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The grapes of wrath: Democracy, political system and violence under challenge in Greece

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The grapes of wrath

Democracy, political system and violence under challenge in Greece

The outburst of the economic crisis and the austerity measures outlined in the EU\IMF bailout brought about a series of large-scale protests in Greece. As a result, a mobilization of indignant citizens developed. This paper analyzes protesters' opinions regarding the political system in Greece during the crisis. For our analysis we use interviews with the protesters conducted during the mobilization. Our results suggest that we can distinguish between different types of indignation according to the efficacy, cynicism, ideological and anti-systemic orientation of the outraged protesters. Although central aspects of democratic parliamentary regime were widely distrusted, an ideal type of democracy was unquestionably accepted by the indignants. Their ambiguous position vis-à-vis political violence reflects the deep representation crisis of Greek democracy.

Introduction

The world financial crisis of 2008 has contributed to the rise of a growing cycle of protest movements that has spread around Europe and the USA. From the 'Indignados' in Spain to 'Occupy Wall Street' in the United States and similar mobilization in several other countries, people protested against the strict economic policy that has been adopted as an antidote to the crisis. Most of all, mass protest sweeping many countries of the Western world was the chance for the 'Outraged' to turn against the political establishment expressing their disapproval of the way 'classe politique' had handled the crisis; the discourse for a more participatory democratic doctrine dominated in these protest events, along with the declining trust in the institutions and the actors of representative democracy.

In Greece, shortly after the October 2009 parliamentary elections, the then socialist government (PASOK) negotiated a bailout agreement with the 'troika', namely the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to face the Greek fiscal crisis that 'created unprecedented challenges to both the governance of the "euro zone" and of Greece' (Featherstone 2011, p. 194). Soon after the implementation of the harsh austerity measures, which were part of the bailout agreement, the Greek government had to face the social implications of this economic crisis. Even though anti-austerity measures protests occurred right after the bailout agreement (Kousis, 2014), they reached their peak in late May 2011 before the parliamentary vote for the mid-term plan in June 2011. By that time they had formed what it is now known as the 'indignant citizens movement' in Greece (Kostopoulos, 2013).

In this article, we focus on the 'anti-austerity protest' of the Greek indignants. Our analysis is divided into four sections. The first section analyses the formation of the Greek indignant movement and its key features. The second section discusses theories of democracy in relation to mass political protest. The third section describes the data used and the methods employed in this study, while the fourth section elaborates on the results and comes to a conclusion.

Key elements of the protest

The protest cycle in Greece started immediately after the first anti-austerity measures that the PASOK government took at the beginning of 2010 and reached its pick after the country's recourse to the IMF and the EU for a bailout agreement on April 23, 2010 (Psimitis, 2011; Kousis, 2014; Rüdig and Karyotis, 2014). Mass demonstrations took place in Athens and other cities in Greece against wage and pension cuts, increased taxes and the rise in the unemployment rate. A few demonstrations turned into riots, with one of them, during the general strike of the 5th May 2010, ending up in the death of three Marfin Bank employees, when masked protesters threw petrol bombs in the building they were working. Up to May of 2011, several demonstrations had taken place in Athens, organized by trade unions and parties against the austerity

measures that the government had taken. On the 25th of May 2011, several groups of citizens gathered at Syntagma Square, after a call that was forwarded via social media, and especially facebook (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos, 2011, p. 446).

According to a general idea of spontaneity that more or less characterizes protest mobilizations and new social movements (Rosenthal & Schwartz 1989; Della Porta & Andretta, 2002), the Greek 'indignants' were at first acknowledged as a short-term response to the Spanish 'indignados'; the mass anti-austerity protest that started at Puerta del Sol in Madrid on 15 May 2011, demanding a new model of democracy, under the banner 'Democracia Real Ya' (Hughes, 2011, p. 408). The mobilization of the European 'indignants' enlarged rapidly from day to day, reaching thousands of protesters and thus provoking similar reactions in other European countries (Douzinas et al., 2011) that were brought about due to the economic crisis. The media offered an estimation of about 30,000 participants in the demonstrations during the first days of the protest in Athens (skai.gr 25/5/2011). Since most of the demonstrations were against the austerity measures voted in the parliament, it is not a coincidence that Syntagma Square, just opposite the Greek Parliament, was chosen as a reference point for the demonstrations (Kousis, 2012).

Even if it emerged from the European South and thrived in the country that experienced the most serious economic crisis, the mass protests of the indignants shared some distinctive common features: the scale of participation and duration, the non-party legacy, the absence of violence and the central role that the new media and online networks played in this mass action.

High participation in protest events and demonstrations is not unique in the Greek case but it had been absent for a while. While general strikes and demonstrations by the Greek indignant citizens were underway, 'European Days of Action and Solidarity' were organized by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) with the slogan: 'For Jobs and Solidarity in Europe. No to Austerity'. During those days, according to several estimations, more than 100,000 protesters participated in the Syntagma square demonstrations (Douzinas, 2011; Nesfige et al., 2011). The Greek indignants protest maintained its high levels of participation and vitality for more than a month, at least until the end of June, when the mid-term plan was approved by the Greek parliament. Condemning the non-party political legacy (Kechagias, 2011), a key feature of the indignant citizens was to denounce any type of party-inclination or party support even if some parties early on declared their pro-movement support and others adulated the 'movement of the square' acknowledging its mass support and broad political influence.

Due to its peaceful start, the Syntagma square mass mobilization was characterized by the absence of violence which helped 'to popularize demands and increase the wave of sympathisers' (Kaldor & Selchow, 2012, p. 23) within people with no-involvement in collective actions and mass mobilizations. But as the movement was reaching its peak, clashes between riot police and demonstrators started to occur. In Syntagma square, several clashes took place between outraged protestors from one side and government parties and politicians from the other. Accusations of corruption against politicians ('thiefs, thiefs' was a slogan shouted by the protesters who raised hands

making a gesture of insult, see Karamichas, 2012), of the authoritarian quality of the political regime ('the dictatorship did not end in 1973' was a slogan on a central banner), etc., were some examples of the contentious political atmosphere that prevailed between the indignants in Syntagma square and the political establishment. Another key feature of the movement, and essential to its exceptional size and duration was the use of the social media. As in the Spanish case, the Greek indignants used the social networks for organizational reasons as well as for mobilizing citizens (González-Bailón et al., 2011; Kechagias, ibid). In Greece, approximately 20,000 citizens were registered on the 'Indignants at Syntagma square' Facebook fan page in just the first period of the mass mobilization (Lu et al., 2012, p. 4). [1] At the same time, the website that the organizers created (www.realdemocracy.gr), became a communication platform, informing and live streaming their sessions in the so-called General Assembly.

In this article, we focus on the mass mobilization and the protest action of the Greek indignants. Although collective action and social movement studies have offered very useful tools for the analyses of these kind of events we focus on protest behavior as a specific form of collective action. In particular, we try to explore the availability for protest and the content of this mobilization within the Greek indignants. Our aim of analysis is targeted at the specific political characteristics of the Greek indignants; we want to examine protesters' perceptions and beliefs regarding the political system in Greece during the first year of the economic crisis under the shadow of blame attribution for the causes of the crisis and the characteristics that differentiate or associate them, and in the light of all these, we want to examine the expectations that the protesters had from this protest.

Mass mobilization, political protest and democracy. Key elements of theoretical conceptualization

In the beginning of the 1960s, new forms of political participation started to appear in many European and Western countries. The economic growth in the first post war era, the increased level of democratization and the processes of cognitive mobilization, cultural transformation and value change (Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart, 2008, p. 131) were key factors for the emergence of 'unconventional' forms of social and political action in many countries. Although the action repertoire of non-traditional political participation and mobilization (i.e. occupying buildings, supporting boycotts, obstructing traffic, etc.) was very different compared to those of 'traditional state-oriented' forms of participation exemplified by taking part in interest groups as well as in other 'bureaucratic agencies' (see Fuchs & Klingemann, 1995, pp. 18-19; Inglehart & Norris, 2003, p. 104, Norris, 2002, p. 39), soon enough they became a 'norm' and a 'mainstream' for a large part of citizens in the Western world (Barnes & Kaase, 1979, pp. 13-14; Fuchs, 1991; Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002; Norris, 2007; Dinas and Gemenis, 2012).

Barnes and Kaase in their seminal work on Political Action (1979) try to explore the reasons why the 'forms of unconventional means of politics had flooded Western

democracies in the late 1960s' (Barnes & Kaase, 1979, p. 14). Although at the beginning of this process the emergence of unconventional forms of mass mobilization was a consequence of economic affluence and political stability, the consolidation of these forms reflected the will of change within the young and well educated generations, the rising of their political interest and interestingly enough the low levels of their party identification and involvement (ibid; Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002). The on going decline of party loyalties, a long-term fall of political trust and the growing electoral volatility that many European countries faced in the late post war era (Norris, 1999, pp. 6, 178-186, Dalton, 2002, p. 22), are all fluctuating evidence of weakening conventional political participation, although at the same time non-institutional forms of mass political activism have been raised dramatically (Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002).

Why do citizens use new forms of political action? Mass mobilization and mass protest are collective actions based on feelings of political dissatisfaction. If people are dissatisfied with politics and at the same time they are unable to express their feeling of discontent to somebody who is listening to them (the government, the politicians, the political parties), 'then comes the urge to shout' (Boulding, 1965, p. 50), in other words, the need to express their dissatisfaction with politics (Farah, Barnes & Heunks, 1979, p. 410). Political protest requires the coincidence of different kinds of emotions within the citizenry: common beliefs that governments, parties or politicians don't effectively respond to citizen's demand ('external efficacy') and individual's feelings of being incapable to influence and/or to have an impact on politics ('internal efficacy') through traditional political involvement (see Craig, Niemi & Silver, 1990, p. 290) raise the motivation of people to take part in protest activities (Farah, Barnes & Heunks, 1979, pp. 437-9; Frijda, 2004, p. 158).

From an elitist theory of democracy it is argued that low levels of internal efficacy combined with high levels of external efficacy constrain protest behavior and sustain the legitimacy of the political regime (Coleman & Davis, 1976; Arzheimer, 2008). Nowadays, democratic systems are confronting a different set of challenges: low levels of system efficacy, growing public mistrust and feelings of political inefficacy among citizens are phenomena that describe the current situation. According to some authors (Klandermans, 1984; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2010), this new set of challenges has led to mass mobilization and political protest. However, according to theorists of emotions (e.g. Frijda, 1986 & 2004; Davou & Demertzis, 2013), the interconnection between emotions and social or political action is not indisputable. Emotions 'have very much to do with action […] They exist for the sake of action […] But there is much emotion without action; there is also much action without obvious emotion' (Frijda, 2004, p. 158). Emotions included 'action readiness', but 'not action per se' (Frijda, 2004, p. 161; Davou & Demertzis, 2013, p. 98). Whether or not emotions lead to action depends on their strength, on the actor's perspective of the situation, as well as on the degree of social support implied by an available mass action (Fridja, 2004, p. 169; Davou & Demertziz, 2013, p. 98).

The question of 'who is willing to protest and why' remains a very important one. Exploring the reasons of mass mobilization and political protest, many

important studies in the 1960's (see, for example Davies, 1962; Smelser, 1963) gave emphasis to social psychological variants and structural strains stressing from a 'demand-side' factors like deprivation, social stress, frustration or aggression as the major causes resulting in mass mobilization and political protest (see Kerbo, 1982). A decade later other research works (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) accentuated 'supply-side' arguments focusing not on citizens' personal situation or emotions but on the tactics and dynamics of social movements and their ability to mobilize a variety of necessary resources to sustain themselves over time (ibid; Kerbo, 1982). According to Kerbo, who distinguishes between 'movements of 'crisis' and 'movements of 'affluence' (ibid), 'there is a place for both theories in the complex field of the study'. Although deprivation theories still face methodological and analytical problems to explain mass mobilization and political protest from a demand-side point of view, changes in expectations and discrepancies between system promises and outcomes give rise to mobilization and protest. In the current situation the traumatic consequences of the financial crisis have extended protest readiness, while people's general low expectations of politics come with the rising hope that mass protests can further the capacity of protesters to enhance their influence on politics.

Methodology and Data

Collective actions and mass protest activities have been widely examined and several research methods have been used in order to investigate the participation in a protest and the behavior of the protesters (see e.g. Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002). Mass surveys, participatory observation, panel surveys, event analysis and face to face interviews with protesters are the most dominant research methods applied thus far (van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001).

For the accomplishment of our research and in order to maintain contact with the participants, we decided to conduct semi-structured interviews with the protesters. According to Blee and Taylor (2002, pp. 92-3), 'semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for understanding social movement mobilization from the perspective of movement actors or audiences. They provide […] access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words [...]'. With the aim to bring protesters to the center of our analysis, our interviews were mainly concentrated on their expectations of the mobilization, their opinion on the way democracy functions nowadays in Greece, how they think that an 'ideal democracy' as well as an 'actual' or a 'real democracy' should work (see inter alia Graham, 1983; Dahl, 2007), and their views on political parties, politicians and violence as a means of political action.

The population of interest in our research was composed of adults that had participated in the demonstrations at least once. Our sampling method was structured through participative observation in the demonstrations in Syntagma square. Researchers in semi-structured interviews are always in a 'problematic balance' between the positions of an 'insider, a participant in a world one studies' and an

'outsider, observing and reporting on that world' (Blee and Taylor, ibid, p. 97). It was obvious at first sight that this protest didn't have the characteristics of a typical movement protest (for the conceptual clarifications of the terms protest and social movement, see Opp, 2009, chapter 2). It didn't articulate specific demands and it wasn't the expression of a unique social group (labour movement, feminist movement, anti-globalization movement, etc.). 'It was a symptom. It expressed a general feeling of concern and anger', stated Josep Lobera referring to Indignados (The Economist 2011). In Syntagma square, the collectivity of actors wanted to express their feelings vis-à-vis politicians and political institutions rather than 'to achieve … goals…by influencing decisions of a target', (Opp, ibid, p. 41).

The sampling method that was therefore considered as most suitable was purposive sampling (Kuzel, 1992; Patton, 2002). As Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009, pp. 173-4) note, purposive sampling has the following characteristics: 'addresses specific purposes related to research questions, uses the expert judgment of researchers and informants and its procedures focus on the depth of information'. Following the typology of Teddlie and Yu (2007, pp. 81-2) on purposive sampling, we have chosen the sequential sampling method as the most appropriate since it combines the gradual selections of cases and allows adding new cases during data collection. This combination of sampling techniques that allows the researcher to adjust his sample in order to develop categories or different patterns of behaviour and beliefs, resembles that of the theoretical sampling used in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2001; Charmaz, 2006; Morse, 2007) where the selection of data is parallel to data analysis. Thus, our gradual data collection entailed weekly meetings of the research team, analyzing data, building categories and determining the composition of our sample. Overall, we conducted ninety interviews in Syntagma square, from May 30th to June 16th, out of which seventy-eight were included in the final dataset. Twelve interviews were discarded since the informants were unwilling to complete the conversation. [2]

Our data analysis was based on the principles of qualitative content analysis (QCA). As Schreier (2012, p. 1) sufficiently stresses 'QCA is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material. It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding frame'. The essential ingredient of QCA is the understanding of the meaning of data and 'the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' that arise from our data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278; Mayring, 2000). Following these characteristics, we started building our coding frame. For the construction of the categories, we applied a combination of concept and data driven categories (Schreier, 2012, p. 33). After transcribing all available interviews, we created a coding scheme from our data depending both on the structure of the interviews and the spontaneous answers that our informants gave us. The meaning and the grounding of the coding scheme will be discussed in detail in the following section.
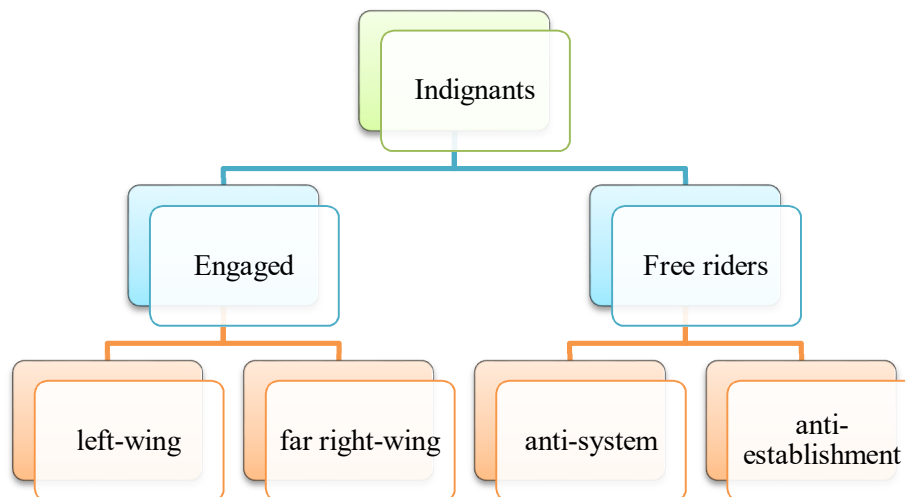
Data analysis

As noted in the previous section, from the coding of the interviews we created a coding scheme consisting of six basic categories. From this coding we created two general concept-based categories, one for the preferred model of governance and a second for the 'diffuse' and 'specific support' for democracy. Concept-driven categories were the result of the interviews' structure that was grounded on concepts entailed in our research questions (deductive). Except from the concept-based categories, our date drove us to four data-based categories: political cynicism, political efficacy, motives and expectations of the participants and, finally, their beliefs regarding the use of violence.

According to Campbell et al. (1954, p. 187) political efficacy is "a feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties". Upon that definition scholars have drawn a distinction between 'internal' and 'external' political efficacy, as was mentioned in a previous section. The meaning that several authors give to external efficacy is very similar to that of political cynicism, as pointed by Miller (1979, p. 952), 'cynicism refers to the degree of negative effect toward the government and is a statement of the belief that the government is not functioning and producing in accord with individual expectations'. What we acknowledge in our research as cynicism is very similar with the above definition; it is a general mistrust in the political system and its institutions, ideologies and actors.

Political cynicism was a common feature for most of our respondents but in combination with political efficacy this resulted in two different types of demonstrators, the engaged and the free-riders (see Figure 1). For the engaged there is a further distinction according to their political affiliation. We identify as engaged those who participated in the demonstrations very frequently and were affiliated with the distinct political groups that were organized around the square. Following the distinction made by Tausch et al. (2011), we find them highly efficacious and less cynical, two characteristics that are highly correlated with participation in protest (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2010, p. 3).

Figure 1. Types of indignation

Indignants

- Engaged
  - left-wing
  - far right-wing
- Free riders
  - anti-system
  - anti-establishment

> Yes, I always vote. I think that by not voting it's like we are giving up on democracy and opening the way for other regimes. This is extremely dangerous. If no one is good for us maybe it's because we haven't looked very well, (man, 32 years old, private sector employee)
> I think that it is important to participate. In general, it is important to show them that people are reacting against all these measures that they have been taken without our having been asked. So I think that our reaction will be a barrier to further strict measures, (woman, 32 years old, public sector employee)

As for their political orientation, we found two different groups, the left-wing and the far right-wing protesters. The left-wings were organized and participated in the 'popular general assembly', camped out in the Square and formulated specific action teams such as a 'multimedia team', a 'general assembly topics team', etc. These protesters were the most experienced, having already been mobilized in mass movements activities, such as those against article 16 of the Constitution, the anti-globalization movement, antifa, the December 2008 protests after 15 year old A. Grigoropoulos was killed, etc. Far-right protesters were against the Memorandum and they were eurosceptics, with ultra nationalistic and authoritarian beliefs, who gathered close to the left side of the Greek Parliament. One group called themselves 'The 300 Greeks', a quaint metaphor of the 300 Spartans and the battle of Thermopylae. The team collected signatures for a referendum on the political system, which would replace the current system of parliamentary democracy.

> It is the first time I have participated in a protest; I don't like being a professional nagger. We all have to come and feel good as Greeks! There are so many people here that they are afraid of us. (And that is) Because we are all Greeks here. We have reached the bottom because all these years we have left the most beautiful country in the world in the hands of traitors and scumbags, (man, 40 years old, private sector employee)

> I don't think we (the 300 Greeks) are a group. Anything that is for the county's good is not a group. We are here solely to make something good for Greece… we just want justification for Greece and the Greek people… for me the disaster of this country is the communist party and trade unionism. Wherever they have tried to invade they caused problems. But besides that I don't think we can talk about politicians now, they are all finished, (man, 43 years old, private sector employee)

For the free-riders, the efficacy-cynicism analogy is very different; they are low efficacious and more cynical, characteristics that reduce their possibility of participating in protest events but despite all that, they went to the square in order to raise their voice either against the political establishment or against the political system as a whole. Although some of them were frequent attendants of the protest, they were not affiliated with any of the political groups of the square; they were not willing to posit themselves on any place of the left-right spectrum, highlighting their distrust and repulsion for all political forces. The group stayed in front of the Greek parliament, shouting slogans, making obscene gestures against the Parliament and criticizing the entire political scene in a rather unconventional way. Within the free riders we can distinguish two subcategories: protesters with anti-system as well as anti-establishment beliefs; for the latter we borrow Sartori's (1976, pp. 132-3) "broad"definition of this phenomenon, that is identified with protesters' opposition on those wielding political power (see also Barr, 2009, p. 31).

> No I didn't vote. Who should I vote for? They are all the same, the same pigs, it's only a change in the masque, nothing else changes; if someone new comes up, with fresh ideas, a party with fresh people that at least seemingly tell the truth and forwards some radical changes and not just crap, they should tell us: you are going to be hungry but can get you somewhere, then I am in, (female, 41 years old, unknown occupational status)

We use Sartori's (1976, p. 133) "strict" definition of anti-systemness to define protesters' opposition on principles of representative democracy and their preference for forms of direct democracy.

> Look, democracy that depends on this parliament, in the way they have made it with its 300 members, with the same 300 being elected again and again, or because they are somebody's son or because they have money or something like that, this is not democracy. It would be democracy if apart from the four parties we could make all the decisions via referendums (man, 31 years old, employed)

We draw a line of distinction between anti-establishment and anti-system beliefs of non-engaged, although an anti-establishment as well as an anti-system mentality can be identified within the Greek indignants as a whole. Concerning protesters' perception vis-à-vis the system of government, what dissociates the engaged from the free riders is the fact that the engaged were more close to anti-systemness, although

they were not 'outside the system'. According to Sartori (ibid, p. 133), who has 'never equated anti-system with "outside the system"', anti-system actors 'may operate from within no less than from without'; the more efficacious and less cynical they felt, the more available they were to operate within the democratic system.

> I don't think it is necessary to have some leaders. We can create new institutions via procedures of direct democracy. Not necessarily from popular assemblies but via representational groups that will be informed and voted from popular assemblies (man, 20 years old, student)

Many analysts have pointed out that the so-called 'movement of the squares' was more an outburst of emotions than a targeted political action (Davou and Demertzis, 2013; Simiti, 2014). The majority of the respondents didn't have high expectations of the mass protest or at least they couldn't translate them into specific political demands. The content of their expectations was vague, but in some cases an expression of hope accompanied with grievance emerged. As suggested by grievance theories, relative deprivation and the feeling of injustice can accelerate protest and especially "when important values and principles are violated (…) this leads to protest in which people express their views and indignation" (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2010, p. 2). Some of them believed that the 'movement of the squares' represented the 'awakening' of the Greek people; by protesting in front of the parliament the chance to declare their opinion on current of economic crisis was given to them.

> It definitely can end up in something, but I don't know what. I am not so sure, (woman, 25 years old, employed part-time)
>
> Finally we are awake now. For all this time we were siting on our couches, being indolent and doing nothing, it's time to wake up. I don't know if there will be any results from this but at least we are doing something, (woman, 18 years old, student)

But for other participants who felt that their opinion didn't count, taking part in this protest was a unique opportunity to express their dissatisfaction or even outrage vis-à-vis politicians, parties or the political system in Greece.

> To throw out the government. What I mean is that I don't want the blues (she means the New Democracy, the conservative party) to become the government after the elections, just for the temporary diffusion of the situation and then do the same as the others. (woman 54 years old, pensioner)
>
> I hope for a new political direction. It is not enough for us to just come here, sit, revile and in that way defuse. We must find a new political target, (woman, 50 years old, pensioner)

The political system and democracy in Greece were in crossfire in this protest and this was the basic element of the before-mentioned protest, as it was shown before. Political trust was ranked very low many years before the outbreak of the current crisis (Georgiadou & Rori 2013, pp. 327-328), which offered ideal conditions for deepening the already existing public mistrust as well as for strengthening the readiness to undertake political action and to participate in protest activity (Davou & Demertzis 2013, p. 98). Many of our informants in Syntagma square were of the opinion, that there is no 'real democracy' in Greece, although most of them were in favour of a democratic system.

> Obviously we don't have democracy now, they are deciding for us and they are taking measures and we can't react to that. This is not what they promised … I expect from those that are elected to be honest and tell us the truth, (woman, 20 years old, student)
> I don't think we have democracy, we have the worst dictatorship. If we had democracy they would have had a referendum to ask the people's opinion on the Memorandum, (man, 43 years old, employed)

The preferred type of democracy was rather a blurry subject since the majority of our informants preferred to support a form of democracy which is closer to an ideal model than to an actual form of democratic government; in other words, democracy for them is an ideal political regime either related to direct political participation or a model of a representative democratic government that will operate without free of 'pathogens'. Even between informants with far right ideas, the democratic ideal remains, at least verbally, viable, although they prefer rather an elitist or an authoritarian type of government. If for many of our informants democracy is equated with an ideal, for many others, a direct type of democracy is in favour, by which decisions must be taken via referendums and popular assemblies and only a few of them prefer a democratic system which focused on democratic procedures (elections, party competition) rather than on substantive policies and political outcomes (see Collier & Levitsky, 2009, p. 273).

Why do our informants have an almost totally negative opinion about the quality of democracy in Greece? According to our data, a representation crisis (but not a legitimation one) is the main reason. To put it another way, the main reason why democracy in Greece isn't perceived of working well is not because representatives and parties are not to be trusted by the majority of the citizens, but first of all because according to citizen perception, political authorities and parties do not properly represent their interests and demands. A legitimation crisis arises when the citizens' demands from democracy rises faster than the system's desire to satisfy them (Habermas, 1975, pp. 68-75). Although the crisis of democracy is often a 'double crisis' of legitimation and representation, indignants of Syntagma square have lost their faith mainly in political institutions and authorities and have expressed alienation from political parties and politicians; at the same time one form of democracy

('ideal', 'direct', or 'procedural') remains for them the most desired form of government.

> I would prefer direct democracy. I mean that whenever big issues are involved, the government should ask the people's mind. Do you not agree? Via a referendum (man, 35 years old, employed)
> I would prefer things to work on a smaller scale, being organized in neighborhoods or small communities but I know this is utopian (woman, 33 years old, employed)
> I want simple people that come from every day and who know how to handle things (woman, 61 years old, retired)

This finding can also be used in order to explain the very negative opinion that almost all respondents expressed about politicians and political parties, which – with the exception to some extent of the smaller parties – are all a kind of 'cartel' only taking care of themselves. [3]

Participants in the Syntagma square mass protest, who provided information for our study, expressed a diffuse support for democracy in general. At the same time they rejected the way the democratic system works in Greece nowadays, as well as the political institutions and the political agents of the Greek political and party system. Although democracy enjoys the diffuse support of the citizens, the lower levels of democracy (institutions and agents) do not gain a serious amount of specific support from the people. [4]

> I blame PASOK's politicians and the bankers, they embezzled people's money…and now do you see any one of them in jail? (man, 40 years old, part-time employed)
> I didn't vote because I saw where we were heading. All parties disgust me. All of them are thieves and deceive people, they are all the same (man, 35 years old, taxi driver)

According to our findings, a 'reservoir' of democratic support (Dalton, 1999) does exist, although low levels of support for the political process might provoke demands for constitutional, institutional and functional changes of the Greek democracy (ibid, p. 59). Diffuse support is an indicator of system legitimacy (ibid, p. 58). High diffuse support and even indirect system legitimacy are the reasons why, despite the lack of specific support, the vast majority of the respondents reject the use of violence as a political means? Trying to explain the use of political violence, we know that 'political support does not hold a cardinal position among explanatory variables. This does not mean', according to Canache & Kulisheck (1998, p. 11), 'that people's support for their political systems is trivial'.

A general rejection of violence as a political means from the vast majority of our informants does not mean that, vis-à-vis the political and party system in Greece, mobilized citizens and protesters are not willing to use violence against the existing political elite and the political institutions. One of our impressive findings is that

despite the general 'no to violence' from many of our informants, the almost equal potentiality of accepting or using violence against politicians, reveals that the relationship between direct political action and the democratic order is more complicated than we think. Generally speaking, the low level of specific support for democracy does not affect the basic support for the democratic system. What then does happen, when citizens' dissatisfaction with political institutions and the incumbents of office coincide with a situation of economic crisis and a mass mobilization within the society? The answer of Dalton (ibid, p. 71-2), who has investigated system support in nine nations during a period of economic crises in the mid-1970s and early 1980s, is an ambiguous one: 'feelings of dissatisfaction have apparently not (yet) affected basic support for the political system and the values of democratic process'. In the Greek case, feelings of dissatisfaction among citizens have been around for a long time, which in times of crisis might erode citizens' loyalty to 'the game of democratic politics' (ibid, p. 72).

> I believe in the violence of the capital and the state, so I think that we should implement some kind of defensive violence. We should protect the movement and our ideas' (man, 21 years old, student)
> We need to be cautious, who we hit and why. Definitely some people need to understand that they are not above all and they are not immune but on the other hand the levelling of everything is equally dangerous (man, 35 years old, PhD student)

Conclusions

The protest at Syntagma square during May and June 2011 can be characterized unconventional considering its duration, huge participation, non-violent nature, the organized dispersal and anti-political rhetoric. Having conducted a significant number of interviews with participants of that protest, we constructed a typology of indignants, distinguishing between the engaged and the free riders. Differences on the level of political efficacy and cynicism were important for highlighting the two main types of protesters. According to their political affiliation we identify left-wing and far right-wing protesters within the engaged as well as protesters with anti-establishment or anti-systemic views within the free riders. The engaged were highly efficacious and less cynical due to their specific political affiliations and anti-systemic ideas with a broad definition being endorsed. Free riders, on the other hand, were low efficacious and more cynical protesters, expressing their anti-systemic and anti-establishment ideas more vividly.

Apart from these differences that dissociate the two main types of indignants, there were some basic perceptions and beliefs that they all shared. Indignants, who gathered in great numbers in Syntagma square for weeks, kept their expectations low regarding their ability to influence political decisions. The mass protests were vigorous against

political actors, regime institutions and regime performance. Protesters wanted above all to express their negative emotions about the political system rather than to address specific demands and to influence the political decision-making process.

The great majority of our informants felt betrayed by the established parties and the political elite from one side, whereas it remained loyal to democratic principles and expressed a willingness to participate in the representative processes of parliamentary democracy. Democracy was perceived first of all as an ideal form, which was accepted by the protesters, as well as an applied political regime, which was widely distrusted. The indignants' ambiguous stance towards democracy may not signal a crisis of legitimacy of liberal democracy in Greece but rather a crisis of political representation as a result of citizen's dissatisfaction with political institutions and political actors and a lack of political trust as well as of transparency in and effectiveness of politics.

An ambiguous position of the indignants was found vis-à-vis their stance on political violence. Refusal of violence as a political means was a common belief in the vast majority of our respondents. At the same time their verbal aggressiveness, partial toleration or even use of violence against politicians reflects the deep representation crisis of the Greek democracy.

Political disappointment, cynicism and a willingness to use political violence are facets of the indignant citizens mobilization in Greece. Beyond any attempt to idealize or to demonize what had happened in May/June 2011 in Syntagma square, we have tried to show the heterogeneity and ambiguity that emerged from the indignants' opinions and beliefs on democracy and the democratic regime in Greece during the economic crisis.

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[1] 41.849 users had been registered in 1.541 relevant pages between May 1st, 2011 and January 15th, 2012. During this period of time, 935.354 posts had been counted (Lu et al. 2012, p. 4).

[2] In qualitative research there is a distinction between respondent and informant; initialized by ethnographic research, participants in in-depth interviews are faced as informants and not as simple respondents (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). "Informants provide the study investigator with insights into a matter but also can suggest sources for corroboratory or contrary evidence" (Yin 2002, p. 90).

[3] The diagnosis of the emergence of the type of a 'cartel party' in the Greek party system is not ungrounded. Vernardakis (2012) analyses the political parties in Greece during the late postauthoritarian era from this point of view and he comes to the conclusion that regarding their organization the ruling parties have already created a 'cartel'. For a synopsis of this analysis of the Greek parties as a 'cartel' see Gemenis & Nezi (2012).

[4] This very negative opinion of actors and institutions of representative democracy in Greece has deep roots: dissatisfaction with democracy and low confidence in political authorities and institutions were already worrying trends in the late '90s (see Eurobarometer Opinion Poll, 47.1, 1997), which haven been accelerated after a decade according the surveys on political confidence carried out by the opinion polling company Public Issue, http://www.publicissue.gr/1378/institutions-analysis-2009/.