

The Greek people see their dreams being destroyed and hopes for a better future about to disappear.

Greek society is experiencing significant economic, political and social change. [Athanasia Chalari](#) is leading an LSE research project on this topic. As part of EUROPP's coverage of the Greek crisis, she explains how the project aims to find out how the crisis affects citizens' every-day-lives and how they cope with the current economic and social insecurity.



Currently, Greek society is experiencing significant economic, political and social change. But how has Greek society changed due to these austerity measures adopted and implemented in the country? In which ways are the Greek people affected by these reforms? I attempted to find answers to these questions in August and September 2011 by conducting more than twenty in-depth interviews all over the country with young and old Greeks, employed and unemployed, male and female, married and unmarried, Greeks from affluent families, the middle-class and the lower class.

The main themes which emerged out of the interviews are: uncertainty, disappointment, pessimism, insecurity, fear, anger, negativism, pressure, anxiety and depression. Participants discussed about the lack of trust towards the politicians and the negative influence of the media. Very characteristically some of them said:

"We see our dreams to get destroyed and our hopes for a better future to disappear."

"The way Greeks live their lives has now changed; now things are worse."

"You can't understand exactly what is happening or what the government wants to do. I can't follow any more."

"The situation creates insecurity to everyone about the future."

Regarding everyday life, participants explain that their way of living has changed dramatically and further difficulties are anticipated:

"Professionally there is a constant feeling of insecurity. Not to get fired, to be good in our job, to get along with small salaries."

"I have started thinking things that I wouldn't have thought five years ago, like getting a job abroad."

"Professionally, I don't know if I will have a job tomorrow and personally, I have no desire to do anything joyful anymore. There is so much insecurity about everything."

"Psychologically it influences me a lot. If you see a society that suffers and everyone in your environment to suffer you can't remain distant."

The participants experienced social as well as personal alterations to their lives, as they have been forced to readjust their way of coping with difficulties and adjust to new ways of living.

At the same time though, participants realise that they have contributed to the formation of this new reality and they try to explain what their role and contributions might have been:

“I might have contributed through my tolerance.”

“Being silent means consenting.”

“We all played a part. We have all contributed.”

Participants do not understand themselves as victims of the situation or as passive receivers of other peoples’ decisions. It is also important to note that they made repeated references to the impairment of the Greek state; the lack of justice, the need for punishment, and to the inadequate health and educational systems. At the same time though, participants displayed a critical understanding of the current situation, of their contribution and responsibility; therefore the element of maturity is the one that emerges out of all interviews.

Although disappointment and insecurity were main themes in all of the interviews no intention of violence emerged, rather the need for collective forms of peaceful resistance was evident (even though the situation in Greece is rapidly changing). Although participants display disappointment and disapproval towards politicians, they do not exclude themselves from being part of the solution.

As society and the politico-economic circumstances alter, insecurity and fear about the future increase. From now on Greeks will have to readjust to new developments and realise that this is how they will live their lives from now on. The current economic and social climate is characterised by the need for constant readjustment to new technologies, non-secure jobs, social and labour mobility and uncertainty about the future. Therefore, the future from now on shall not be predictable or stable and we thus need different ‘means’ to confront it. This is a new element compared to the past which supports the assumption that as societies (along with the Greek society) change, citizens should readjust to the new reality and that society will inevitably reform in that direction.

Social change may occur gradually or from sudden and dramatic transformations of political, social and economic institutions. The case of Greek society falls in the second category as most of the recent economic and political reforms are a result of dramatic transformations; it may also be the case that Greece signals the beginning of greater social changes that may follow in Southern Europe. And this is the exact reason why we need to pay particular attention to the Greek case and the social dimension of the crisis, as it might enable us to cope with possible future ‘metastases’ of the political and economic crisis across Europe.

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