

CRISIS AND REPRODUCTION STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

The economic crisis, besides economic effects, has a strong impact on the main sectors of social life such as social reproduction strategies. The educational system, as one of the main social reproduction institutions, has been influenced, like many other aspects of society, by the crisis. Based on a case-study methodology, this piece of work is focused on the impact of the crisis on lower socioeconomic background pupils and their family's school and social life characteristics. Using observation tools and semi-structured interviews, our study indicates that the school and social life of pupils from a lower socioeconomic background and their families have strongly been affected by the economic crisis. Especially, what they do to deal with the crisis phenomena is to reinstate old social reproduction strategies such as student employment.

Keywords: *crisis, educational system, reproduction strategies*

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η οικονομική κρίση, εκτός από τις οικονομικές επιπτώσεις, έχει ισχυρό αντίκτυπο στους κύριους τομείς της κοινωνικής ζωής, όπως είναι οι στρατηγικές κοινωνικής αναπαραγωγής. Το εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα, ως ένας από τους βασικούς μηχανισμούς κοινωνικής αναπαραγωγής, επηρεάστηκε, όπως και πολλές άλλες πτυχές της κοινωνίας, από την κρίση. Βασιζόμενο στη μεθοδολογία της μελέτης περίπτωσης, το παρόν άρθρο εξετάζει τον αντίκτυπο της κρίσης σε μαθητές από χαμηλότερα κοινωνικοοικονομικά στρώματα και τα σχολικά και κοινωνικά χαρακτηριστικά της οικογένειάς τους. Χρησιμοποιώντας εργαλεία παρατήρησης και ημιδομημένες συνεντεύξεις, η μελέτη δείχνει ότι η σχολική και κοινωνική ζωή των μαθητών από χαμηλότερα κοινωνικοοικονομικά στρώματα και οι οικογένειές τους έχουν επηρεαστεί έντονα από την οικονομική κρίση. Αυτό που κάνουν ειδικότερα για να αντιμετωπίσουν τα φαινόμενα της κρίσης είναι να επαναπροσδιορίσουν παλαιότερες στρατηγικές κοινωνικής αναπαραγωγής, όπως είναι η απασχόληση των φοιτητών.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: *κρίση, εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα, στρατηγικές αναπαραγωγής*

■ EDUCATION AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION DURING THE CRISIS IN GREECE

For many years, the social groups that use the educational system as a social reproduction strategy have been expanded (Panayiotopoulos & Thanos, 2008). This results in both the entry into the educational system of social groups that did not use it earlier and the intensifying of competition among social groups for the acquisition of university degrees, which may help occupy positions in the labour market (Bourdieu, 2002).

When the crisis broke out, *inter alia*, it affected the labour market with job cuts. Thus, as the number of working positions declined, the university degrees leading to these positions increased due to the expansion of the educational system. This resulted in an imbalance that led to a crisis in school-based social reproduction strategies and mechanisms (Panayiotopoulos & Thanos, 2008).

Social reproduction strategies

Reproduction strategies are practices with which individuals or their families seek to maintain or improve their social position in the structure of hierarchical social relationships. Reproduction strategies depend on both the volume and structure of the individuals or their families' capital to be reproduced and the state of the instruments of reproduction. As a result, reproduction strategies depend on an individual's social position. Individuals with similar social status use similar reproduction strategies (Bourdieu, 2002).

Indeed, individuals who have a similar social status are placed in homogeneous conditions of existence that produce homogeneous systems of dispositions/hexis. These hexis (i.e. *the Aristotelian habitus*) can generate similar practices. Therefore, the practices and, in particular, the reproduction strategies depend on the social position of the individual, which is determined by the structure of the relationships among all the properties (educational level, occupation, income, etc.) that the individual has (Bourdieu, 2002).

The correlation between the reproductive strategies and the social origin of individuals is the result of, on one hand, the inculcation which takes place in the context of the family and / or of the initial conditions of existence and, on the other hand, of the social trajectory, namely, the experience of social rise or decline, which influences their dispositions and their opinions (Bourdieu, 2002).

The school as a social reproduction strategy

In Greece, the school's integration into the social reproduction strategies of the lower social classes is linked to the transformations of Greek society during the post-war period. One of the major transformations was the reduction of the employees in the primary production sector from 47,8% in 1951 to 17,3% in 1991, and the increase of the employees in the tertiary production sector from 26,7% in 1951 to 48,3% in 1991. Thus, a significant proportion of those employed in the primary production sector, that is, a large proportion of people from the lower social classes, were absorbed in the tertiary sector (Thanos, 2010). However, employment in the service sector, in most cases, had as a prerequisite the possession of an academic title. Thus, the school as a means of social rise was incorporated into the strategies of reproduction of the families from the lower social classes in Greece, resulting in a high motivation for their children's studies and they are making many financial sacrifices for that reason (Tsoukalas, 1987).

The social mobility displayed by the lower classes during the post-war period is not "genuine" but structural because it is the result of the transformation of the structure of the Greek society. Despite this development, according to the results of all relevant research, the educational system in Greece has contributed to the reproduction of the social structure (Thanos, 2010). Young people from the lower classes who manage to enter higher education are admitted to the so-called "non-privileged universities", which award degrees leading to posts/positions which in other countries require academic titles of lower educational levels (Fragoudaki, 1985).

With the completion of social transformation, the possibilities of absorbing graduates in the tertiary sector are reduced. Thus, since the end of the 1980s, graduates, of mainly "non-privileged schools" have begun to face problems in the labour market. This situation has worsened with the crisis (Thanos, 2012).

The crisis and the crisis of the reproduction strategies

The crisis in Greece began to emerge in the early 2010s and culminated at the end of the decade (2009) with the country's entry into the International Monetary Fund. The crisis affected all social sectors, including employment (Panayiotopoulos & Schultheis, 2015). Unemployment soared and hit, mostly, young people (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2018).

The decline in jobs, especially in the public sector due to the crisis on one hand, and the increase in academic titles that led to them on the other, reinforced the imbalance between them (Bourdieu, 2002). This imbalance had been manifested by

the late 1980s, as reported (Thanos, 2012). Study for a degree, as a strategy and the educational system as a social reproduction mechanism were directly affected by the crisis. Particularly influenced were those social groups which relied mainly on their educational capital for their reproduction (Bourdieu, 2002).

Indeed, in this situation, graduates who have the least means to make use of their degrees face the greatest risk of having them devalued. To cope with this situation, they hold positions that previously did not require a degree. Thus, from this devaluation of degrees, people who are in the worse predicament are those who enter the labour market without a degree (Bourdieu, 2002). This, in the Greek society, appears as an attempt by the social subjects, mainly from the lower classes, to obtain a degree either to find a good job or to avoid remaining unemployed (Thanos, 2012).

RESEARCH

The present study is a case study and concerns a teenager who comes from the lower middle class. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the crisis on the use of the school as a social reproduction mechanism. The aims of the research are to study the impact of the crisis on the adolescent and his family's daily life, the practices they use to deal with the crisis and the school progression and finally, the student's school aspirations in relation to the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the family and of the society in which he lives.

Non-systematic observation and semi-structured interview were used as a means of data collection. As part of the observation, data on the daily life of the family and the place of residence were recorded. The semi-structured interview included questions about the socio-cultural characteristics of the family and the village, the daily life and school life of the subject. The subject of the research was also asked to record a ten-day diet in the form of a diary.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

V. is 16 years old, a member of a family of four, consisting of two parents and an older brother. Both his paternal grandparents live right next to his house. V. is in the first year of Vocational (Senior) High School (Year 10).

The house, village and wider area (prefecture) of residence

Greece is a mountainous country and the plains are few. The prefecture that V.

lives includes lowland and mountainous areas. Residents are employed in the primary production sector (farmers, stockbreeders and loggers). During the crisis, many workers have lost their jobs and are in search of new ones. The capital of the prefecture is a large town compared to other towns and is home to over 50% of the population of the prefecture that live and work locally. In the period 2001-2011, the population of the prefecture decreased¹.

V. lives in a village 9 km from the capital of the prefecture, in a lowland area. The majority of residents are high school graduates and are mainly engaged in agriculture. In the village, there is a community arts organisation with dance and theatre groups and it organises various cultural activities. The population is 374 but has declined over the last decade, as many residents have moved to the major urban centres of the country and have also migrated abroad.

The village consists mainly of detached houses, as V.'s house, which was built in the 1960s as a dowry for his grandfather's marriage with his grandmother. It consists of two bedrooms and an open plan kitchen- living room (58sqm). The bathroom is an additional space. Home furniture and electric appliances are old but are slowly being replaced. The most important problem with the house is high humidity. Next to their house, there is a room (20sqm) where his paternal grandparents live. There is also a storage room. In front of the house, there is a large yard, and part of it is used as a garden.

The family

V.'s parents are Vocational High School graduates who then studied at an Institute of Vocational Training (IEK). His father studied to be an assistant radiologist but failed to work in this field. Initially, he worked as a contract employee in the municipal water supply service, in which, after some years, he became a permanent public employee and still works there. His mother studied nursing and later worked in various medical institutions as a nurse (a contract employee). His father wanted to be a teacher and his mother a doctor.

His brother is a sophomore and studies in a School of Education. As a student, he was quite good. He studied systematically in the third year of Senior High School (Year 12), a Year in which he also attended cram school and supplementary classes.

His paternal and maternal grandparents are primary school graduates. They are now retired but previously worked in the agricultural sector. They are pensioners.

1. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from <https://trikalacity.gr/dimografika-statistika/>

His maternal grandfather was, for some time, the owner of an OPAP (gambling company) agency franchise, but it was closed down since the liabilities were more than the assets. His paternal grandparents live next to their house, while his maternal grandparents in a nearby village, whom they visit almost every Sunday.

Income, crisis and economy practices

The basic family income is the father's salary, since the mother is unemployed. The father earns 944 euros a month. The paternal grandparents, who receive a monthly pension of 900 euros also contribute to the income of the family, by offering them half of it. His maternal grandparents contribute about 300 euros (children's pocket money, shopping, etc.). V. earns about 120 euros a month from his work and uses it for his expenses. In total, the family's income, with the help they receive, is approximately 1.864 euros.

Chart 1. Monthly expenses before and after the crisis by category

Expenses (per month)	Before the crisis	After the crisis
Electricity	190,0	135,0
Telephone	42,0	37,0
Cellular phone	50,0	10,0
Water	36,7	30,0
Heating	120,0	80,0
Car service	150,0	183,3
Petrol	300,0	150,0
Purchase of furniture	83,3	41,7
Supermarket	350,0	150,0
Grandparents' shopping	100,0	300,0
Clothes/shoes	166,6	83,3
Entertainment	200,0	30,0
Brother's studies	80,0	450,0
Personal expenses	250,0	120,0
Total expenses	2.188,6	1.803,00

Before the crisis, his father was paid 1.244 euros and his grandparents a pension of 500-600 euros each. When his mother worked, she was paid 1.400 euros. Before the crisis, the family's income was 2.644 euros, without the help of his grandparents.

Their expenses amount to around 1.800 euros per month and have all been reduced, compared to their pre-crisis expenses. Expenses related to necessities (eg. electricity and telephone) have slightly been reduced, while other expenses that do not cover necessities (eg. clothes and entertainment) have been reduced greatly.

The whole family try to economise by mainly reducing those expenses that are not necessary for their survival, such as entertainment expenses. Before the crisis, every week, his parents went to town for a drink or a dinner out. Now, they stay at home or go out to the village grill restaurant. Their parents rarely buy clothes, while he and his brother buy clothes during the sales period. In order to save money at the supermarket, they plan the shopping of the week rather than the shopping of the fortnight or month as they used to, they visit many supermarkets and compare prices, choose 'own- brand' supermarket products over branded ones or go to supermarkets which have only "own-brand" products. In addition, for saving purposes, their mother does the laundry or the ironing at night. When it comes to bathing, they turn on "the water boiler once for everyone". In winter, the heating is barely switched on, only once at noon and once in the evening before going to bed. His mother and the two children often argue with their grandfather because he turns off the heating every time they switch it on. Before the crisis, the radiators were on all day. V. remembers having the radiators on while it was sunny outside. They rarely visit his mother's parents, who live in a nearby village, to save on petrol.

According to a ten-day recording of their food, they eat toast or eggs from their chickens or cheese pies from the village bakery (1 euro each) in the morning and they sometimes skip breakfast. The milk they drink is supplied free of charge because of his father's work in the municipality. Lunch includes chicken or pork from their stock of small animals they keep, legumes, vegetables/salads, that they produce, and fish (sardine or anchovy). In the evening, they usually eat leftovers and may sometimes order souvlaki (3 euros each time) from the village grill restaurant.

V. and his family's daily life

His father is the first to wake up at around 6:00 am. After drinking coffee and getting ready he passes by the grandfather's house and they talk about the jobs that must be done on that day. His mother wakes up a little later and the grandparents usually give her fresh bread. V. wakes up at 7:00 and after breakfast, he goes by his grandfather's house to get his daily pocket money (1 euro). They talk about the

previous night and the people at the grill restaurant where V. works or if he needs to buy something from a tool shop, which V. is crazy about.

His mother does the housework. Then she usually meets a friend. Once or twice a week she goes downtown to run such errands as buying the grandparents' medicines.

V. returns home at 14:35 after he has stopped by his grandparents' house. He talks to his grandfather about their shared interest, the motorbike the tractor and the car. Sometimes they talk about school, whether they went on an excursion or saw something interesting or about the lessons, whether they made something like soaps, perfumes, candles, etc. Since this is a Vocational High School. Then he goes home and eats with his mother and they mainly talk about work. His mother tells him that he works long hours and gets paid a little (8-10 euros a day). Sometimes, though, he goes straight to work and eats later (17:00) when he leaves work for a break.

His father returns home at 15:00, eats and then lies down. When he wakes up, he sometimes drinks coffee with his grandparents. Then, he may go to work or downtown to the supermarket and then plays "Stoixima" (bet) (a lucky game). Sometimes he stays at home.

V. sees his friends at work and leaves work several times a day to go home. If there is some work to be done, such as cleaning his father's car, he helps because he likes it. He returns home around midnight.

V. rides a motorbike he acquired a year ago and is crazy about it. He bought it from a kid for 90 euros and little by little fixed it on his own. He and his friends like to disassemble motorbikes and use spare parts to improve their performance. The motorbike has no papers (registration certificate) because it is old.

Studies, interests and reproduction practices

V. is in the second year of Vocational High School (Year 11) and wants to join the Police Force or go to the Army Officers' School (SMY) or the Fire Brigade. In the first year of Senior High School, he attended General High School. His average score was about 15, but he didn't study at all. In basic subjects (physics, chemistry, ancient Greek) he had very low grades. This was one of the main reasons for his decision to continue his studies in Vocational High School, where courses are easier, there is less competition and, thus, he is more likely to succeed in one of the schools he wants. He knows someone from his village who went to Vocational High School and was admitted to the Army Officers' School and wants to follow his example.

He decided for his future without discussing it with his family. Everyone in the family reacted except for his father. The main cause of reaction was the fear of “falling in with a bad crowd” and not so much the school type. His mother characteristically said that “in the Vocational High School they are punks and, generally, deal with drugs” and “that there are also people of older ages”. His grandfather told him: “You will not make any progress there” and “you will become a punk there”. But V. managed to convince them.

His parents are not optimistic about the future because V. does not study. However, he has good grades (average=15.5/20), compared to other classmates. Many times he doesn't even bother to change the books in his bag, which is a cause of quarrel with his mother. He doesn't go to a private evening school (“frontistirio”) this year for financial reasons, although his parents have suggested it. He will take extra lessons in the final year of high school, from the summer onwards, as his brother did, he will study and he believes he will fill in gaps. He is only interested in design, which he is “crazy about”, as he says.

His parents try to do the best they can for V., for him to study and manage to get a job. Every day he is urged to study. They complain that he works so many hours at the expense of school since he has no time to study. Because he returns late from work, he sometimes goes to school late or does not go at all, so he has reached the limit of allowed absences and his performance in classes is not good. His parents want V. and his brother to study at university, because as V. says, “They don't want us to be unemployed for our whole life, to find something. (...) They believe we need to study, not to stop in high school with a High School diploma because we won't accomplish anything”.

He likes football a lot. At first, he played with the local village team, but the team no longer exists. He was asked to play in the town's Football Academy, but the transportation costs were high and he went only for a short period. He then enrolled in the team of a nearby village, where he goes by motorcycle. He plays in this team every 2-3 weeks and trains 1-2 times a week for 1.5 hour.

V. is crazy about cars and motorbikes. From a young age, he was interested in bikes, which he fixed. When a friend got a motorcycle, they fixed it together, using spare parts. Then, he learned to ride a motorbike and bought his own, that is, he took the spare parts and made it himself. V. and the other children in the village like to “modify” motorbikes, by disassembling them, putting other spare parts and fixing them and then racing them. His parents do not object because he is careful. They just shout at him because he spends a lot of money on spare parts.

■ DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

V.'s family moved from the town to the village in the early 2010s, on the onset of the crisis, so as not to pay rent (Panayiotopoulos & Schultheis, 2015). The villagers are mainly involved in agriculture and livestock breeding. The volume of capital of the residents is small (Bourdieu, 2002), like V.'s family. V.'s parents have a small income and live in a house of about 60 sqm, a dowry to his grandfather from his marriage with his grandmother, which was built in the mid-1960s and has various problems. His grandparents, primary school graduates, even though they have retired, they still grow vegetables and raise a few animals, just for home use.

V.'s father is a civil servant in the municipality. His mother is unemployed. Although she worked under contract with several public organisations, she failed to become a civil servant. His parents, Technical High School graduates, then studied at IEK (Institute of Vocational Training) in order to find work in the public sector, this being a well sought practice of the lower classes which aims to improve their social status. The expansion of the services sector and, in particular, of public sector services during the post-war period contributed to this. In many cases, a prerequisite for a position in the public sector was the possession of a degree (Tsoukalas, 1987). Since the mid-1980s, with the expansion of the educational system and the decline of new positions in the public sector, an imbalance between academic titles and positions has begun to emerge (Thanos, 2012). Thus, during that decade his father managed to become a civil servant, while his mother did not.

The crisis, which affected all sectors of society, also affected V.'s family, resulting in the reduction of his father's salary and his mother's unemployment. As his brother studies in a School of Education and consumes about half of his father's salary (450 euros), the family engaged in a series of practices to reduce significantly their expenses, in order to meet their daily needs. But that is not enough. This is the reason their grandparents contribution is welcomed, while V. himself works in a grill restaurant-cafe in his village for small money. Past practices, due to the crisis, reappear (Panayiotopoulos & Schultheis, 2015).

After school, V. goes home for lunch, leaves for work and returns home late at night. He does not study at all and only occupies himself with designing, which he likes. He studied at General High School for a year and continued his education at Vocational High School for the second year (Year 11), as did his parents and his friends from the village. Studying this case, is also evident that the educational system reproduces social inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2014).

V. believes that going to a Vocational High School, it is easier to achieve his

goal, which is to enter higher military or police schools. Attendance at one of these schools will provide him with a permanent job (job security) in the public sector, so as not to have difficulty finding a job or become unemployed, as is the case with other degrees. V. seems to understand that he does not have the necessary capital to make good use of a degree (Bourdieu, 2002), so he tries to enter such a school as did his cousin and other young people from his village. However, he does not overlook the acquisition of any other degree, as both he and his family consider it necessary in the job market. Indeed, in times of crisis people who do not have a degree are mostly at risk of becoming unemployed (Bourdieu, 2002).

The results of the present research cannot be generalised and relate only to this particular case. Based on the relevant literature and taking into account the results of the present research with their limitations, it seems that:

- the educational system reproduces social inequalities
- University studies and school have been the social reproduction strategies of the lower classes due to the transformations of the social structure during the post-war period, with the main focus being on the expansion of employment in the service sector, in particular, the public sector
- employment in the Greek public sector, since it has the stature of a permanent position, is a key objective of the lower social classes to improve their social status
- the crisis has had multiple effects on people's daily lives, especially those from the lower social classes
- the crisis has fuelled practices of the past, such as student employment, help from older parents, and self-sufficient forms of economy in the lower social classes
- the lower classes attribute qualities to an academic degree, that were present before the crisis, when conditions were different.

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