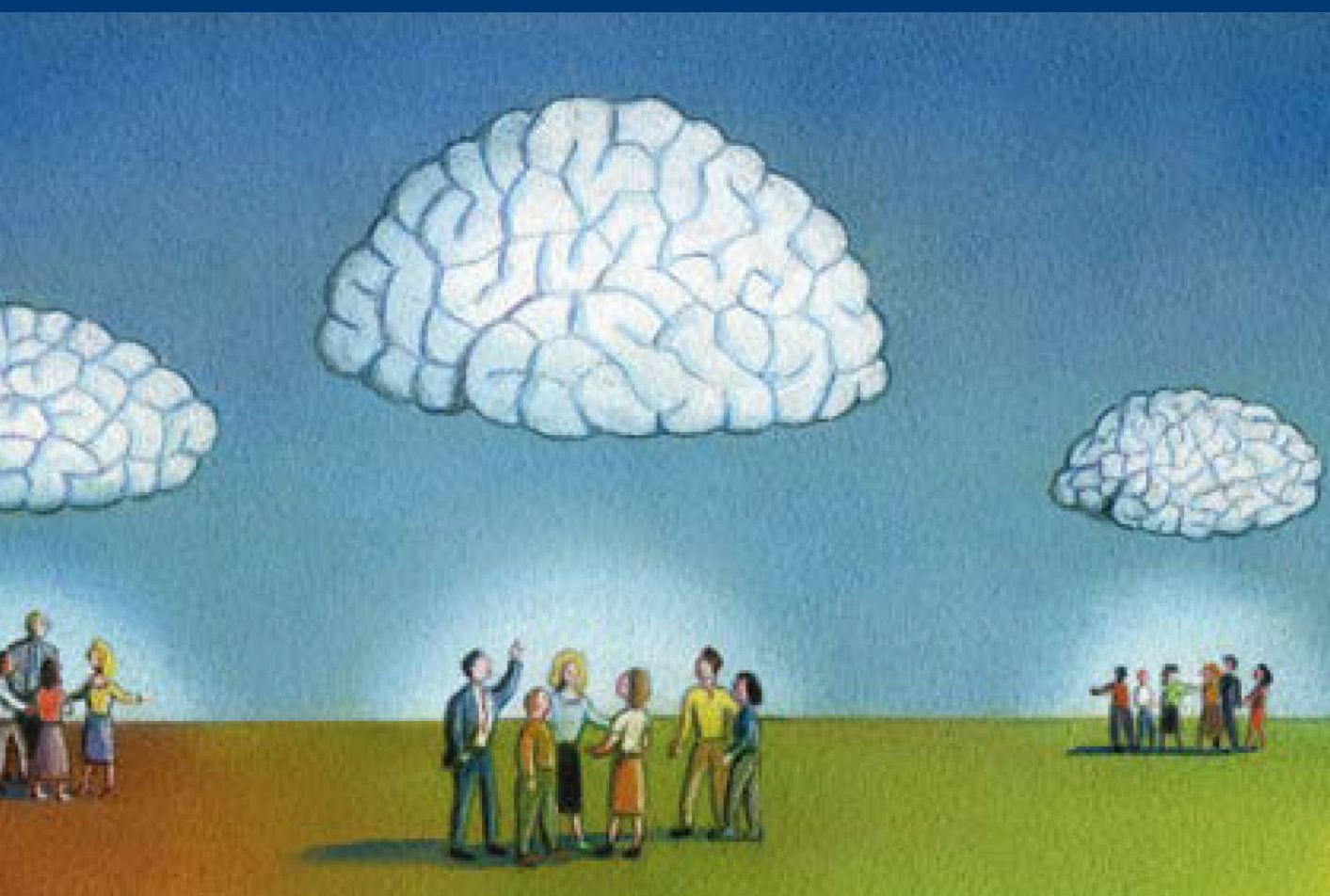


DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN THE EU

The Myth of a Citizens' Union



EDITED BY
STEVEN BLOCKMANS
AND **SOPHIA RUSSACK**

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACTA	Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement
AFCO	Constitutional Affairs Committee
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
CETA	Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CVM	Cooperation and Verification of Progress Mechanism
EC	European Commission
ECI	European Citizens' Initiative
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EEA	European Economic Area
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EMA	European Medicines Agency
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EU	European Union
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EPSO	European Personnel Selection Service
EPIN	European Policy Institutes Network
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
GUE/NGL	European United Left/Nordic Green Left
IGC	Intergovernmental conference
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NHS	National Health Service

OLAF	Anti-Fraud Office
PES	Party of European Socialists
PETI	Committee on Petitions
REFIT	Regulatory Fitness and Performance
S&D	Progressive Alliance of Socialist & Democrats
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UBI	Unconditional Basic Income

13. MOBILISING FOR DEMOCRACY DURING AUSTERITY IN GREECE

FILIPPA CHATZISTAVROU¹

During the post-dictatorial era (*metapolitefsi*), Greece imported the institutional-social model of mass democracy. The economic crisis shocks caused a serious break in this process worsening identity confusion in the country while multiplying the attempts of (re)claiming, at first sight, the fundamentals of a (direct) democratic process. Economic crisis' policies and memorandums have brought out new politicised forms of active citizen participation and progressively cross-class coalitions of anti-austerity protesters. These movements less in their identitarian and more in their protestatory form could have potentially become a favourable political opportunity structure. Hence, does the increase of participation rates of conventional and unconventional forms of mobilization equate with a kind of real democratic breath that signals the beginning of a 'critical juncture'? This chapter examines to what extent participation and mobilisation incentives proved to be capable of bolstering direct democracy or they have been largely taken over by partisan politics.

Introduction

Since its liberation in the early 19th century, Greece has had a long way to go in trying to adapt to Western democratic standards of the French Enlightenment and Anglo-Saxon empiricism. This difficulty has been the subject of various explanations, such as the Byzantine patrimonialism of the state, the Ottoman approach to governing and

¹ Valuable research assistance was provided by Konstantinos Papanikolaou, ELIAMEP Junior Research Assistant.

the Greek elites' obedience to the great powers, as well as the de facto satellisation of the country justified by an underdog culture.²

The two key elements of Greek narrative identity – the Athenian civic democratic ethos and the sense of belonging to the West – have been transformed through biased stories, thus creating well-established and holistic although inaccurate beliefs about normative guarantees for (direct and indirect) democracy.

While the invocation of ancient democracy was supposed to play a major role in the battle against the monarchy in Europe and in favour of citizens' rights in the West, in fact it served as a decisive metaphor for modern liberal democracy, i.e. individualist liberalism in the full sense of the term (Castoriadis, 2008).

Ancient Greeks sought to share social power among all citizens in the open (public) space where freedom was central. However, the free world of the Athenian polity was based on a series of exclusions, namely of women, slaves and metics; furthermore, the social and economic conditions of citizens were not part of the discussion (Castoriadis, 2008). The aim of the 'Moderns' (17th century) has always been to safeguard their private pleasures and they have viewed the freedom offered by institutions as a guarantee of these pleasures (Constant, 1819). The industrialisation of the economy, the rise of the bourgeoisie and then the internationalisation of capitalism promoted a value system that emphasises the liberal variable of the democratic pattern, as an (unequal) combination of a normative Rousseauist conception of the role of the people and an empiricist Lockean conception of the role of the state.³ Liberal democracy established the economic and social conditions within societies as structuring elements of a system where the dominant democratic ethos stems from the principle of representativeness. The fact that the two models – Rousseauist and Lockean – consider political participation in different ways (the first as a means and the second as a goal) did not obstruct the

² In 1994, Nikiforos Diamandouros discerned two cultural political prototypes in Greece, the reformist one and the underdog (i.e. clientelism, corruption, individualism, lack of meritocracy and professionalism, obstructive foreign policy, ottomanism etc.) (Diamantouros, 1994).

³ The conceptual distinction between the two standards suggests that liberalism and political democracy do not necessarily coincide.

establishment or prevent the deleterious effects of mass democracy, through which political participation progressively became a formalistic option for electing small minorities.

Western interpretations of classical Greek democracy as well as the Greek ruling elites' faith in the value system of modern liberal democracy contributed to a 'historical' misunderstanding of a certain continuity between the old and new democratic ethos. In these terms, the country imported an anachronistic, simplistic and moralist Western interpretation of its own invention of democracy as it engaged in the process of integrating into the West and later into the European Communities.

Western interpretations of classical Greek democracy as well as the Greek ruling elites' faith in the value system of modern liberal democracy contributed to a 'historical' misunderstanding of a certain continuity between the old and new democratic ethos.

In light of the historical traumas of dictatorships (junta) and civil war, the country opted for an occasional use of referendums only at critical moments of modern Greek history, while at the same time a culture of resistance towards foreign interventionism flourished.

During the post-dictatorial (*metapolitefsi*) era, Greece imported the institutional-social model of mass democracy, whose main features are broad government intervention in the economy for developmental and redistributive purposes, the organisation of citizens into mass parties, trade unions and social organisations, and development of the welfare state (Manitakis, 2012). The economic crisis caused a serious break in this process, exacerbating confusion about the country's existential identity while increasing attempts to seemingly (re)claim the fundamentals of a (direct) democratic process.

13.1 The reappraisal of more direct forms of participation and mobilisation against contentious politics

In comparison with other European countries, Greece is the only one that consents to living under an eight-year regime of

memorandums of understanding (MoUs).⁴ At a time of crisis and high political volatility, with positions on austerity, immigration and European integration moving to centre stage, Greece has been led to a more or less forced Europeanisation of its national policies. That in turn has contributed to the entanglement of economic issues with the refugee crisis and (national) security concerns (over the Balkans and Turkey). In this context, eurozone requirements for budgetary discipline and structural reforms have been closely intertwined with national political considerations, making it difficult to distinguish national from European issues. Yet, in contrast with other countries where the refugee question has monopolised public debate, economic and social issues related to socioeconomic decline and social fragmentation have been more prevalent in Greece. The refugee issue has received far less popular attention, being mainly instrumentalised by the neo-fascist, extreme right-wing Golden Dawn party.

Since Greece's engagement in the first economic adjustment programme, there has been a reappraisal of more direct forms of civilian mobilisation and social movements. Economic crisis policies and the MoUs have brought out new politicised forms of active

Economic crisis policies and the MoUs have brought out new politicised forms of active public participation.

public participation. In this context, the repertoires of contention of these broad and progressively cross-class coalitions of anti-austerity protesters have combined different types of action: i) demonstrative, confrontational and sometimes violent actions (unconventional forms of both legal and illegal political participation, i.e. threats, symbolic violence or destruction of property); and ii) direct democratic tools and action (conventional forms of legal political participation).

⁴ Greece concluded three MoUs that set out the economic adjustment policies the country was called to implement in the context of its request for financial support from the euro-area EU countries and the IMF. The first programme was based on bilateral loans, and the second and the third were financed by the European Financial Stability Facility and the European Stability Mechanism respectively. The European Commission, the European Central Bank, the IMF and, at a later stage, the European Stability Mechanism (the so-called troika, which then became a 'quadriga') monitored the implementation of adjustment policies.

Actually, the different forms of civilian mobilisation started to spread after the December 2008 events, which contributed to the reinvigoration of various grassroots groups. Meanwhile, following his death, the teenager Alexandros Grigoropoulos became a new icon of resistance for Greek youth against what they perceived as state authoritarianism. For the period 2010 to 2015, the literature distinguishes three waves of anti-austerity mass mobilisation while various local movements were also active. More or less loosely organised and unconventional legal forms of political participation, including new social movements, strikes and protests, reached their climax with the holding of the 2015 referendum on the bailout.

The mobilisation took the form of local demonstrations, some simultaneously in more than one city, with occupations of public buildings, encampment in squares (such as Syntagma Square) and participation in assemblies. The frequency and size of demonstrations had no precedent in the *metapolitefsi* (Sotiropoulos, 2017).

It is clear that while the expansion and the intensity of these movements was significant, their main motive was neither revolutionary nor to contribute to formulating a new political project for Greece and Europe. In principle, revolutionary movements are composed not of deprived, oppressed, annihilated people but of a powerful, highly intellectual minority that cannot stand to see other people suffering (Arendt, 1970). These movements – less in their identitarian form and more in their

While the expansion and the intensity of these movements was significant, their main motive was neither revolutionary nor to contribute to formulating a new political project for Greece and Europe.

protestatory form – potentially could have represented an opportunity for a favourable political structure (Tilly, 1997); yet they were taken over in large part by partisan politics. The direct democracy process should enable or restore popular channels for expressing and outlining a new system of political beliefs, ideas and proposals, not just as a mode for ‘questioning’ people, but as a mode for articulating a new socio-political demand (Laclau, 2005). Instead, Greeks mobilised themselves over what they considered to be political mistakes that had caused an ‘exceptional’ situation. The

main goal of mobilisation was to protest against the bad economic situation through two main channels of criticism.

On the one hand, some of these forms of public expression were intended to condemn the core individualist, dysfunctional values of liberal democracy. At the beginning of the crisis, Greeks experienced the crisis as a means of imposing a new European order, i.e. interdependent economic and political systems where *homo economicus* prevails over *homo politicus*. The imposition of restrictive policies through the MoUs has been classified as an approach that exacerbates the liberal side and strengthens the authoritarian side of the regime (Barber, 2003). Initially, there was an attempt to recall the importance of the organic solidarity of Athenian democracy in contrast with the utilitarian culture of enlightened self-interest on which representative democracy has traditionally been based. Instead of the liberal individualist – and in this sense pluralist – and adversarial conception of modern politics, a more radical conception of the common interest, the steering role of the state and the primacy of the polity over people was even temporarily rehabilitated.

On the other hand, the different waves of popular mobilisation expressed discontent towards the ruling elites that have exercised political power since the *metapolitefsi* and who have been considered responsible for the country's subordination to the economic MoUs and subsequent policies. Here the criticism of the elite might be easily interpreted as an interest in the revival of direct democracy in the 21st century; nevertheless, one should carefully evaluate to what extent these forms of participation and mobilisation represent an alternative or a complementary process to strengthen democracy. Undoubtedly, the Greek political system has been weakened by its embedded, idiosyncratic, confrontational political method and personalistic culture, which has elicited calls for reform since the outbreak of the crisis under a European regime of increasing economic asymmetries and unmutual political reciprocity between EU member states.

One way or another, popular movements in all their variety put into question the loose foundations of liberal democracy in its southern paternalist version. Unsurprisingly, these movements in the new context of post-*metapolitefsi* have become the object of two quite contrasting academic analyses about their 'populist' nature

and the prospects of their inner dynamics becoming tools of further democratic decline or renewal.

On one side, there is a long academic tradition rejecting all forms of populism as “illiberal democratic forms” (Pappas, 2013), and which describes Greece’s *metapolitefsi* as a ‘populist’ one, thus challenging its liberal foundations.⁵ Scholars of this tradition, devotees of representative democracy, have analysed popular attitudes of resentment since 2008 as a phenomenon stemming from a populist underdog culture that is driven by clientelist demands against the rational domestic elite. The latter is presented as a regular part of modernising politics and as being confronted by these anti-establishment (populist) forces.

On the other side, other scholars distinguish different kinds of populism and consider that a large part of these popular expressions represents excluded groups attempting to put forward an egalitarian agenda and hence combine the formal populist core with the legacy of the radical democratic tradition (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014). In this perspective, these forms of mobilisation can be seen as an integral part of democratic politics, as a source of renewal of democratic institutions and as a vehicle for a sought-after redemocratisation (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014).

Without denying Greeks’ propensity for personalistic authority and embedded clientelism (Featherstone, 1990), we pay more attention to the fact that populism as an embedded feature of Greek politics has artificially increased political polarisation and the adversarial nature of the system in order to heighten partisan identity. In this respect, Pappas (2013) talks about strategic and not ideological polarisation. Nevertheless, in the framework of this contextual analysis, the populist argument seems more useful not as a holistic but as a complementary explanation so that we can examine the extent to which these various forms of mobilisation have cultivated democratic reflexes. Therefore, we can go beyond those explanations that use populism generally to demonstrate why Greece has never reached the level of maturity of liberal democracy seen in other countries (Barber, 2003) and that merely analyse the

⁵ Populist Greek political culture is dealt with exclusively within the post-authoritarian period, as the “political culture of the petty bourgeoisie” (Elefantis, 1991) or as a “defensive political culture” (Katsoulis, 1988).

Greek crisis as the result of a systemic compromise between the ruling parties which prevented the country from 'effectively' meeting its EU membership commitments, thus fostering anti-austerity attitudes and protests.

13.2 Varieties and drivers of public participation and mobilisation

During the first wave of mobilisation in 2010, there was an escalation of the traditional social movements of general strikes, demonstrations and intense protests. These involved ordinary full-time employed people of all educational backgrounds and ages from the militant political Left who are most likely to be involved in strikes and demonstrations (Rüdig & Karyotis, 2014). The

The traditional networks of trade unions and voluntary group membership, as well as public sector employment, played a key role in recruiting protesters already engaged in organised political participation through their membership.

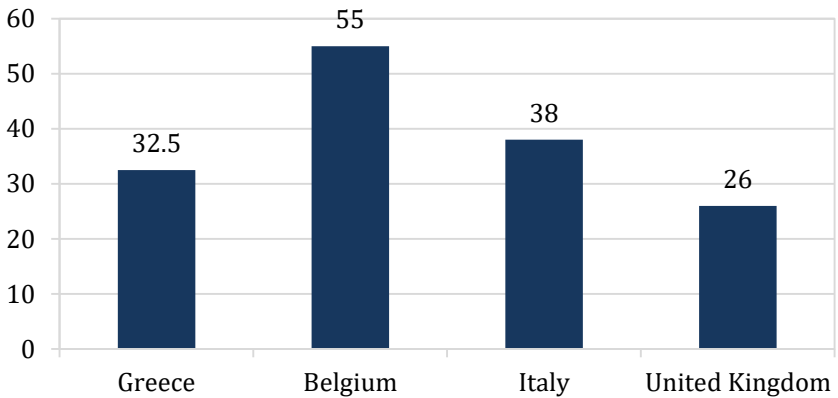
traditional networks of trade unions and voluntary group membership, as well as public sector employment, played a key role in recruiting protesters already engaged in organised political participation through their membership. Still, these networks exerted their influence through previous protest experience.

In other words, those involved were people fully plugged into economic life, rather than people on the margins or outside the labour force. They were the main carriers of this protest movement, organisationally linked to a number of resilient extra-parliamentary leftist groups, trade unions and parliamentary parties of the Left, giving it an 'old politics' flavour (Kassimeris, 2005). As later discussed, the second wave of mobilisation during 2011 can be regarded as a new social movement, focused, however, on issues of material concern.

In the third wave from mid-2012 onwards, a number of large protest events took place. Among them were three national general strikes by public and private sector workers, one workers' rally, two national, general work stoppages (one of which was part of the first strike by the European Trade Union Confederation against austerity) and one march on the commemoration of the university student uprising against the military junta (Kousis & Karakioulafi, 2013).

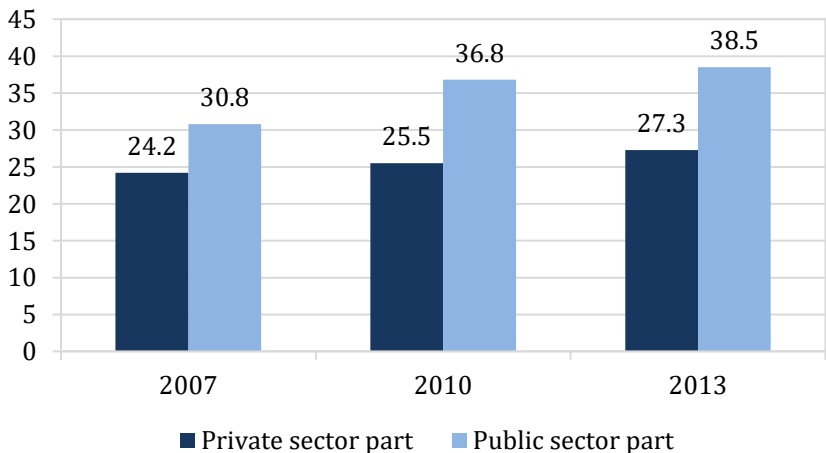
Concerning trade union membership and density in Greece, it has been observed that there is an underrepresentation or no representation in trade unions of the most vulnerable categories of the workforce (Kretsos, 2012). Greece nonetheless remains high on the list of strike-prone countries in Europe, with very conflictual industrial relations (see Figure 13.1 and Figure 13.2).

Figure 13.1 Trade union membership, selected EU countries, 2015 (%)



Source: OECD Statistics (2015).

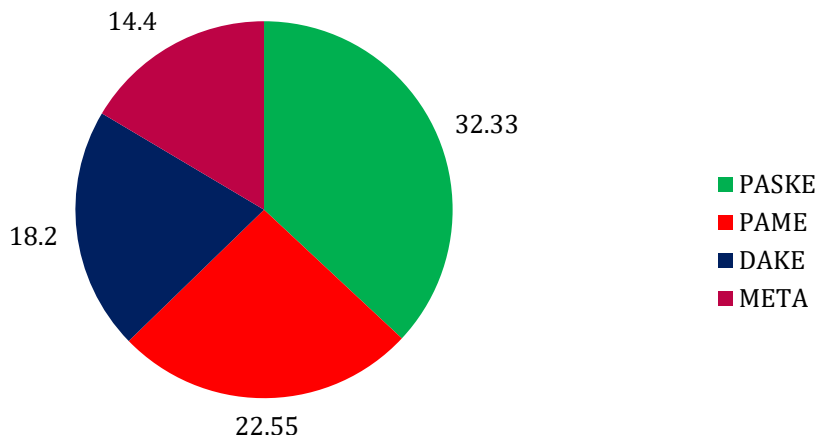
Figure 13.2 Trade union membership, private and public sector in Greece, 2007–13 (%)



Source: Labour Institute, General Confederation of Greek Workers (INE-GSEE) (2014).

Trade unions have historically been dominated by the Socialist Pasok party and the Communist Party of Greece. In the pre-crisis period, Syriza had no real trade union, militant tradition (Tsakatika & Eleftheriou, 2013). Despite Syriza having limited influence in the two biggest trade unions in Greece, Syriza's replacement of Pasok as the main centre-left party in the Greek political system has increased its connections with the main political groups of the trade unions (see Figure 13.3 and Figure 13.4). Yet, in the national parliamentary elections of January 2015, the negative effect of union membership on the Syriza vote indicates that it failed to steadily strengthen its ties with the trade unions.

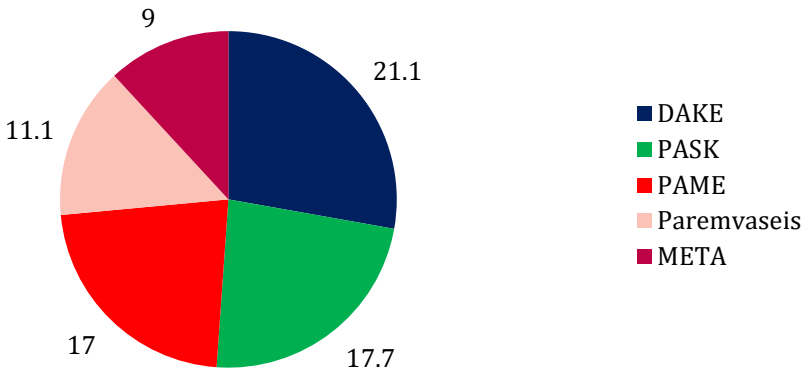
Figure 13.3 Election results by trade union political group, General Confederation of Greek Workers, 2016 (%)



Notes: PASKE is affiliated with Pasok; PAME is affiliated with the Communist Party of Greece; DAKE is affiliated with New Democracy; and META is affiliated with Syriza. Despite the breakup of Syriza during the summer of 2015, the trade union forces of the radical Left section of the party (which has been renamed LAE (Popular Unity)) remained in the same political group with Syriza until the end of 2016.

Source: General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) (2016).

Figure 13.4 Election results by trade union political group, CSC, 2016 (%)

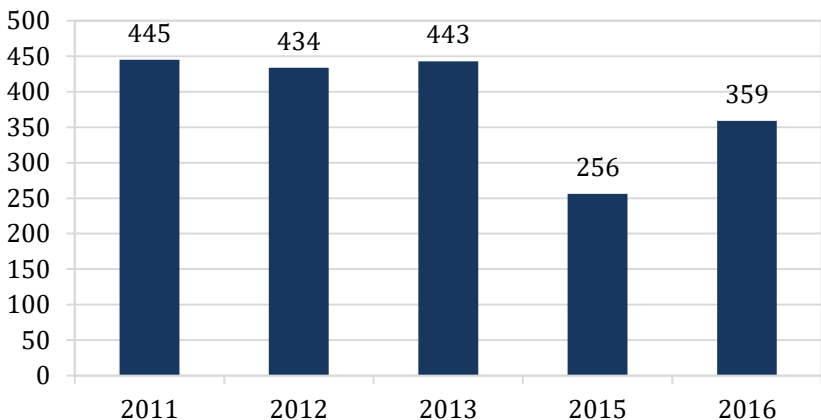


Notes: DAKE is affiliated with New Democracy; PASK is affiliated with Pasok; PAME is affiliated with the Communist Party of Greece; Paremvasseis is affiliated with the radical Left; and META is affiliated with Syriza.

Source: General Elections of the Civil Servants' Confederation (ADEDY) (2016).

The high degree of participation in strikes lasted mainly until 2013. Furthermore, what is interesting to observe is the inverse correlation between the toughening of austerity measures and the decrease in strike activity (see Figure 13.5 and Figure 13.6).

Figure 13.5 Number of strikes and labour mobilisations in Greece during the crisis, 2011-16



Source: Labour Institute, General Confederation of Greek Workers (INE-GSEE) (2017).

Figure 13.6 Number of public and private sector trade unions involved in strikes and labour mobilisations, 2011-16



Source: Labour Institute, General Confederation of Greek Workers (INE-GSEE) (2017).

During the first five years of increased fiscal oversight, a wide network of local movements entitled “I don’t pay” was created mainly to protest against the taxes and other fiscal burdens that Greek governments had successively imposed. The members of these movements organised a number of actions and gatherings objecting to the imposition of high taxes and fees (property tax, income tax, toll fees, etc.). Thousands of people participated in such collective actions in different parts of the country. Furthermore, local ecological movements in the Greek countryside constituted a significant share of the mobilisation of the Greek public (Lekakis & Kousis, 2013). Over 40 such local movements have developed in the last decade in Greece, opposing the placement of industrial wind and solar parks in environmentally protected areas as well as mining in several marine areas, and promoting the establishment of sustainable local communities. In the Attica region, civil protests by the majority of residents in the southern part of Athens (about the development of landfill facilities in Keratea), the (ongoing) mobilisation of people in the Chalcidice region (over development of the Skouries mining site for gold extraction) and also in the Epirus region (concerning development and production facilities for oil or

gas extraction) are among the most popular local movements in Greece. The basic demand of all such movements is to halt environmental degradation in the respective regions by fast-track privatisations and investment plans that, owing to heavy-duty industrial processes for the sake of economic viability and profitability, risk disaster through huge ecological, environmental and social changes.

Similarly, the first successful European Citizens' Initiative was organised in 2012 for the non-privatisation of water in EU member states ('Right2Water'). In Greece, this initiative took the form of the 'Save Greek Water Initiative', which collected over 33,000 signatures by individuals and social organisations. The second successful European Citizens' Initiative was organised in 2015 for a reduction in the use of animal testing ('Stop Vivisection'), which gathered over 18,000 signatures in Greece.

More generally, the level of participation in plebiscites and public involvement as well as more violent anti-systemic movements peaked just before the referendum of June 2015. Since the December 2008 events, it has been observed that initial protests or demonstrations could turn into unconventional and illegal actions, such as riots, squabbles, damage to foreign property, squatting and conflicts with the police or political opponents. These illegal forms of unconventional participation are signs of a rising 'uncivil' society, giving birth to or reinvigorating anti-systemic or violent 'shadow' activism and vigilante movements (such as the militias of Golden Dawn), as well as para-state action, anarchist activity

Illegal forms of unconventional participation are signs of a rising 'uncivil' society, giving birth to or reinvigorating anti-systemic or violent 'shadow' activism and vigilante movements.

in the district of Exarcheia and initiatives by the Rouvikonas group. Rouvikonas is one of the main anarchist groups that emerged during the period of the 'anti-austerity movements' in Greece. From 2013 to 2018, the group carried out more than 50 acts against government and non-government facilities (foreign embassies, the representative offices of European institutions, multinational corporations, etc.). More specifically, the members of Rouvikonas – according to police sources, the group has approximately 120 to 150 members and many of them have been arrested – take mainly

organised action to protest against the enforcement of austerity measures. The group's operations have been characterised by a 'violent symbolic' activism that is a common feature of Greek anarchist organisations. Nevertheless, their activities have turned mainly against 'non-grassroots' targets with the aim of becoming more likeable to a section of Greek public opinion.⁶

Riots can be a means used by anti-systemic movements to specific ends or an (irrational) eruption of mass behaviour (Drury and Reicher, 1999). In the Greek case, the crisis broke the longstanding unspoken compromise between the ruling elites and a (stagnant) society, which had legitimised policies that produce significant distributional asymmetries, and thus reinforced inequality and provoked self-defensive reactions by young people and deviant attitudes. Among the causes of the riots have been the increasing feeling of social injustice,

The crisis broke the unspoken compromise between the ruling elites and a (stagnant) society, that had legitimised policies that produce significant distributional asymmetries, and thus reinforced inequality and provoked self-defensive reactions by young people and deviant attitudes.

the absence of effective political institutions and the state's decreasing legitimacy (Andronikidou, 2012).

As we will see, after a first phase in which the ideological imperatives of anti-globalisation were raised, the political and cultural aspects of a long period of anti-systemic or anarchist activism within the country were replaced by more materialist concerns.

In the second wave of mobilisation in 2011, there were escalating and intensive cross-class protests across the country. The social movements that were sparked included those with violent repertoires. In Western democracies, the widely spreading

⁶ The practices of Rouvikonas contrast with those of the majority of Greek anarchist groups, which often choose nihilistic tactics (such as Black Bloc anarchism, which is part of the wider political anarchism in Europe). The members of these groups focus on an anti-capitalist agenda based on nihilistic arguments and approaches without having an alternative, specific political plan to propose (unlike other currents of political anarchism, such as anarcho-syndicalism). Their actions gain minimal popular support since they are characterised by indiscriminate violence.

credibility crisis of conventional channels for participation has led to the organisation and proliferation of new social movements. These grassroots, self-organised assemblies in central squares are defined by their inclusive and diverse nature, their fluid and leaderless structure and their use of and mobilisation via digital media (Castells, 2012). For some analysts, this has been the case in Greece too. In fact, according to this view, the second wave of mobilisation can be classified as a new social movement, which distinguishes it from the traditional/old social movements of strikes and demonstrations like those that took place extensively in 2010.

Indeed, this classification appears useful in order to underline that these newer forms of mobilisation do not have a consistent or common class background and that is why they are less focused on political issues or ideology. Instead they comprise divergent ideological or political backgrounds of segmented, diffuse and decentralised groups of individuals rather than collective coherent movements. Thus, as far as the Greek case is concerned, new social movement scholars have rightly considered that the participants in these mobilisations politically identified themselves as outside the political system since they seemed unorganised and lacking in resources. But thereafter, scholars have extrapolated the new social movement explanation in order to support the idea that the participants were more concerned with post-materialist,⁷ cultural and symbolic issues, i.e. personal and intimate aspects of human life (Andronikidou, 2012).

In fact, this *Indignados*-inspired movement called the *Aganaktismeni*,⁸ and no doubt more varied socially and politically

⁷ In the new social movement approach, the explanatory variables are linked to post-materialism, such as interpersonal trust and some political interest by a mainly middle class educational elite who are active in their spare time, while trade union membership is negatively associated (Rüdig & Karyotis, 2014).

⁸ According to Rüdig & Karyotis (2014), a more detailed comparison of the different groups since 2010 suggests that the *Aganaktismeni* participants are older than those in other groups, are less likely to be members of voluntary organisations and have a lower degree of interpersonal trust. Rüdig & Karyotis claimed that the *Aganaktismeni* reached, at least marginally, a group of people who are not part of the usual Greek protest culture but clearly do not fit a 'new social movement' profile either.

than before, was focused on the occupation of public spaces primarily against austerity policies and their economic and social implications. Anti-austerity protests could be regarded as having some characteristics of a more recent wave of diverse mobilisation than new social movements, in which individuals are mobilised around personalised values to engage with multiple causes – such as economic justice (fair trade, inequality and development policies), environmental protection, and worker and human rights (Bennett, 2012). However, their main focus was on ‘material’ issues, such as cuts in public expenditure, unemployment and inequality. In this context, we observe that people expressed attitudes of estrangement

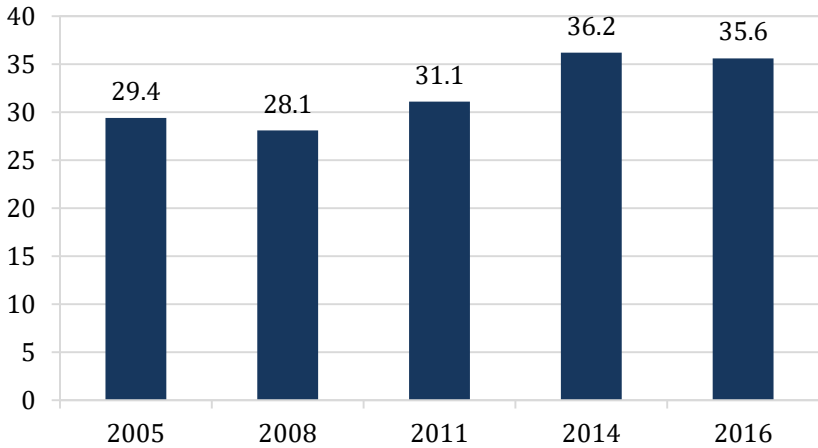
People expressed estrangement from or rejection of the prevailing political system by taking controversial political action, which is quite different from civic engagement.

from or rejection of the prevailing political system by taking controversial political action, which is quite different from civic engagement activities. The rise of civic voluntarism is mainly detected in the area of health and social protection/welfare given the dramatic decrease of state financial support pursuant to the MoUs; in this field, the extreme right-wing Golden Dawn took advantage of the situation by undertaking social work initiatives in order to build a ‘humanitarian profile’.

Conventional mobilisation waned as a consequence of declining loyalty, distrust of programmatic promises and a considerable shrinking of ideological cleavages. Progressively from 2012 and during the third wave from mid-2012 onwards, there was a further increase in participation and an expansion of mobilisation in the form of a new, resurgent *apartisan* protest.

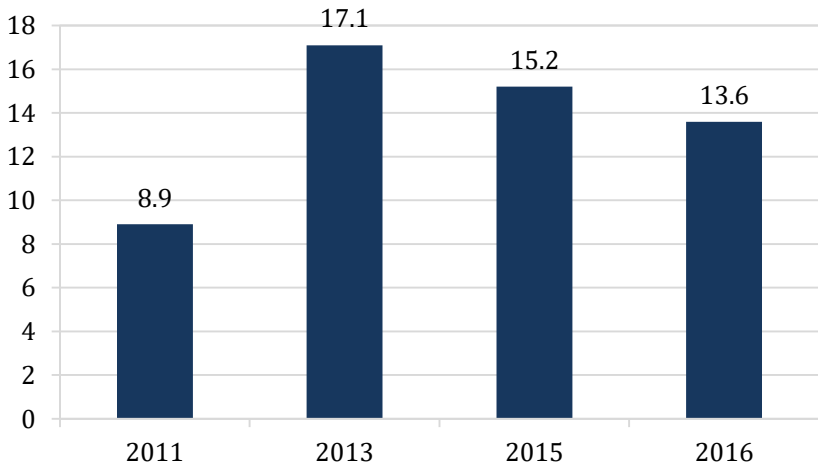
In more general terms, mobilisation during the years of crisis was motivated by cultural as well as socioeconomic factors. The drivers of mobilisation varied somewhat according to the period. Nonetheless, we see that there is a common set of them enabling analysis based on deprivation theory. This theory refers to the deterioration of living conditions explaining to a large extent popular mobilisation as a social phenomenon of anger and social aggressiveness towards the ruling elites (see Figure 13.7 and Figure 13.8).

Figure 13.7 Rates of poverty and social exclusion in Greece, 2005-16 (%)



Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) (2017).

Figure 13.8 Rates of extreme poverty and food insecurity in Greece, 2011-16 (%)



Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) (2017).

Yet, Greek political culture has also played an important role in triggering social movements. Since 1897, there has been resistance against the law, with representatives of public order/security being viewed as instruments of oppression. Through authoritarian and

turbulent periods of a long confrontational history, this political culture of ‘resistance’ has marked the country, although it has mainly been linked to the extra-parliamentary and parliamentary Left and to trade unions. While this culture of resistance became a timeless way of expressing discontent, it has failed to transform

The motive of relative deprivation (the fear of economic scarcity),⁹ which has transformed street socialisation into protests, has been expressed by groups of action with different political stances.

itself into a political and social mode for forming and transforming collective structures. Similarly, protesters’ fervent socioeconomic demands have become ends in themselves rather than evolving into coherent ideas about the political and social transformation in Greece and in Europe. That is why the motive of

relative deprivation (the fear of economic scarcity),⁹ which has transformed street socialisation into protests, has been expressed by groups of action with different political stances.

13.3 Assessing direct democracy

Does the increase of participation in conventional and unconventional forms of mobilisation equate with a kind of real democratic breadth that signals a ‘critical juncture’? According to the historic neo-institutionalist approach, if that were the case, it should produce a radical change of democratic conditions or the revision of established procedures in favour of direct democracy.

Indeed, according to the ancient Greek conception, the social and economic condition of citizens was not part of the discussion. The establishment of freedom in the sense of social position was completely separate from the granting of political and civil rights to all those considered free citizens (ισηγορία, equality in the right to

⁹ The theory of ‘relative deprivation’ is focused on a range of conditions necessary to turn the stimulus of ‘absolute’ deprivation (poverty and inequality) into active protest. Relative deprivation theory was replaced as the dominant theory of protest in the 1960s and 1970s by approaches that focus on individuals’ resources and variables, such as education, occupation and income – their ‘socioeconomic status’ (SES approach). In the 1990s, the SES approach was supplemented to create an extended model known as ‘civic voluntarism’ (Rüdig & Karyotis, 2013).

speech; and *παρρησία*, the obligation to express oneself in public affairs). Nowadays, the globalisation of capitalism has privileged the consumerist rights of contemporary liberal democracies, pushing towards a more authoritative doctrine about economy and politics. While there are many definitions (and practices) of deliberation, we probably should accept that there is a common prerequisite in all cases that all participants must be free of the kinds of material deprivations that hinder participation, such as a lack of income or education (Mutz, 2006).

The impact of the crisis on southern European democracies has been so great that this Great Recession has ended up affecting the quality of democracy at large. The worsening of the economy has mainly affected the rule of law, electoral accountability, participation, equality and responsiveness (Morlino & Quaranta, 2016). In other terms, a representation crisis has also negatively affected the legitimacy standards of the democratic model itself.

In relation to the distinction proposed by David Easton (1965; 1975) between diffuse support for democracy as a principle and the specific support for the procedures and typical actors of democracy, the question is whether the economic crisis jeopardised support for democracy in Greece. In the Greek case, there was a decline of diffuse support, when comparing 2008 with 2012 (Freire et al., 2016). Studies have likewise found a decline in specific support for the incumbent political authorities, which may be related to the emergence of the economic crisis. Similar observations can be found on the decline in electoral turnout, the decay of mainstream parties, the growth of distrust in political institutions and the decreasing capacity of parties to channel and represent the preferences of voters (Freire et al., 2016; Hernandez & Kriesi, 2016). An 'electoral epidemic' affected all the regions of southern Europe during the first years of the eurozone sovereign debt crisis, at its peak registering even higher levels of public dissatisfaction (Bosco & Verney, 2016).

During those turbulent protest years, Greek citizens went beyond their main call for an end to austerity and demanded more accountable and direct models of democracy (Sotirakopoulos & Sotiropoulos, 2013; Diani & Kousis, 2014). The question again is whether the incentives for participation and mobilisation proved to be capable of sufficiently bolstering direct democracy. This

observation is related not only to the outcome of the 2015 Greek referendum, but also to the prerequisites of direct democracy, which include some structural politicised features. There are various approaches that try to see whether these prerequisites were met in this specific historical period in Greece.

The *Aganaktismeni* movement has been seen as an ideal type of populist, grassroots engagement in which the basic characteristics – such as a leaderless, self-organised mobilisation demanding direct democracy – could classify the participants as a ‘multitude’.¹⁰ Or, since they claim to represent the whole community, they could be characterised as ‘the people’, who consider that any anti-populist attitude can be seen as a crucial aspect of post-democracy and as a way of marginalising any disagreement (Katsambekis, 2014a; 2014b). From such a perspective, this movement is seen as the engine of democratic revival.

Others scholars have asserted that these movements established an antagonistic dichotomy that separates ‘the people’ from ‘the other’ (e.g. ‘the enemy’, ‘the establishment’ or in the recent period of financial recession, ‘the troika’, ‘the Memorandum defenders’ and ‘the global financial elites’). Anti-globalisation, anti-Western and anti-imperialist rhetoric has had a long history in Greek political culture (Doxiadis & Matsaganis, 2012). In this context, populism tends to deny the legitimacy of any entrenched elite, however recruited (Mavrogordatos, 1997). These protesters believed that they were defending themselves, their rights and the Greek nation against various opponents: the markets, the banks, foreigners and the corrupted Greek political elites who betrayed Greece by not protecting national and popular interests. Indeed, according to this view, this point was exactly where social populism met national populism (Pantazopoulos, 2013). The enemy was no longer only at the top. The enemy was also on the other side and the political elite was cooperating with the enemy against the people. The appearance of these *Indignados*, who perceived themselves as

¹⁰ In the early 2000s, Antonio Negri introduced the term ‘multitude’ as a concept of emancipation from the old political designations of the masses. The ‘multitude’ does not refer to unity but to the common social and political capacity of a group of people to take decisions and act in common.

being the new National Liberation Front, initiated the transformation of social populism into national populism, breaking down the boundaries between the Left and the Right (Pantazopoulos, 2013).

Supporting the idea that ideological and political boundaries have collapsed because of these newly formed street constituencies that seek in a simplistic way the 'restoration of the previous regime' cannot explain why, despite the increase of direct and unconventional mobilisation, the effectiveness in terms of reviving democratic reflexes in a long-term process has remained quite low. Populist strategies may involve, in a disruptive way, various elements of the above normative categories (referring either to a leaderless, grassroots democracy phenomenon or to a blind insurrection of manipulated people); and in this sense, it is not a sufficient, clear-cut explanation of the political and social ramifications.

Undoubtedly, from 2011 onwards, the heterogeneous group of protesters included people from all kinds of ideologies and social strata. Even though no overall collective identity preceded the collective mobilisation or was constructed through collective protest, there were strong partial (collective) identities congregating in the two levels making up Syntagma Square (Right and Left stances, respectively), i.e. Ano and Kato Plateia (Simiti, 2014). Accepting the fact that political contestation is not reducible to a single ideological dimension (Freire et al., 2016), both Left and Right gained new ideological content. Particularly in the context of the Greek electorate, not only economic and social but also cultural(ist), nativist (especially those concerns derived from the issue of migrants and refugees) and territorial issues emerged, forming a multidimensional ideological space with new congruencies and incongruencies, new socio-political cleavages and preferences.

Nevertheless, the protests in public places did not convert into venues of (democratic) deliberation, since people were not exposed to oppositional views and so there was no exposure to political disagreement. Although deliberation seemed completely appropriate for most participatory settings (open-dialogue thematic groups, popular assemblies, occupation of the city hall,

neighbourhood gatherings and information in workplaces),¹¹ interactions with others of differing views were not assumed to be essential to comprehend and come to appreciate the perspectives of

Although deliberation seemed completely appropriate for most participatory settings interactions with others of differing views were not assumed to be essential to comprehend and come to appreciate the perspectives of others.

others. Awareness of the rationales for oppositional views is a particularly important type of political knowledge because of its close ties to legitimacy (Mutz, 2006). Those with high levels of exposure to political disagreement would thus have more balanced judgement.

The above observations can better explain why the political recapture or recycling of social demands by Syriza has been so successful. With respect to the three waves, party affiliation shows that protesters did not radically detach from political parties and that they progressively identified with Syriza (Karyotis & Rüdig, 2017). While they would have liked their actions to be more political, at the same time there was a fear of being instrumentalised by established or emerging political organisations seeking to gain political benefit. From 2012, the mobilisation phenomenon of decentralised, everyday forms of resistance¹² transformed into an electoral opportunity for promoting Syriza to those in the centre of the political spectrum (Aslanidis & Marantzidis, 2016).

The economic voting argument (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2007) explained quite well the outcome of the January 2015 elections. Greek voters sanctioned the previous governing coalition of New Democracy and Pasok for its overall macroeconomic record

¹¹ There were different kinds of meetings planning actions, which were surrounded by smaller groups (such as the “Audit Committee”) and subgroups preparing proposals and resolutions for the grand assembly, which was attended by 2,000–3,000 people each day and broadcasted live on the internet.

¹² The number of public protests was much higher in Greece than in Portugal. The absolute number of marches and demonstrations recorded in police data remained high, with 5,654 protest events taking place in 2012, 6,231 in 2013 and 3,032 in the first six months of 2014 (Rüdig & Karyotis, 2014).

and for the impact of its policies on individual economic well-being. But, in the September 2015 elections, the main motivation of New Democracy voters was to support the country staying in the eurozone, while that of Syriza voters was first to approve the personality of the prime minister and second to show their partisan support. Hence, it has been rightly pointed out that by voting for Syriza, the Greeks approved the government's persistent and difficult efforts to bring about a better bailout agreement¹³ (Rori, 2016).

The 2015 referendum revealed an intergenerational divide, with young voters massively voting 'No' and older ones supporting 'Yes'. Still, the referendum served more as another 'pre-electoral test' and less as an autonomous device for recording popular preferences on eurozone policies. It helped to stabilise the contours of the ruling structure of Syriza, which thus gained governability. It did not serve its main purpose of increasing citizens' capacity to intervene in the policy process in order to (re)clarify the frame of

The referendum served more as another 'pre-electoral test' and less as an autonomous device for recording popular preferences on eurozone policies. It helped to stabilise the contours of the ruling structure of Syriza, which thus gained governability.

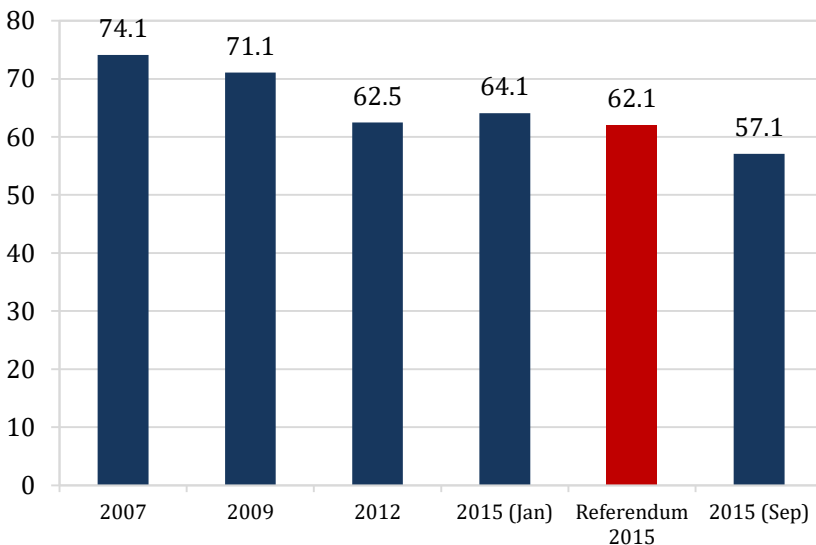
negotiation, empowering the incumbents to take appropriate action. Actually, participation in the referendum was about 62.15%, which was 2% lower than the turnout for the January 2015 elections and 5% higher than the September 2015 elections. The above observation explains how, in the September elections, 77.62% of the vote supported parties that had endorsed the third bailout agreement (see Figure 13.9).

The second wave of popular mobilisation was a mixture of spontaneous reaction and activation of established organisational structures. The capitulation of Syriza showed very clearly that it has been progressively instrumentalised by a growing political movement that builds its political power and recognition on it transforming protest into electoral promises. Voters opted for a radicalised political choice in the January 2015 elections, but the referendum ended up having the opposite effect. The strict

¹³ Source: Metron Analysis, common exit poll, 20 September 2015.

oversight regime reinforced the weaknesses of the Greek political system instead of enhancing more direct forms of democracy. Since September 2015, we have observed that mobilisation and calls for direct democracy have been quashed. There has been a return to more traditional engagement and a decline in mobilisation (strikes and demonstrations), with the occasional eruption of illegal, violent political action, for instance by Rouvikonas.

Figure 13.9 Participation rates in Greek national elections, 2007-15 (%)



Source: Greek Ministry of Interior Affairs (2016).

The MoUs brought a significant change in the nature and functioning of Greece's economic and social model, i.e. the relations between the state and the economy as well as between society and the state. The politics of the crisis in Greece under the European Stability Mechanism endorsed the full dependence of Greece's economic and social development on the conditions and requirements of the leading powers of the EU (Manitakis, 2012). This is about a legal regime where a state is formally sovereign but is fiscally and economically substantially dependent. The Greek people realised quite late the country's longstanding commitments to the EU and consequently the extent of the dependent relationship between Greece and the EU, where the imperatives of eurozone

integration significantly limit the exercise of fiscal autonomy. The results of a national survey conducted by Dianeosis in 2018 to assess the impact of eurozone policies in Greece show that public opinion, while considering EU membership valuable, accepts more easily than before the structurally asymmetrical nature of the EU and its unequal consequences for the weakest member states (see Table 13.1).

Table 13.1 Greece and the EU

<i>Overall evaluation of EU membership</i>	<i>Positive & Fairly Positive 67.6%</i> <i>Negative & Rather Negative 30.5%</i>
<i>Has Greece today lost or gained from its participation in the EU?</i>	<i>Lost 48.9%</i> <i>Gained 22.2%</i>
<i>As a whole, from Greece's participation in the EU, would you say that the EU has:</i>	<i>Mostly benefited 58.2%</i>
<i>Was the country's entry into the eurozone ultimately the right or wrong decision?</i>	<i>56.8% Sure & Rather Wrong</i> <i>41.7% Sure & Fairly Right</i>
<i>Do you think the objective of Greece's real convergence with the average of the most developed countries in the euro area in the next years is</i>	<i>38.2% Not achievable</i> <i>30% Feasible</i> <i>29.3% The distance will grow</i>

Source: Dianeosis, Panhellenic survey research, "What do the Greeks think?", January-February 2018.

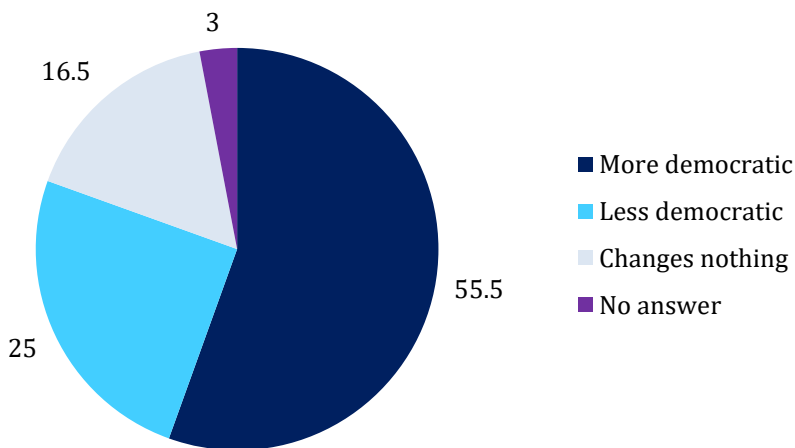
In this sense, the 2015 Greek referendum was a point of no return for national and EU political realities, proving that direct democracy tools in democracies lacking maturity – against a backdrop of economic scarcity – can easily be diverted from their initial purpose. In this sense, it serves as a counter-paradigm in relation to the Brexit referendum.

Indeed, the country shows little experience with referendums. Following the fall of the junta in 1974, the Karamanlis government held a referendum that abolished the monarchy and instated the constitution of 1975, which gave the president of the newly established democratic republic exclusive responsibility for

the initiative to hold a referendum on critical national issues.¹⁴ The constitutional reform of 1986 widened the use of referendums on serious social issues, and the initiative to hold a referendum now belongs to the government. It was not until much later, in November 2011, that Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou withdrew his proposal for holding a referendum on the creditors' proposals at that time and resigned from office. Since then, particular subjects have been the object of (informal) local referendums (regarding the privatisation of the Thessaloniki water supply company in 2014, the privatisation of the four regional airports in the Ionian Islands region in 2015 or the Kallikratis reform of regional and local authorities).

However, Greek citizens are not discouraged in their diffuse support for the idea of direct democracy (see Figure 13.10).

Figure 13.10 Will the introduction of referendums make the political system more democratic?



Source: Dianeosis Survey (2016).

¹⁴ In the Greek constitutions until 1975 there was no reference to a referendum, with the exception of the constitution of 1927, which provided for an optional referendum.

In this context, the tool of local referendums, incompletely introduced in 2010, has been reinforced through the recent Kleisthenis decentralisation reform in 2018. Local referendums can be held on issues based on the initiative of municipal and regional bodies, but also on citizens' initiatives. Furthermore, in 2016 the government announced its intention to undertake a constitutional reform. This reform is intended to reinforce direct democracy by introducing, among others, new referendum mechanisms on national issues or in the case of the transfer of sovereign powers of the state. It also introduces the possibility for citizens, after collecting more than a million signatures, to express an opinion on a law passed or even take a legislative initiative. This constitutional reform is currently subject to a public consultation; but while it is presented as a 'democratic restart', it is having difficulty attracting participants, especially young people.

The capitulation of 2015 showed clearly that the negotiation process was based on an ever-more 'constraining consensus'¹⁵: the more the economy of a country is dependent, the more the country must consent to the conditions proposed and accept external control of its socioeconomic model of production. Scholars have seized upon the issue of divisive referendums – plebiscites based on a monopolistic form of agenda setting that favours tribalism (division into non-communicating competitive groups in political and social life) while disregarding the political consequences – by proposing inclusive solutions (Tsebelis, 2018).

Conclusions

In the theoretical debate on democracy there are radical approaches that consider direct democracy to be only real form of democracy, thus opposing the representative model and promoting direct democracy as the alternative to liberal democracy (Barber, 2003; Castoriadis 2008). There are other holistic approaches that speak of 'big' democracy, which includes both forms, indirect and direct (Heller [1985], 1990). Then, there are approaches that follow the tradition of Rawls, Dworkin and Pettit, which consider that

¹⁵ Inspiration for this term has been taken from Hooghe and Marks (2009) description on the shift from a "permissive consensus" to "constraining dissensus" towards the EU integration process since 1991.

constitutional equality is better ensured by representative institutions and not by occasional majorities in the name of a united people or nation (Alivizatos & Eleftheriades, 2002). For those defending indirect democracy, the problems are complex and technical and there are no simple answers; there is a danger of oversimplification and imaginary dilemmas that favour demagogues – as the public cannot be fully informed because there is no time for that, no real possibility of consultation, meditation and decision (Barber, 2003). Conventional and unconventional mobilisation through street protests, repeated elections and the referendum have shown that the Greek people do accept a combined use of direct and indirect democracy, while the elites show reluctance over the systematic use of referendums, basing their argument on the danger of populism.

Athenian democracy was not a state of things but, as long as it remained fertile, a process of continual transformation (Castoriadis, 2008). Democracy was not regarded as the rule of law assuring citizens' freedom or equality, but as a questioning of the traditional law. It was the first appearance of social autonomy in the sense of a society challenging its own institutions through reason, in other words, the confrontation of opinions (Castoriadis, 2008).

Protests have mainly operated as critiques against the economic performance of governments and against their political shortcomings without acquiring substantial political and social gains from active participation. In a context of structural inequality, to create citizens according to the Rousseauist conception is a big task. A public sphere dominated by like-minded discussants is not a good place for cultivating a civic culture; at the same time, oppositional views should not be an obstacle to reaching a consensus. John Stuart Mill ([1861], 2010) pointed out that a lack of contact with oppositional viewpoints diminishes the prospects for a public sphere; Hannah Arendt (1970) talked about "enlarged mentality". A deliberative democracy legitimately should justify non-unanimous decisions and ultimately should lead from dissimilar views to a consensus by building agreements (the ideal speech situation of Jürgen Habermas (1973)).

Recent grassroots mobilisation, participation in plebiscites and public involvement were an expression of a political and social perception of 'no way out' of Greece's crisis. Yet this protest against

the state of humanity did not evolve into a coherent and robust critical view of politics, or prove able to formulate the political demands to change it. These street movements have nothing in common with the post-materialist expectations of the 1960s. The intensification of grassroots movements has mostly been related to socioeconomic demands. Here, they are about neo-materialist claims confronting the fear of global capitalism as a force of continual uncertainty for individuals.

This protest against the state of humanity did not evolve into a coherent and robust critical view of politics, or prove able to formulate the political demands to change it.

A movement lasts a short time but has considerable effects on political development over long periods (Arendt, 1970). The civilian mobilisation brought a fundamental shift in political discourse and civic consciousness yet did not succeed in proposing a plan for political and democratic transformation in Greece or the EU. Despite the intensification of public mobilisation, its influence on EU politics is minor in political terms. The 2015 referendum affected the credibility, the effectiveness and the coherence of popular action. The vigour of these 'conjunctural majorities' has been instrumentalised in order to restructure the partisan and strategic game at the national and to a certain extent the European level, and finally to legitimise specific policies for economic and social development.

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