks, local economies, social clinics and other informal groups and networks. According to Kousis and Paschou (2017, 140), these emerging solidarity groups and networks have been described in the literature³ as:

...diverse repertoires of citizens' direct solidarity actions and aims, with economic as well as a socio-political transformative capacity, which are alternative to the mainstream/dominant capitalist economy, or aim at building autonomous communities. They usually flourish during hard economic times marked by austerity policies, multiple, compound inequalities, governance problems, the weakening of social policies, as well as the depletion of labour and social welfare rights.

Their emergence, as recent evidence suggests, is noticeable not only in Greece but also in those South European countries harder hit by the crisis (Spain, Italy). In these crisis-hit countries, social and solidarity structures, exchanges and networks aim at strengthening community practices to

3 In fact, there is rich literature addressing the potential of the emerging social and solidarity economy in both developed and developing countries, involving an array of grassroots exchanges and networks that address unmet needs (such as food e.g. Lambie-Mumford 2012; Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen 2012; Phillips 2012; health e.g. Stuckler and McKee 2011; and education for citizens e.g. Conill et al. 2012), mobilising unused resources, engaging in collective provisioning, democratic self-management, and managing common pool resources (Laville 2010; Dacheux and Goujon 2011). In Greece, social and solidarity economy constitutes an emerging area of research. Petropoulou (2013) studied its theoretical origins and a first typology and evaluation have been advanced by Greek scholars (Kavoulakos, Gritzas and Amanatidou 2012).

meet basic needs such as food, shelter, health and education, change lifestyles towards more sustainable forms of consumption and production, and/or develop new artistic expression (LIVEWHAT Integrated Report 2016).

Parallel to the bottom-up rise of solidarity economy are the efforts of the Greek governments to give a boost to the social economy and social entrepreneurship initiatives. To this end, the Issuing of Law 4019/2011 on "Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship" has allowed the recognition of the Social Cooperative Enterprise (Koin.S.Ep.), as a new legal entity and has resulted in the creation of the "Special Service for Social Inclusion and Social Economy" (EY KEKO). EY KEKO is commissioned with the coordination of policies and the implementation of activities with a view to enabling the Greek Social Economy, "eco-system". The same law established the "Registry Department of Social Economy" within the Ministry of Labour Social Protection Directorate. Furthermore, EY KEKO elaborated the content of the Ministerial Decision 2.2250 / no. 4.105 (Official Gazette 221/2012) regarding the operation of the Registry of Social Economy. It is probably too early to draw conclusions about the sustainability of emerging social economy and solidarity organisations, groups and networks. What is clear, nevertheless, is that new forms and understanding of solidarity, activism and engagement, neither linked to nor dependent on the State, have been on the rise since the onset of the Greek economic crisis, breaking away from established patterns of civil society development and old realities.

Solidarity, Austerity and the Ambivalence of Litigation

Apart from being a feature of the recent growth of Greek civil society, "solidarity" has also been enshrined in the Greek Constitution. In particular, the principle of solidarity is enshrined in article 25, paragraph 4 of the Greek Constitution where it is stated that every adult citizen has the right to participate in the social, economic, and political life of the country. The State and all its agents are directed to ensure that individual rights and liberties are exercised fully. The State may, for its part, call on all citizens "to fulfill the duty of social and national solidarity" (in Greek: "Το Κράτος δικαιούται να αξιώνει από όλους τους πολίτες την εκπλήρωση του χρέους της κοινωνικής και εθνικής αλληλεγγύης"). Interestingly, the constitutional enforcement of solidarity is enshrined in the very same constitutional pro-

vision granting “rights of man as an individual and as a member of the society” (art. 25 para.1), which means that the notion of solidarity in Greece is directly connected to the protection of fundamental rights with the overarching goal of “the achievement of social progress in freedom and justice” (para. 2). In more concrete terms, the principle of solidarity has traditionally been strongly associated with the Greek welfare state (guaranteed by article 25 of the Constitution aforementioned) and particularly the public pension system. As Symeonidis et al. (2014, 38) writes:

After the Second World War, a key contributor to the Greek pension system became the principle of social solidarity, which can be witnessed through the social security bills No. 1846/1951 and No. 2698/1953 concerning the establishment of minimum pension income and No. 4169/1961, according to which farmers were covered through a compulsory scheme funded only through general taxation and not through contributions... After the restoration of democracy in 1975 till today, the principle of solidarity elements commanded further an important position in the Greek public pension system providing generous funding processes and universal coverage. The State guarantees a fixed amount, not equivalent to contributions paid, and the pension levels are not dependent on the range of insured persons or on the amount of contributions....

Over the early crisis years, domestic courts have generally demonstrated an ambivalent attitude towards the ways in which solidarity as well as human dignity and decent living, are safeguarded through the pension reforms implemented as part of the state’s fiscal adjustment efforts. For instance, the Athens Lawyers Bar, the Public Service Trade Union Confederation (ADEDY), the Panhellenic Federation of Public Service Pensioners, the journalists’ union ESIEA, the Technical Chamber of Greece, and the academic personnel of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Crete, together with other associations and individual complainants, brought before the Council of State (CS) the reductions in public wages, pensions and other benefits (case 668/2012). As Psychogiopoulou (2014, 10) notes:

Noting that the disputed pension cuts formed part of a broader programme aimed at tackling the state’s pressing economic needs and at strengthening its financial stability in the long-term, the CS held that the measures were justified by a legitimate aim in the public interest, that is, the state of necessity facing the Greek economy and the need to improve the state’s economic and financial situation in the future. Moreover, the measures reflected the ‘common’ interest of the Member States of the Eurozone to ensure, in line with EU requirements, fiscal discipline and the stability of the euro area. After finding that the pension changes contributed to immediate cuts in public spending and

that therefore they were necessary to attain the objective pursued, the court rejected the argument put forward by the complainants that the legislator should have considered alternative, less burdensome measures to cope with the fiscal and economic challenges facing the country. Besides the pension reductions at issue, broader efforts for fiscal adjustment and economic consolidation were made through a range of fiscal, financial and structural measures. Similarly, the CS did not accept the claim that the disputed measures were disproportionate on account of the fact that they were not purely provisional: the aim they pursued was not merely to remedy the immediate acute budgetary problems of the country but also to strengthen its finances in the long term. Further, a fair balance had been struck between the demands of the general interest and the requirement to protect pensioners' fundamental rights. The pension cuts had not entailed a total deprivation of pensioners' entitlements, resulting in the impairment of the essence of their rights, and they had been designed with due attention given to the needs of vulnerable groups.

With regard to other cases of similar pension cuts that followed, Psychogiopoulou (2014, 10-11) observes:

...the CS confirmed the compatibility of the measures enacted also with Articles 4(1), 4(5), and 22(5) of the Constitution on equality, the obligation of Greek citizens to contribute without distinction to public charges in accordance with their means, and the state's obligation to provide for a social security system.⁴ Taking note of the fact that the disputed provisions eliminated seasonal bonuses for pensioners below 60 years and maintained reduced seasonal bonuses for pensioners above 60 years, the CS held that the criterion of age was not an arbitrary criterion leading to discriminatory treatment. On the contrary, it was an objective criterion, justified first, by the need to protect older pensioners and second, by the fact that a broader pension reform increasing existing age limits for retirement was under preparation⁵.

Over the years that followed, though, the judicial stance was altered with the Court of auditors (CA) ascertaining that:

...the ECHR and the Greek Constitution did not safeguard a right to a pension of a particular amount and accepted that under severe economic conditions, the legislator could adopt restrictive measures to decrease public spending. In doing so, however, due respect for the requirements of Articles 2 and 4(5) Const. should be ensured, so as to preserve adequate living conditions, especially for vulnerable groups, and guarantee a fair distribution of the ensuing

4 Council of State, Cases no. 1285/2012, 2 April 2012; and 1286/2012, 2 April 2012. See also Council of State, Case no. 1283/2012, 2 April 2012; and 1284/2012, 2 April 2012.

5 Law 3863/2010, adopted following the disputed pension cuts, had indeed carried out such a reform, providing for a gradual increase of the retirement age to 60 years (with 40 years of insurance) or 65 years.

economic burden on citizens. According to the CA, in a relatively limited period of time, the Greek legislator had adopted numerous acts to reduce pension and related benefits.⁶ This, in conjunction with repeated legislative action to reduce public wages, amounted to pensioners' and public employees' discriminatory treatment, in breach of Articles 2 and 4 of the Constitution, as well as Article 25(1) of the Constitution on the principle of proportionality and Article 25(4) Const. on the state's right to claim fulfillment of a duty to social and national solidarity by *all* citizens. Further, the draft law raised serious concerns with respect to its compatibility with Article 22(4) Const. on the state's duty to provide for a social security system. A similar line of reasoning was followed by the CA in delivering an opinion on yet another pension-related bill in 2013⁷ (*ibid.*, 12).

It should be stressed that the failure of early litigation in domestic courts can be primarily attributed to the fact that the disputed measures, forming part of the state's first attempts to reduce public spending, were held not to have deprived pensioners of essential means of subsistence to such an extent as to nullify their individual rights. By contrast, the Court of Auditors building on the notion of the "cumulative" effect of the various measures taken in terms of degrading living conditions, several times held that pension cuts were unconstitutional mainly because these added to a number of earlier cuts in pensions and other social benefits. The ambivalence of up to date litigation should be understood in its historical socio-cultural context. All the above mentioned decisions dealt with the first attempts of the Greek state to curb public expenditure through reductions in pensions and social benefits amid austerity backlash, which upset Greeks' old-standing understandings of the welfare state and prevailing conceptions of solidarity as a value and a guiding principle for public policy. Hence, the crisis has raised many questions about solidarity as a moral foundation of public policy and as "the institutional responsibility of the whole polity for a certain contribution to the corporeal needs of the individuals" (Tsoukalas 1998, 1).

6 Laws 3845/2020, 3865/2010, 3986/2011, 4002/2011, 4024/2011 and 4051/2012.

7 Court of Auditors, Proceedings of the 2nd special session of the plenary, 27 February 2013.

The Limits of Solidarity in Practice

The question of whether solidarity constitutes a guiding feature of decision-making among the Greek political elites has arisen many times in public discourse. Very often clientelism and patronage has been seen to have mediated the allocation of resources and subsidies. Along these lines Zambeta (2014, 72) argues that traditionally "...the state, instead of providing for institutional solidarity by guaranteeing quality social services, has acted as an employer promising work placement to the citizenry in the public sector. On the other hand, state bureaucracy has imposed central control to all aspects of public policy encouraging inertia on the part of the civil society". More recently, recession, fiscal consolidation, and austerity seem to have further affected the normative foundation and practical exercise of solidarity and the social welfare state, though the latter are clearly defined in the Constitution as a duty of the Greek state towards its citizens.

Since the onset of the Greek crisis, successive economic adjustment measures have impacted living conditions, and in certain cases violated human rights legally protected at the domestic, European and international levels (Lumina 2013). Indicatively, these measure are:

- Measures affecting the right to work and unemployment risk. Post-2010 austerity reforms severely undermined the realisation of the right to work by shortening notice periods for dismissals and deregulating the system of collective bargaining, and by imposing successive wage cuts and tax increases that lead to the erosion of labour standards and massive lay-offs. Also, by reducing minimum wages, social allowances and unemployment benefits, labour market precariousness intensified (FIDH/HLHR 2014). In the public administration, legislation decreased wage costs and numbers of civil servants.⁸ Government-decreed compulsory work affected a number of different categories of employees.⁹ Also, the crisis disproportionately impacted women and migrants, increasing involuntary work¹⁰ and unfair dismissals due to pregnancy. Conflicts rose in the informal sector employing, in exploitative and unprotected labour conditions, many of

8 Laws 3863/2010, 3979/2011, 3986/2011, 3996/2011, 4019/2011, 4024/2011, and 4052/2012.

9 Truck drivers (2010), municipal workers (2011), underground railway employees (2013), shipyard workers (2013), teachers (2013), and electricity workers (2014).

10 61% of part-timers did not choose this status, an increase of 16% (see ETUI 2013).

the irregular immigrants (see A/HRC/23/46/Add.5, para. 4). Note that the right to work is recognized in the Constitution¹¹ as well as in the regional and international instruments to which Greece is a party. This fundamental right has been most affected by recent legislative and policy changes. The right implies that the State must protect workers from being unfairly deprived of their employment and ensure equal access to employment. The State must take the necessary steps to create jobs and not set obstacles to a person's opportunity to earn their living (obligation to respect); ensure the best possible working conditions for employees and prevent this opportunity from being destroyed by third parties (obligation to protect); and provide the conditions to earn one's living to anyone who lacks this opportunity (obligation to fulfil) (European Parliament 2015, 62). The two Economic Adjustment Programmes, though, entailed a policy of internal devaluation and a series of wage and labour reforms aimed at reducing wage and non-wage costs that helped to curb undue wage pressures.¹² Thus, post-2010 reforms violated standards endorsed in treaties to which Greece is party.¹³

- Measures affecting the right to social security. The right to social security is guaranteed in the Constitution (Article 22§ 5), UDHR (Articles 22, 25), ICESCR (Articles 9, 10), CEDAW (Articles 11, 13, 14), CRC (Articles 18, 23, 26), CERD (Articles 2, 5), and ESC (Articles 8(1), 12, 14, 16, 17). It affords protection to the most vulnerable members of society, guaranteeing to all the minimum goods and services required for a life in dignity (FIDH/HLHR 2014). It is violated by recent measures for pension cuts that entail "a significant degradation of the standard of living and the living conditions of many of the pensioners concerned".¹⁴

- Measures affecting the right to social protection. The right to social security is enshrined in the Constitution (article 22§ 5), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (articles 22, 25), International Covenant on Econo-

11 Under Article 22(1) the State protects the right to work and creates conditions of employment for all citizens.

12 See European Commission 2010b. The Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece, OP 61. The same demands were regularly repeated and specified as appropriate in the successive reviews of the Programmes.

13 E.g. the right to fair remuneration in article 4(1) of the ESC. See Complaint No. 66/2011, Decision on Merits, 23.5.2013.

14 Law 4046/2012 applied the Second Memorandum (p.684: "First as a prior action we will enact legislation to close small earmarked funds in non-priority social expenditures (OEK, OEE)").

mic, Social and Cultural Rights (articles 9, 10), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (articles 11, 13, 14), Convention on the Rights of the Child (articles 18, 23, 26), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (articles 2, 5), and European Social Charter (articles 8(1), 12, 14, 16, 17). It affords protection to the most vulnerable members of society, guaranteeing to all the minimum goods and services required for a life in dignity. Yet, the two Economic Adjustment Programmes imposed social spending cuts affecting pensions, work and social benefits (OECD 2013), thereby entailing "a significant degradation of the standard of living and the living conditions of many of the pensioners concerned."¹⁵

- Measures affecting protection against discrimination. Workers under 25 years in the labour market were excluded from the legally protected minimum salary (European Social Charter 2014, 31). Xenophobia against migrants increased (Racist Violence Recording Network 2013; Muiznieks 2013). According to UN Human Rights Council (2013), the systematic detaining of all irregular immigrants became official policy. Cutbacks were introduced in social services due which have had "detrimental effects on women in all spheres of life" (UN CEDAW 2013), affecting especially female economic autonomy and discrimination in employment, sexual and reproductive rights (Law 90380/5383/738/2012) and protection from violence.

Against this background, the Greek Ombudsman (2012, 4) has warned about the consequences of rising pauperization, by emphatically noting that "the drastic adjustments imposed on the Greek economy and society as a whole, have had dramatic consequences on citizens, while vulnerable groups multiply". Similar warnings have been echoed by the National Human Rights Commission, drawing attention to a "rapid deterioration of living standards coupled with the dismantling of the welfare state and the adoption of measures incompatible with social justice which are undermining social cohesion and democracy" (Greek National Commission for Human Rights 2011).

15 European Committee of Social Rights 2013. Federation of Employed Pensioners of Greece (IKA-ETAM) v. Greece, Complaint No. 76/2012. Decision on merits, 7 December 2012, para. 78.

Conclusion

Recent developments are quite revealing as to Greece's shifting social realities and new understandings of micro- and macro-level forms of solidarity. De Beer's (2005) distinction between "individual" (micro-level) and "institutional" (macro-level) solidarity may be informative in this context. Individual solidarity refers to situations in which single persons decide to contribute to the well-being of others; institutional solidarity refers to types of solidarity that have been institutionalised in the form, for instance, of the modern welfare state and social protection systems. The Greek case as presented in this chapter provides support for the claim that there is a link between austerity and the erosion of institutional solidarity underpinning many post-war arrangements that have created the Greek modern social welfare state and economy. The adverse effects of this linkage have been more painful for vulnerable groups undermining a set of values such as social justice and equity and the moral foundations of public policy-making. Moreover, solidarity as a normative foundation of the Greek welfare state has been challenged by the ambivalent judicial stance over reductions in pensions and social benefits amid austerity backlash.

As a result of the State's failure to provide citizens in need with adequate social policies and services, there is evidence – as we have seen – testifying to the (re-)generation of civil society. Emerging solidarity initiatives and grassroots groups mainly, embodying what Harvey (2000) describes as “new spaces of hope”. These new forms of micro-level solidarity are increasingly functioning as “shadow welfare state. They seem to be filling in historically established “solidarity gaps” in clientelism-driven social welfare provision that have been further intensified by recent policy choices.¹⁶ This undoubtedly calls for a rethinking of the relationship between macro-level solidarity and micro-level acts of solidarity (that is, be-

16 As Gianitsis and Zografakis rightly remark (2015, 13): “the deterioration of the pension system during the crisis and the cuts in pensions have... been a result of domestic political choices that have burdened the pension system, even amid the crisis... the governments facilitated the retirement of large numbers of people who are expected to shift the higher cost to existing pensioners, pushing down the level of pensions. Thus, this mechanism is used as a substitute of social policy and expresses a policy of solidarity the cost of which now falls upon the pensioners themselves, thereby undermining the entire social security system. However, given that solidarity means support to those in need from those who are better-off and not from other weaker groups, it is highly questionable if a policy which forces the

tween public actors and services and civil society and solidarity actors are also on the frontline in the development of responses to urgent and pressing social needs) and its effects on citizens' resilience in times of crisis (Kousis et al. 2015). An examination of this relationship may allow for a better understanding of the possible synergies between citizens' solidarity initiatives and state mechanisms and their potential impact.

Ultimately, a major question that arises from the Greek evidence is whether austerity significantly undermines the objective of the EU 2020 Strategy to build a sustainable and inclusive (therefore, solidarity based) economy. Undoubtedly, the crisis has prompted major policy rethinking across Europe, as tensions emerging from the clash between Europe's social aspirations (as set out in the Treaties) and European economic governance, are exerting dangerous downwards pressure on labour and social rights. Overall, we might ask whether welfare retrenchment and austerity policies do not contradict the place that the European Social Model should have in European construction. Admittedly, a fuller picture could be drawn, if the effects of the crisis and austerity in Greece are studied on a comparative basis that is, by contrasting choices of solidarity notions and crisis management policies across countries. It seems though that a hard look at the failings of the recent past is necessary in order to render new understandings about (transnational and national forms of) solidarity in the future.

weaker groups to redistribute among them a meagre income and aggravates the huge deadlocks of a bankrupt system and the prospects of this part of society can qualify as "solidarity policy".

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