

Introduction

Crisis and Austerity

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It has been a number of years now that Greece has been under the restructuring project known as austerity. Dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank, and the European Union (EU), known collectively as the Troika (though not always in consensus)—significant changes have been wrought, in return for the largest bailout in the IMF's history. The extent and lasting impact of this project (for Greece, and for the Troika) we are only just beginning to comprehend. This period, from the start of Greece's sovereign debt crisis up to this writing, has been written about extensively and broadly, popularly and academically. In this literature we find moral tales of corruption and comeuppance, explorations of resistance and defiance, and stories of desperation and victimhood. We find macroanalyses of local and global structures, both economic and political. We find detailed and thoughtful depictions from the perspective on the ground, and sweeping orientalist declarations on the South.

What this volume aims to contribute to these varied and competing voices is longitudinal and comparative scholarly research that sets aside the prereceived truths about this period in Greece's history; the authors examine multiple sectors of Greek society on their own terms. The contributors span several disciplines: from history to anthropology, criminology, psychology, political science, sociology, international relations, and cultural studies. We hope that this disciplinary breadth will provide the reader with distinctive and varied approaches and viewpoints to what are, after all, multifaceted problems in Greek society. We also try to cover as many aspects of society as the space of one volume allows, again to demonstrate the impact of these past years on society, state, institutions, and—above all—people.

Additionally, we want to avoid, as much as possible, discussions about causation related to what has come to be called Greece’s “crisis.” This book pursues neither simple reasons for this “crisis” nor does it propose solutions. Rather, we chose to focus on the impact these years have had on Greece and the people who live there, and to understand the responses. Two crucial elements that these scholars do have in common are (1) their expertise in their field or topic of research specifically predating 2009 and the subsequent economic depression, and (2) a research agenda that extends through this period (with the exception of two authors whose field of research exceeds the Greek crisis geographically rather than temporally). This expertise is significant for several reasons. First, as Janet Roitman has influentially argued, evoking a crisis instigates particular narratives that start by asking a very limited, moralizing version of, “What went wrong?,” which compels immediate, Band-Aid type solutions to larger historical problems. This particular causal question has been posed and argued exhaustively elsewhere, and so we hope to offer here narratives that escape crisis-mode and crisis-thinking. Second, evoking a crisis automatically creates periodization, an era with a beginning and end, and particularly an era that is set off as exceptional (Roitman 2013: 28). We recognize these frameworks as limiting the understanding of what is happening in Greece today. With deep knowledge based on long-term research, and/or theoretical frameworks that resist crisis discourse, the authors have the ability to give their own genealogies that disrupt some of the assumptions about what “crisis” has brought to Greece, exactly. They often tell tales of social impact that are much longer, or larger, in scope. Although this book and its chapters replicate some of the popular narratives of the Greek crisis that have held sway—and in fact, in analyzing their effects and how people understand them, could not have done otherwise—it also works against many of the chapters.

A popular metaphor in Greece for understanding the condition of living under austerity has been that of being laboratory animals (*peiramatozoa*). Methods for restructuring the society have been attempted, the results hoped for but ultimately unknown. A laboratory animal does not undergo its trials in order to have its ills healed; it undergoes them so that others do not have to, others who might be healed just the same. The term “laboratory animals” speaks strongly to a long-standing cynicism and suspicion with which these reforms are perceived, and a historically entrenched concern with being the victim of foreign interests and interventions. We are aware that we risk mimicking the scientists of this metaphor in posing our own questions here: Austerity was the experiment, and what are its effects? Again, we believe that the broad temporal and contextual scope that these chapters provide moves beyond a narrow, cause-and-

effect focus that other case-study accounts of crisis and austerity provide. Studying Greece is not taken here only as a means to understand austerity effects.

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Beyond being a word that evokes specific narratives, the word “crisis” also has the ability to create its condition by naming it so, a power shared by many other performative economic terms, in that it “contributes to the construction of the reality that it describes” (Callon 2007: 316). As we see in the tumbling of events that followed Prime Minister George Papandreou’s declaration after the 2009 elections that Greece was in a state of emergency, naming and creating a crisis modality opened the way for a restructuring of Greece that prior to that moment had been politically impossible (Kyriakopoulos 2011). Giorgio Agamben’s (2005) writings on states of exception (i.e., a suspension of the democratic process or rule of law as a response to emergency, aspects of which could become normalized and permanent) have been influential in much of the analysis of Greece under the regime of crisis (see Athanasiou 2012), including much of the work in this volume. This discourse on exception should not be confused, however, with presenting Greece as an exceptional case, which is not the position of this text (see Rakopoulos 2014 for further consideration of this point). The Troika-imposed ideologies and goals of austerity, under which Greece becomes the subject through successive governments’ attempts to implement them, are not unique to Greece. At the same time, the changes to Greece’s political sphere, the state provisions, and the social responses that result must all be interpreted through the history and cultural context into which they unfold. We do not propose this as an argument for Greece’s exceptionalism, but rather for particularism. In short, these are local expressions of global forces.

Austerity is the dominant organizing ideology enabled through this state of exception, however controversial and often resisted it is (as evidenced in Greece by the political instability examined in part I of this volume). The most recent iteration of austerity ideology emerges in response to the 2008 global financial crisis, where the legerdemain of austerity transforms what begins as a problem of finance (rescuing and repairing the banking system) into a political problem of cutting state expenditures in multiple EU economies, not just those who would later be identified as dangerously close to default (i.e., Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) (Clarke and Newman 2012). While contemporary austerity in the United Kingdom historically echoes a post–World War II austerity pe-

riod of self-imposed, shared sacrifice (Clarke and Newman 2012: 307), in Greece the historical echo is the German occupation, a period of forced sacrifice, imposed from the outside (see Knight 2015). The difficulty of creating broad-based consent for such programs is hardly unique to Greece, but this framing of austerity as externally directed—and removed from the country's democratic process—brings it more in line with IMF-led austerity programs in Latin America or the global South in the prior decades than with current austerity programs in other EU countries.

But what exactly do we mean by the phrase “the ideology of austerity?” We view it in relationship to our understanding of a number of its goals: the decrease of state debt toward being more attractive to financial markets, the decrease of state spending and the increase of state income as paths toward the former but also as aims in themselves, and the creation of an economic (and political) environment attractive to outside investment. It is a methodology for dealing with economic difficulty that is meant to stimulate confidence and thus growth (Clarke and Newman 2012), but that also comes laden with moral overtones about profligate spending, inefficiency, waste, and occasionally (certainly in Greece's case) corruption. It is an ideology with enough hegemonic power that some would term this era the “age of austerity” (Breu 2014). It is certainly the case that the 2008 financial crisis created the opportunity for austerity to return as a dominant answer for economic restructuring, irrespective of empirical evidence for its effectiveness (Jabko 2013). Why austerity continues to be a compelling economic answer is beyond the scope of this volume, but exploring its outcomes is a main objective.

Some academic disciplines, and/or political viewpoints, see these structural transformations as a liberalizing of the statist character in the governance of the economic sphere in Greece. Others, including some of the authors in this volume, explicitly frame these structural transformations—and the related kinds of subject formation they produce—as instantiations of a neoliberal model of economics and governance. A number of chapters in this volume reference or detail the neoliberal character of austerity's aims and ideologies specific to their field of research, and give evidence for neoliberal subjectivities that result from, or are intensified by, these changes. These chapters add useful data to help us understand the effects of the institutions and expert discourses that enforce this economic ideology on a global scale (see Ostry, Loungani, and Furceri 2016 for a questioning of these policies' successes from within the IMF itself). The deregulations, privatizations, and reduction in welfare provisions identified as the hallmarks of neoliberal restructuring are explored both as a running thread of background context and in case studies: health care, consumption, mass media. The increased attention to security often linked

to neoliberalism (and with its failures, see Goldstein 2010) is also explored on multiple fronts: the scapegoating of so-called criminal foreigners, the new crisis of refugees and Greece's borders, the vigilante policing of Golden Dawn, the attempts to monitor and track financial transactions. The effects of these policies on society's most vulnerable members is a consistent theme in this volume.

A critique of the usefulness of neoliberalism as an analytical category has been circulating for some time now (see Ganti 2014), partially due to its broadness and the fact that its implementations and effects are not uniform, at the same time that its expression as a governmentality often aims for standardization (see Hess this volume for a further discussion). The use of the term is both evaluative and political, because its evocation in academic work implies criticism and critique of its ideological practices and its effects. For more than a decade in Greece, however, the word "*neoleftherismos*" has had a vigorous life outside of strict academic discourse, in everyday political conversation (though to draw a line between academic discourse and the discourse of everyday life is certainly a false distinction). This use in everyday parlance is unique from many other countries not in the global South, at least before the events of 2008 brought economic ideologies under popular scrutiny more broadly. It has been used to understand and criticize the structural changes the country was undergoing as part of belonging to the EU (visible on protest signs, banners, and in op-eds from at least the early 2000s), and then to address the changes required by the Troika. As such, the term "neoliberalism" in Greece is interpreted and understood through an embodied experience that is specific to its local context, as much as it connects that context to similar processes occurring elsewhere. To use some old-fashioned social science language, it has become both an emic and etic category in understanding the forces shaping everyday life in Greece. Its use by authors in this volume cannot be disentangled from its specificity as an on-the-ground and politicized interpretive framework for comprehending the lived experience of Europeanization and austerity processes in Greece. And it is worth noting Stuart Hall's suggestion that the ultimate usefulness of the term could indeed lie in its political force (Hall 2011).

Chapter Overviews

Michael Herzfeld has noted that external financial control and economic dependence have marked Greece's relationship with the West from the state's very inception—a condition he names "crypto-colonialism"—with the continuing effect of political marginality for the nation (Herzfeld 2003). Although the specific lending markets and the Great Powers involved

have changed over time, this paradox of dependency and resentment toward foreign intervention continues through to the current moment, and has had a hand in the reshaping the Greek political sphere. Part I of the volume, titled “The Political Dimension of the Crisis,” begins our exploration through a series of examinations of the political culture of Greece, its developments, continuities, and breaks.

Evdoxios Doxiadis begins with our first chapter, “The ‘Illegitimacy’ of Foreign Loans: Greece, the Great Powers, and Foreign Debt in the Nineteenth Century,” a historical examination into the origins of the Greek foreign debt and its perception by the Greek government and public in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and their effect on modern perceptions of state debt in Greece. The chapter focuses on the role of the Great Powers and how that role has been understood in Greece, and argues that the frequent confrontations between Greece and the Great Powers of the time has colored Greek perceptions regarding foreign debt to this day, with frequent misappropriations of this history in contemporary political rhetoric. This chapter demonstrates that much of both the current popular and political discourse concerning the state debt and the crisis are grounded in a long history of similar discourses. But it also evaluates why this particular threat of bankruptcy, in a long history of such threats, has played out differently.

The second chapter is by Harris Mylonas, “The Political Consequences of the Crisis in Greece: Charismatic Leadership and Its Discontents.” It revisits the argument that austerity disrupted the clientelistic political system in Greece, in order to argue not only that the crisis and its management by political elites has led to a political reconfiguration, but also that these consequences on the Greek party system have been deeper than in other European cases because of the succession crises in the two main political parties of the past generation. Both parties had relied on charismatic leaders whose style of governance undermined institution building, thus handicapping the ability of non-charismatic leaders to manage the crisis.

Kostis Karpozilos continues this examination of how current political trends associated with the crisis are in fact grounded in longer historical trends in his analysis of one of the more disturbing phenomena usually blamed on the crisis: the growth of the extreme-right wing Golden Dawn party. In “Golden Dawn: From the Margins of Greece to the Forefront of Europe,” he chronicles the transformation of Golden Dawn from an ideological sect into a body with parliamentary representation and mainstreamed policies. Karpozilos positions the Greek extreme right within the contemporary academic debate regarding the transformation of neo-fascist movements into post-fascist social phenomena in Europe.

The chapter by Kostas Kanellopoulos and Maria Kousis, “Protest, Elections, and Austerity Politics in Greece,” examines the impact of the crisis on the political system through the examination of protest events surrounding the austerity policies and the memorandums of understanding (MoUs) that have led to the rapid loss of faith of Greek citizens toward national and European institutions. Approaching the changes in the political sphere from outside of the history of party politics, as opposed to the inside-approach presented by Mylonas, this chapter identifies the links between social movement activities and electoral outcomes. Kanellopoulos and Kousis detail the structure and content of the large protest events that have characterized anti-austerity expression in Greece, showing the role of both old and new players.

The final chapter in part I is by Björn Bremer and Guillem Vidal, “From Boom to Bust: A Comparative Analysis of Greece and Spain under Austerity,” a comparative look at the significantly different political consequences of the crisis on two affected countries: Greece and Spain. The authors argue that the crisis in Southern Europe did not simply lead to a political crisis, but that prior political developments also played a role in bringing about the economic crisis in the first place. They argue that the substantial differences in the restructuring of the party systems of both countries should be seen through a combination of preexisting domestic conflicts, and new conflicts that were brought about by the exceptional economic and political situation. This chapter continues much of the conversation introduced by Mylonas’s chapter, as well as Kanellopoulos and Kousis’s, regarding the reshaping of politics as a result of austerity, but presents the further argument that election results reflect not just dissatisfaction with government actions, but also a greater disillusionment with the political system overall. This offers an interesting parallel to Karpozilos’s arguments regarding the rise of Golden Dawn, and aligns with Kanellopoulos and Kousis’s conclusions regarding the eventual decline in large protests.

Part II of the volume, “State Functions, the Welfare State, and the Economic Crisis,” explores three distinct sites that have undergone severe changes as a result of privatizations, restructuring, budget cuts, and securitization. To begin, Franklin L. Hess contextualizes a discussion of recent shifts and restructurings of the mass media sphere in Greece with a history of mass media in Greece and its past connections to political turmoil, explicating the long relationships between media and state governance, in “Crisis and the Changes in the Mediascape: Greece and the Globe.” He examines the closure and reopening of Greece’s public broadcasting channel ERT, an unexpected and controversial silencing that brought domestic and international protest, and other recent shifts in distrusted and trusted

voices. A combination of legislative actions, new media formats, charismatic voices, changes in the market, and critical and cynical media consumers are shown to have reshaped Greece's mediascape during this era. The complicated relationship between state, media, and public opinion is particularly significant as a backdrop to many of the other issues discussed in this volume, and Hess additionally draws compelling connections to emergent media phenomena in other countries as well, pointing to neoliberal influences (and neoliberal failures) beyond the immediate impact of Greece's austerity.

Sappho Xenakis and Leonidas Cheliotis continue this attention to governance in their chapter "Crime and Criminal Justice Policy in Greece during the Financial Crisis," where the politicization of crime statistics and criminal policy are clearly linked to the state's attempt to direct public attention toward very specific types of criminality (that affecting the most vulnerable) and away from others (those possibly implicating political elites). Xenakis and Cheliotis deconstruct the myths regarding what kinds of crime are influenced by economic downturns, and speak to their enduring narrative in constructing Greece's crime problem. The focus on migrants and foreigners as a source of danger during the crisis (as opposed to types of criminality potentially linked with the crisis's cause) connects significantly to concerns discussed by other chapters in this volume.

Populations made vulnerable is also Noëlle Burgi's theme, in her exploration of the effects of austerity on the Greek health-care system. In "The Downsizing and Commodification of Health Care: The Appalling Greek Experience since 2010," Burgi details the systematic dismantling of health-care provisions, offering insight from the doctors currently struggling to work within this changing system. Her chapter demonstrates the effects both of the cutbacks in state spending and also the shift away from health-care access as a right and more toward a market logic in its provisions and structure. Her work highlights the ways in which those persons who are already precarious are made even more so through these changes. She also describes new social responses to these cuts, however, that are meant to address the gaps left in state care, in the form of solidarity health clinics; this attention to precarity and to collective response is continued in the chapters through the volume's third and last part.

Beginning part III of the book, "Changes in Greek Society and Culture," Alexandra Zavos in "Gendering the Crisis: New Values and Agencies beyond Destitution" provides a detailed overview of the scholarship on the gendered effects of Greece's socioeconomic crisis and austerity, giving a feminist reading to many of the structural changes discussed by authors in part II (something underrepresented in scholarship on austerity). She also offers her own research on new social and economic initiatives that

have emerged, with three case studies, finding new avenues of action become available to women during this period of time. She asks, however, what here is actually new and what is a return to or reinvention of traditional roles. This attention to new forms of organization echoes many of the other authors' analyses.

Heath Cabot also brings us to a story that is not new, and yet is now undergoing a double crisis, in "From the Twilight Zone to the Limelight: Shifting Terrains of Asylum and Rights in Greece." A longstanding humanitarian issue in the region, asylum and services to refugees undergo a new austerity, but one that comes on top of long-existing structural inequities, much as Zavos demonstrates relating to gender equality. She explores the withdrawal or absence of state services—framed in a discourse of rights—to both refugees and citizens, and the new formations such as solidarity movements that fill those gaps. Cabot also reflects on how crisis thinking has shaped not just the response to refugees, but also the way the topic has been approached and studied, echoing this volume's concern with crisis as a limiting modality for academics and what it means when an old problem receives the particular attention that is created during periods defined as crises.

Tracey A. Rosen's piece that follows demonstrates the heterogeneity of migration as an issue in Greece, as the introduction of Chinese goods, capital, and people into the country holds a very different place of concern than that described by Cabot, where the Chinese state is the positive example of the government that aids its citizens while at the same time that the devaluation of labor in Greece is understood to be "becoming Chinese." In "*Giname Kinezoi!* ('We've Become Chinese!'): Critical Developments in the Imaginary of Chinese Labor," Rosen explores the moral discourses surrounding labor and goods that are instigated by Chinese migrants and commodities, against a background of declining domestic production and the creation of a consumer society.

This theme is carried into the final piece, "Disrupted and Disrupting Consumption: Transformations in Buying and Borrowing in Greece," where Aimee Placas gives an overview of the development of consumer society in Greece and explores how consumption under austerity has been a site both of government intervention and social experimentation. The chapter shares with Rosen the argument that what economic life should look like has been under public debate for quite some time in Greece, but also that the crisis seems to have strongly shaped the manner and possibility of the critiques that are offered. Placas considers the way that austerity means to shape the economy at the level of everyday practices, a disciplining of the consumer that is part of the neoliberal subject considered in all of the chapters in this part III. Overall, each of these pieces

in part III clearly demonstrates the effects of austerity in everyday life, through diminishing government services, increasing impoverishment, and declining infrastructure. However, they also collectively argue that current austerity is just one iteration of a set of forces relating to ideologies of capitalism, Europeanization, and neoliberalism that have been shaping Greek society for years.

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