CHAPTER 10

Intergenerational Transmission of Resources and Values in Times of Crisis: Shifts in Young Adults’ Employment and Education in Greece

Asimina Christoforou, Evmorfia Makantasi, Kyriakos Pierrakakis, and Panos Tsakloglou

10.1 Introduction

During the period 1996–2007 the growth rate of real GDP per capita in Greece was 3.5%, substantially higher than the average of the EU (2.3%) or the Eurozone (1.9%) (EUROSTAT 2019). Nonetheless, the Greek unemployment rate in 2007 was 8.5%, higher than that of the EU

A. Christoforou (✉) · P. Tsakloglou
International and European Economic Studies, Athens University of Economics and Business, Athens, Greece

P. Tsakloglou
e-mail: tsaklog@aueb.gr

E. Makantasi · K. Pierrakakis
diaNEOsis, Marousi, Greece
e-mail: fay.m@dianecosis.org

K. Pierrakakis
e-mail: Kyriakos.p@dianecosis.org

© The Author(s) 2021
J. Tosun et al. (eds.), Intergenerational Transmission and Economic Self-Sufficiency, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17498-9_10
or the Eurozone (both 7.2%). In the same year, Greece had the highest under-25 (22.7%) and female (12.9%) unemployment rates among all EU countries. For young adults, the problem of transition from education to the labour market was quite severe (Karamessini 2006; Mitrakos et al. 2010; Dendrinos 2014). The growth rate of the Greek economy was based on consumption and external borrowing. When the bubble burst, Greece experienced one of the most severe and prolonged crises recorded in a developed country since World War II. Between 2008 and 2016 the cumulative decline in real GDP per capita was 25.1%. During this period, unemployment shot up. In 2013 the total unemployment rate peaked at 27.5% (with over three quarters of the unemployed being long-term unemployed), while the youth unemployment rate reached 58.3%. Since then there was a gradual decline, but rates remain at very high levels. In 2019 real GDP growth in Greece was 1.9%, slightly above that of the EU-28 (1.5%), while total and youth unemployment rates fell to 17.3 and 25.8% (age group 20–29), respectively, which are still higher than those of the EU-28 (6.3 and 8.3%, respectively) (EUROSTAT 2019). However, despite improvements in growth and employment, the COVID-19 pandemic and the containment measures implemented across countries are expected to reverse positive trends and lead to severe economic crisis throughout the globe.

In the years before the crisis, despite high unemployment rates, especially among youths and women, very inadequate unemployment insurance benefits, virtually no unemployment assistance, low spending on active labour market policies and lack of a minimum income guarantee scheme, the welfare position of the youth was not considered especially vulnerable (Tsakloglou et al. 2016). This was possible due to the central role of the family and the strong ties among family members, which often substituted the weak welfare state. Despite the inadequate protection offered by Greece’s “Southern welfare state” (Ferrera 1996), as long as at least one member of the family—usually, the male head—had a formal attachment to the labour market, there was a redistribution of resources within the family and extreme cases of poverty and social exclusion were avoided to a considerable extent (Andriopoulou et al. 2020). This situation changed dramatically during the crisis. The number of jobless households shot up—between 2008 and 2013 the shares of persons aged 0–17 and 18–59 living in jobless households rose from 3.6 and 7.5% to 13.3 and 19.6%, respectively. Thus the family could
no longer act as an effective shield for the young unemployed family members (O’Reilly et al. 2015). At the same time, the pre-existing slow school-to-work transition was reinforced by the crisis, leading to higher unemployment, lower earnings and lack of income support among young adults (Matsaganis 2015).

Currently, there is a paucity of studies on the Greek labour market offering an in-depth analysis of qualitative factors affecting youth employment and welfare in an intergenerational context, especially during a crisis. Despite signs of recovery in Greece, the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have a devastating impact on the economy, which will continue to negatively affect growth and employment prospects and, more importantly, will considerably transform how we value and distribute resources within society and across generations. In this chapter, we analyze the intergenerational transmission of resources and values within the family and how this relates to young adults’ education and employment trajectories in Greece. To this end, a series of semi-structured biographical interviews were conducted in order to cover the educational and work experience of young adults in Greece, as well as their relations with their parents and grandparents. The element that stands out in all interviews, across generations, is that family matters. More than any other economic or social institution, the family has a critical role in the transmission of resources and values to younger generations. However, the economic crisis of the past decade has undeniably impacted the employability of young adults, their school-to-work transition and the role of social institutions, especially that of the family. Our findings suggest that young adults in Greece may already be reacting to the changes imposed by the crisis by inducing them to reflect on their strategies, explore possibilities and shape new ways of economic production and social reproduction. From our research, it becomes evident that resources, values and transmission processes may be undergoing considerable transformation. The question is whether these new ways can ensure young people’s employability, economic self-sufficiency and well-being at the individual and collective levels, or merely reproduce past “visions and divisions” of society, leading to social unrest and political instability. We discuss this issue in our concluding section.
10.2 Economic Self-sufficiency and Family Background

The semi-structured biographical interviews included ten young adults, aged 18–35, along with one parent and one grandparent, so a total of thirty interviews were conducted. They took place in the first quarter of the year 2017 and were conducted by Dr. Evmorfia Makantasi of the diaNEOsis research institute that is representing Greece in the CUPESSSE project. The demographic characteristics of our sample are summarized in Table A.10 in the Appendix. In accordance with project guidelines, the sample of young adults consists of five males and five females, who are distributed equally among the following occupational categories: employed in the family business, self-employed, in education, unemployed and employed.

The gender composition of the full sample, including young adults, parents and grandparents, is almost balanced, the share of females being only slightly higher (54% females and 46% males). The mean age of the young adults in our sample is 27, for the parents it is 56 and for the grandparents a bit over 80. Almost all young adults are single, apart from two, a male and a female, who are married with no children and also happen to be unemployed. All parents are married, with an average number of children around two, while grandparents are or were married, since four women are now widowed, with an average number of three children. Eight grandparents and three parents in our sample are pensioners (see details in Table A.10 in the Appendix). Also, half of our sample comes from a rural area and half from an urban area. It is worth noting that in some cases the family of the young adult originated from a rural area and migrated to the urban area in search of better work and living conditions for themselves and their families. Later on some families decided to return to the rural area they originated from to exploit family assets they had inherited from previous generations, including land or buildings, which would be cultivated for personal use or rented off for agricultural or touristic activities.

All families in the sample are of Greek nationality, apart from one that migrated to Greece and originated from the Balkans when the young adult who was interviewed was young enough to begin schooling in Greece from a very early age. Based on data from the Greek Ministry of Interior, over 550,000 (legal) immigrants are currently living in Greece,
the majority of whom originates from the Balkans (Ministry of Interior 2017). Since the crisis broke, the country witnessed higher migration outflows, especially of young people with higher educational qualifications. Between 2008 and 2013, over 200,000 individuals aged between 25 and 39 moved permanently out of Greece in search for work (Bank of Greece 2016; Lazaretou 2016). The diaNEOsis research institute and the Laboratory of Demographic and Social Analyses of the University of Thessaly (2016) claim that this new wave of emigration is likely to continue for as long as negative growth and employment prospects persist in the country. Notably, in our sample, two young adults had migrated or are thinking of migrating abroad, with the encouragement of their families, while some of the parents and grandparents mentioned that in the past, when they were younger, they had migrated or were thinking of migrating abroad themselves in order to support their families.

Public sector employment and self-employment are dominant in our sample. As we discuss in more detail later in the chapter, this reflects individuals’ perceptions, which are quite widespread in Greece, whereby being a civil servant or having your own business offers a sense of security and status compared to employment in the private sector. There is a further qualification that we must make with regard to the Greek context. Those declaring self-employment in our sample are not entrepreneurs; they are independent workers contracted to provide services to one or more clients in more or less the same way as an employee would, but they attain the status of self-employment, because they are not entitled to the kind of workers’ benefits typically supplied by employers. This has become a common practice in Greece after the crisis, contributing to the elevated rate of self-employment which is the highest in Europe. Recently, relevant legislation has been passed to amend the situation; but impacts remain to be seen. The young adults in our sample stated that currently self-employment is probably the only way to find a job in Greece. They argue that this solution has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, they can negotiate with their employers the terms of their employment by personalizing the wages and hours of work; they can also find work more easily by undertaking various projects with different employers. On the other hand, their employment conditions become all the more precarious as they are called upon to pay considerable insurance contributions and taxes as self-employed, while they have no pre-determined working hours, making it difficult to schedule their work with other projects and balance with family obligations.
One of the most striking features of the sample is the high social mobility observed across generations in relation to their level of education. Though grandparents start out with a rather low level of education, some leaving school before completing the primary level, their own children would obtain at least a secondary education degree, some of whom moved on to obtain a post-secondary degree (five out of ten), or even a higher education degree (two out of ten). In our sample some grandparents refer to the unfavourable experience of poverty during WWII or in the early years of the post-war period, especially in rural areas where agriculture dominated and identified with hardship and poor living conditions, to explain why they left school and why they worked hard to provide a better future for their children.

Indeed it appears that—even though grandparents often claimed to work with their children in the fields or in the family business, in the same way they had when they were young—they strongly encouraged their own children to invest in education. Thus, the parents in our sample have a higher educational level compared to their own parents. Apparently, parents maintained this mentality in the upbringing of their own children, who comprise the young adults of our sample. Indeed four out of ten young adults in our sample have a bachelor’s degree, one has a master’s degree, one has a Ph.D., three have enrolled in a higher education institution (two are in education and one has not managed to complete her studies) and one has a post-secondary level degree. These results are consistent with education data for Greece. According to the OECD, since 2000, educational attainment of young adults aged 25–34 has grown at a much higher rate than for the Greek population as a whole: in 2012, tertiary attainment for young adults reached 35%, up from 31% in 2010 and 26% in 2005. However, these rates are still below the OECD averages of 40% in 2012, 38% in 2010 and 33% in 2005 (OECD 2014). Similarly, in the Greek survey for the CUPESE Project, out of 1500 young adults aged 18–35 nearly 60% had a tertiary level degree, while only a quarter of their parents had attained the same educational level (Pierrakakis et al. 2017). Despite higher levels of human capital, only half of the young adults in our sample seem to be satisfied with the job they are doing, often struggling to find work that is related to their educational qualifications and skills and is suitable to their preferences and personality. Apparently, more education, in this sense, has not offered the job security and better living conditions expected by their families.
At the outset, we observe that economic self-sufficiency, identified as reliance on one’s own work and income and independence from family and state support, is a rather precarious goal among youths, despite families’ investments in children’s education. However, as we discuss in the following, in times of crisis youths may move back in with their family and take on available jobs, even if these jobs do not ensure their own financial independence or correspond to their personal educational qualifications, because they wish to help their family, whose livelihood has also been threatened by the economic crisis, the rise in unemployment, the failure of family businesses, the fall in wages and pensions, the rise in household debt and taxes, and the limited access to health care.

10.3 Transmission of Attitudes, Values and Actions

The element that stands out in all interviews, across generations, is that family matters. More than any other economic or social institution, the family has a critical role in the transmission of resources and values to younger generations. Our findings are consistent with the so-called Mediterranean or South European social model, where the family has a prominent place in the temporal and spatial distribution of resources and is primarily responsible for providing the support that young people need in order to face the difficulties of adulthood. Greece, along with Italy, Portugal and Spain, are often identified with this employment and welfare model, which is thought to differ from the Social Democratic model of Nordic countries, the Liberal model of Anglo-Saxon countries and the Conservative/Corporatist model of Continental Europe (Ferrera 1996; Esping-Andersen 1999; Karamessini 2007). These countries seem to share the following characteristics: (1) the family is the primary locus of solidarity in both social provision (care and support) and production (family-based businesses); (2) women, young people and migrants suffer from high unemployment and are disproportionately involved in irregular forms of work, mostly in small businesses and the underground economy; (3) social security is based on occupational status and work performance and is organized around the male breadwinner/female carer family model (derived rights for dependents); (4) social assistance schemes are residual since those without a normal working career must primarily rely on the family’s support; (5) child and elderly care are basically provided by family
members and mainly women’s unpaid work; (6) unemployment compensation and vocational training systems are underdeveloped; (7) jobs in the public sector or cash benefits are selectively distributed through clientelism and patronage networks and (8) welfare-state institutions are highly inefficient (Karamessini 2007). For example, in studies of youth welfare citizenship, Greece appears to follow a “familialization” logic, whereby student support depends much more on parental income and far less on social assistance granted directly to young adults by the welfare state, as parents are supposed to financially take care of their children in all levels of education (Chevalier 2016).

Our findings are also consistent with the dominance of a certain type of social capital, namely bonding social capital, which captures the strong ties that develop among the individuals of a group, usually the members of a family (see, for instance, Andriani and Christoforou 2016). In the interviews, explicit questions referring to individuals’ social capital, especially with regard to the people they contacted regularly and the networks they use to access financial resources, find work or exchange information, reveal that close family members are dominant, compared to public agencies and market institutions.

According to the literature, bonding social capital, in the form of strong familial ties, has both an upside and a downside. The upside is that the family takes on the responsibility of preparing younger generations for the future by providing the “means and meanings”, the resources and values, they need for their survival and well-being. Moreover, the family functions as a safety net in times of crisis, especially in countries that are less developed and governed by ineffective states, by pooling resources and offering protection to those members that become most vulnerable due to unemployment, illness or age. However, it is argued that strong bonding ties among family members may lead to the crowding out of bridging and linking ties, that is, the development of relations among diverse groups and relations with other formal institutions, which may offer a broader range of opportunities to individuals to obtain additional resources and expose themselves to alternative values that may contribute further to their well-being and development (e.g. Woolcock 1998). For example, young people may often find themselves taking on the family business, which prevents them from exploring other opportunities that are located outside this line of work and might be more suitable to their talents and preferences. At the macro level bonding social ties without bridging ties may hamper individuals’ capacities for promoting
technical and social innovations and alternative strategies of employment and business, which potentially contribute to economic development, higher employment and social welfare. Moreover, they may foster hierarchical relations, nepotism, favouritism and clientelism, which adversely affect the impartiality and accountability of governance structures and, thus, hamper their effectiveness and legitimacy. Distrust towards public institutions further weakens trust towards other individuals in society and broader forms of social and political participation (e.g. Rothstein and Stolle 2003), which is likely to strengthen reliance on the family for economic and non-economic support. Family bonds are sustained by values of “honouring”, “gratifying” and “continuing the family name”, inculcated in younger generations (Bourdieu 1977).

10.4 Resources Vs. Risk Aversion

The grandparents in our sample explain the hardships they experienced early on in their lives. They engaged mainly with agriculture, which provided insufficient resources and often failed to satisfy their family’s basic needs. They also spoke about the harsh conditions during WWII and the early post-war years. Thus, in most cases, going to school and investing in human capital was not even an option, because they had to help their own parents in the fields to make ends meet and could not gather sufficient resources for their education. In some cases grandparents in our sample stressed that they did not even have schools or teachers in their area. These conditions may explain the rather low educational level of grandparents, the majority of whom did not complete primary school; some even claimed that to this day they have trouble reading and writing.

In our sample it is clear that parents and grandparents, in anticipation of their own constrained capabilities, strived hard to multiply the meagre resources they had, not only to secure the daily needs of their children, but also to transfer sufficient resources that would ensure a better future for them and for their families. In certain cases, they invested in real estate, to give their daughter rooms to rent for a “steady, sure” flow of income, while she tended to her household responsibilities and her children’s upbringing. In other cases, in which a family business existed, they invested in expanding the business to be taken on by their children. Above all, every parent and grandparent in our sample would appear to go out of their way and accept any kind of sacrifice needed in order to educate their children. This was especially evident in questions regarding parents’
aspirations and expectations for their children, the values they taught their children and the things for which they pressured their children to focus on early in their lives. Even the priorities and values they claimed having for themselves in leading their adult lives and raising their families identified with working and sacrificing to enhance their children’s education. The strong emphasis on educational values may reveal the family’s need to offset the scarcities in resources. In our sample parents and grandparents would explicitly associate education with better working and living standards.

We simply wanted our daughter to go ahead in her education, as she actually did. She was a good student and we wanted her to go ahead. To become someone. To specialize in something... (in education, rural, male young adult; grandfather)

Of course, [at home we talked about] the children’s education. That is, I always made sure that [my children] set a course in their life, at least with regard to their education, what they wanted to be when they grew up. And I took care to arguably promote the idea that they should get an education. That they need to learn one, two foreign languages and that they need to continue... (employed, rural, male young adult; father)

According to the relative risk aversion theory (see theoretical introduction of the book for a detailed analysis), parents invest in their children’s education, either to pass on to their children the knowledge and skills they themselves had attained, enabling them to secure a living for themselves and their families; or to grant their children the opportunity to escape the precarious conditions of their own livelihood by investing further in their children’s education and ensuring a means for upward social mobility. In this context, one could argue that the impoverished conditions grandparents and parents experienced in Greece in the first half of the twentieth century, especially in the rural areas, induced them to place their hopes for a better living in the education of their offspring, particularly in sectors considered to offer job security, like the public sector and self-employment. In fact, even though they were aware of the considerable resources they would need to invest in their children’s education, it was often stated during the interviews how they would be more than willing to make any sacrifice necessary in order to put their children through school and secure for them a better living. However, the relative
risk aversion theory assumes that investments in education are a result of rational choice decision-making at the individual level, leaving out structural factors and social motivations, which determine individual behaviour and depend on the distribution of resources and the transformation of values. To account for the impact of structural factors, we appeal to Bourdieu’s work concerning the intergenerational transmission of diverse forms of capital, namely economic, cultural and social capital. What is noteworthy about Bourdieu’s analysis is that, by using the novel concepts of habitus and field, he transcends the dichotomy between “individual” and “structure”, and investigates how individuals shape and are shaped by social structures, and how these interactions reproduce or transform the social space.

We could say that the challenging conditions of stark deprivation, which earlier generations faced, especially in rural areas during the World Wars, affected the intergenerational transmission of resources and values. People were deprived of the economic, social and cultural resources needed to provide for their families and create a better future for their children. This may have cultivated materialistic values of thrift and frugality with a focus on satisfying the families’ basic needs, working hard and saving money, and investing in the material and non-material assets that they consider will secure their children’s well-being against all odds in the future. Grandparents and then parents in our sample would often express how much they value sacrificing for the sake of their children, even at the expense of their personal pleasure and development. According to Bourdieu (1984), this may be an indication of a “choice for the necessary”, which is characteristic of lower income classes. He argues that necessity imposes a taste, or a habitus, for necessity, “which implies a form of adaptation to and consequently acceptance of the necessary, a resignation to the inevitable, a deep-seated disposition which is in no way incompatible with a revolutionary intention, although it confers on it a modality which is not that of intellectual or artistic revolts” (Bourdieu 1984: 372).

When grandparents were asked about their cultural capital, the idea of having free time and spending it for personal pleasure and development, by going on vacation, taking on a hobby, reading a book, going to the theatre or visiting a museum, appears rather incomprehensible, outlandish and even wasteful, when there are basic needs to be met in the family. Even those activities that they ultimately refer to as “hobbies”, in which they engage whenever they have time and energy outside
income-generating activities, involve chores within and around the household that improve living conditions: do-it-yourself repairs or producing extra food from livestock and the family’s personal fruit and vegetable garden. Entertainment was mainly provided by participating in social events like weddings and baptisms, which appear to strengthen bonds among members of the extended family. And these activities continue even at better economic times, when their children are all grown and have the capacities to create and attend to their own families. The explanation offered is that in these times of crisis, it is these activities and values that they continue to adopt in order to help their children and grandchildren cope and satisfy their basic needs. As we move from grandparents to parents, we observe a differentiated habitus. Apparently, as economic conditions improve for grandparents, and the country introduces institutions of mass education, parents had access to more education and, thus, more cultural capital. This perhaps explains why parents in our sample were more willing than their own parents to obtain different hobbies, appreciate vacation with the family and invest in what would be called “extras”, beyond basic needs. However, they stressed that concrete economic constraints would continue to limit their choices and induce them to save for their families.

In our sample we observe that the young adults have attained rather high levels of education. They themselves seem to appreciate the value of education and also recognize their parents’, or even grandparents’, contribution in supporting their education, as well as instilling in them values of education. Yet, we observe that only half of them are satisfied with their occupation. In some cases, their occupation differs from their area of expertise on the basis of their educational qualifications; in other cases, their degrees are in line with their occupational aspirations, but had they had a choice to specialize in areas that they found more suitable to their preferences and personality, they would have followed another line of work. The reasons for these discrepancies, according to the young adults in our sample, are to be found, on the one hand, in the constraints imposed by the crisis, which put the family’s survival over personal aspirations, or, on the other hand, the inability to make educational and occupational choices, which would combine employability, independence and creativity, due to their own or their parents’ misinformed guidance. Bourdieu argues that in the absence of sufficiently up-to-date information regarding the timely “bets” they should make—bets of economic and social capital sufficiently large to find alternatives in case of failure—the
middle and working class families have every chance of making bad educational investments (Bourdieu trans. Grenfell 2014). This may reflect the so-called “skills mismatches” on the demand as well as on the supply side of the labour market. According to Matsaganis (2015), on the one hand, parents tend to hold manual work in low esteem, so they overwhelmingly opt for general education over vocational education for their children and encourage them to get a university degree and secure a job as a civil servant or a self-employed. On the other hand, on average, Greek firms, compared to firms of other European countries, are very small in size, low-tech and oriented towards the domestic market, so they do not have the ability to employ and absorb high-skilled, high-paid workers.

I am a [university] graduate... I achieved a grade of 8.43 [out of 10]... I soon realized that there are no employment prospects in this field of study... I was already preoccupied with computers since I was young and during my studies I took some training in social media, I obtained some google certifications and the like, so now I am a professional in this area... (self-employed, urban, male)

I have a PhD. My father was a civil servant. There was no family business for me to inherit, so I had to study. Beyond that, through the university exam system, what I would study would be like a lottery ticket... So I happened to enter [specific university]. I thought that since I would study for this profession, I would have to find something that I like, so I specialized in [area of research]. I found a professor that was very good in [area of research] at [specific university] and I happened to do a PhD. That is, I considered it a challenge and I thought I should see what I can do, where it takes me... But after balancing the pros and cons, I decided not to follow an academic career... I did various jobs after that ... and now I am working full time in the public sector as a customs officer... (employed, rural, female)

I finished the Lyceum and studied for four years at [specific university]... I chose this line of work, because I really liked it, generally I liked helping people... I think that my family’s love for children and their fellowman guided me in this choice... I did not complete my studies, I still needed to pass a few exams to obtain my degree, but I did not manage it so far... I left [the region] I was studying in and moved to Athens to search for work due to economic difficulties... [Had I had the chance to decide otherwise], I would have chosen to go abroad, because I think I would have completed my studies there and immediately found a job in my field of study. (unemployed, rural, female)
Furthermore, Bourdieu observes that fractions of society that are relatively weak in economic capital but rich in cultural or social capital tend to turn to “shelter-careers” (Bourdieu trans. Grenfell 2014: 240). A common expression in Greek, often used by the older generations in the interviews, is to “ensconce oneself” by finding a job. For the grandparents and parents of our sample shelter-careers are far from agriculture and relate to public sector employment and self-employment, because they believe that these options offer a higher and steadier income, social insurance and pensions, and a kind of independence from hardship and exploitation. They maintained similar aspirations for their children, encouraging them to seek the shelter of the public sector or the family business. However, the crisis has certainly reversed people’s perceptions about these employment options. Some parents in our sample admit the difficulties they face now for having relied on these options as they watch their wages and pensions fall in the public sector or their earnings dwindle in the world of small businesses. In response to these precarious conditions, young adults in our sample appear to highly value skills like adaptability and flexibility, which are in line with broader global trends, but seem to be driven largely by the crisis in Greece. These values are often coupled with traditional values of devotion to work and family, which their parents and grandparents seemed to be most fond of. Apparently, this is the way young adults these days create the economic resources they lack and make some use of the cultural capital they attained through education. Put differently, the conversion rates among the diverse forms of capital are shifting in the social space, partly as a result of the crisis, and changing individuals’ perceptions and choices regarding the kind of resources and values that are worth transmitting to younger generations (Bourdieu 1986).

10.5 (Grand)Parenting Style and Context Factors

Parenting style seems to affect the transmission of the diverse forms of capital and the inculcation in children of those traits that will help them develop into individuals that take charge of their life or adopt a more passive stance. In this regard, it is believed that a more authoritarian parenting style, in which parents appear more dominant over their children, is considered less effective than an authoritative style, in which parents allow children freedom of choice by setting certain disciplinary
boundaries, especially when the child is young (see theoretical introduction of the book for a detailed analysis). In our study, it is difficult to determine the parenting style applied by interviewees. When parents and grandparents were asked directly whether they had given their child room to make his/her own decisions, most of them were more than eager to support their child’s choice of profession or even partner. When asked what kind of values they wished to teach their children, parents and grandparents were more inclined to distinguish certain kinds of behaviours and values they claimed to have actively tried to inculcate in their children, mainly the values of being educated, finding a job to make a living, getting married and having children, maintaining a united and loving family. Interestingly, these were values that were repeated by young adults, who talked about the genuine worth of these values and their willingness to share them with their children should they get married and have a family of their own. When parents and grandparents were further asked about their ambitions and expectations for their children, apart from personal prosperity and happiness, they would talk a lot about their children’s education, which appeared as one of the most important topics of families’ discussions in the home. In this case, they were more open in expressing the active and passive ways they used to channel their children’s efforts towards higher levels of education, and to persuade them to follow certain occupations, especially when there was a family business. They would even express their willingness to go out of their way to obtain the capital resources needed and invest in their children’s education.

However, a careful reading of our findings further reveals some rather indirect ways in which children were orientated towards certain kinds of behaviours and values by their parents. When parents and grandparents were asked about the values they taught their children, a number of them stated that they did not want society to “point the finger” at their children for various transgressions (e.g. not paying a loan or doing harm to someone); they wanted their children to be respected, they wanted to hear pleasant things about their children by members of the community. Parents and grandparents would sometimes mention children’s mischiefs and their bumpy relations with them; but overall they would praise their children’s obedience and gratifying behaviour towards them. On the other side, though younger adults would appear reactionary and seek their independence in their relations with their parents, they appeared keen on not disappointing their family; on justifying all the sacrifices
and hardships their family had undergone to put them through education and offer them a better life; and on actively supporting their family in times of crisis. In fact, several young adults stressed the importance of financial independence and took pride in the fact that they worked from a younger age to support their families, either because they had a small business that was struggling or because their parents were unable to work due to health problems. At the same time, they appear to keep living at their parents’ home and their parents seem to balance their budget by considering all the members in the household including their “employed” children. In comparison with many of the countries analyzed in the present volume, these conditions may reflect lack of self-sufficiency and independence among younger generations. However, it should be emphasized that in the Greek context staying at home may be a result of conditions of interdependence among family members and the need to pool resources among family members to deal with the crisis, because not only do parents continue helping their children, it is now the children that work and come back to help their parents, who faced pension cuts and limited access to health care. These behaviours and values may also be pointing to the central role of the family, in the absence of other formal institutions that transmit resources and socialize young adults into the real world. Overall, we observe that younger generations’ traditional values of education and family are now accompanied by values of adaptability and independence.

Q: “What do you think is important for young people to learn from home to meet future challenges?”

- To learn to listen and try to put themselves in their parents’ position and the sacrifices they made and reap as much as they can from their parents, because they are older and more experienced (family business, urban, male)
- Not to give up easily (self-employed, urban, male)
- …Whatever you do, if you are hard-working, you will be successful… (in education, rural, male)
- To trust their family because they have been through difficult times … and believe in what they [family members] say… (unemployed, rural, male)
- …I continue to believe that honesty is very important. It might not help much in the society we live in, which is very competitive and not in the best way, [so] it is important for me that the institution
of the family be maintained in an essential way [whereby] there is a
bond, support and love… (self-employed, urban, female)

• To stand on their own feet and rely on themselves… (unemployed,
rural, female)

• To be hard-working, and adaptable (in education, urban, female)

• [Young people] have to be independent, autonomous and after a
certain point to take responsibility for their own decisions, take their
lives into their own hands. It is fine that our parents put us in a
certain frame [of mind and action] as we grow up, but beyond that
‘open your wings, make your decisions and create your own future’…
(employed, rural, female)

Parenting style could not remain unaffected by a context that gives promi-
nence to familial relations and stresses the unity and honour of the
family. More than often this would imply hierarchical family structures
in a patriarchal society like Greece. It is not a wonder that the female
grandparents in our sample claimed to forego their own aspirations, if
they dared have any, due to necessity in their own family and the one
they created. They said that they were naturally expected to work in
the household and with their husband, the breadwinner, and live their
family off the wages and pensions of their husband. If they made any
extra monies by offering their services from time to time on the basis
of the skills they had, like embroidery or farming, it went to the daugh-
ters’ dowries. The female parents in our sample would either claim to
have inherited assets that they rented for an additional income to support
their family, or taken on part-time jobs, along with their husband’s work.
However, they appeared to be very keen on supporting their daughters’
education given the importance of financial independence. This idea was
more or less shared by male parents, though male grandparents would
stress more the woman’s role in the family and in the household. This is
consistent with broader trends whereby women’s roles in the family and
labour market have been gradually changing (Folbre 2013). In questions
regarding the ability of interviewees to balance work and family, both
men and women seem to struggle, though grandparents applied a more
concrete distinction whereby women stayed in the private sphere of the
household and men were in the public sphere of the labour market and
social life (which in rural areas would consist of men’s coffee houses as
a space for socialization and political discussions). Interestingly, Lyberaki
and Tinios (2014) express the idea that if the crisis increases reliance on
the informal networks of the family, as opposed to formal institutions like
the welfare state, in the provision of care services, then a possible adverse scenario could result in the retreat of women to the private sphere.

10.6 Conclusion

Our study confirms that in Greece family does matter: it is mainly responsible for the transmission of the diverse forms of capital across generations, affecting young adults’ educational and professional trajectory and, thus, the course of their life and that of their children. To summarize, in our sample, earlier generations were endowed with a limited stock of economic and human capital, due to the harsh conditions they faced in the agricultural sector during the World Wars and the early post-war period. Thus, as they strongly stated in their interviews, they were willing to go out of their way and to make any sacrifice necessary to secure a better future for their children, especially by investing heavily in their children’s education. We argued that the attitudes, motivations and values underlying families’ investments in education and the intergenerational transmission of resources go beyond the implications of the relative risk aversion theory, which concentrates on rational choice decisions at the individual level. Families’ attitudes and actions are equally determined by contextual factors and their interaction with individual behaviour. For this purpose, we appealed to Bourdieu’s work, which identifies diverse types of economic and non-economic capital and employs the concept of habitus and field to explore the interaction between agency and structure. In this manner, it was possible to trace the broader spectrum of economic and non-economic determinants of the intergenerational transmission of resources and values, and, more importantly, to outline the possible transformations borne out of the recent crises in youths attitudes and values towards education, their employability, their self-sufficiency and their individual and collective well-being.

In our sample, we observe the central role families play in providing mutual financial and moral support among its members, given the absence of social protection by a welfare state, or even the absence of a private business sector which would have been able to absorb the highly-educated and highly-skilled youths. It was evident how parents encouraged their children to seek the shelter of the public sector or the family business as a source of job security. However, as the parents in our sample admit, after the crisis, these options were unable to measure up to their expectations as wages and pensions in the public sector fell, or earnings in the
world of small businesses dwindled. Thus, younger generations now face the difficulties of the economic crisis of the past decade, coupled with the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, in spite of the fact that they embody a considerable stock of cultural capital, especially in the form of educational qualifications. Apparently, following their “dream job” has become an “unreachable dream”, so their parents’ efforts to make up for the lack of economic capital by investing heavily and at every cost in their children’s education did not pay off as expected. Finally, though families displayed strong bonding ties, this type of social capital was not accompanied by bridging ties, that is, links to other groups in the market and the state that would expand young adults’ knowledge and opportunities, resources and values. Parenting styles were adjusted to support the core family unit, which appeared to be one of the major sources of material and non-material well-being. Parents felt a strong sense of obligation to provide for their children, at times adopting aspirations beyond their own and their children’s desires and capacities, whereas children had a strong sense of gratitude towards their parents and grandparents, by acknowledging their parents’ and grandparents’ sacrifices and at times by returning to the family home and business to offer their care and support, even if this meant putting their personal aspirations on hold for a while. We could say that the central role of familial relations is affected by the patriarchal structure of Greek society; the weak welfare state and the absence of social protection; the familialization of education and employment.

Yet in light of the economic crisis of the past decade one notices the transformations taking place in young adults’ values and attitudes, whereby devotion to family and education, which was valued by parents and grandparents, is now coupled with values of adaptability and independence. One explanation for these transformations, according to Bourdieu, could be a “break” between the habitus and the field. The field represents the objective social structures that depend on the distribution of capital and determine agents’ economic and social conditions and positions; agents’ habitus identifies with the internalized, embodied social structures that are converted into a disposition, which generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions. A de-synchronized habitus and field creates a crisis whereby the habitus fails to generate those practices and perceptions of practices that accord to the objective structures of the field. This could be a result of, among other things, demographic, cultural and economic shocks, that is, social changes that appeared far more rapidly
than the habitus can adapt to and lead to struggles for the reconstruc-
tion and redefinition of the principles that determine the field. In fact,
the intergenerational conflicts that emerge can hardly be attributed to
what is usually labelled as a generational gap. Young adults may actu-
ally be inheriting from their parents a habitus that does not provide them
with the means to deal with this shifting, indeterminate field. Notably, for
Bourdieu, the habitus is not only a structured structure, which passively
accommodates to an ever-changing field; it is a structuring structure, that
is, a generative principle of practices and perceptions of practices. In other
words, the habitus shapes and is shaped by the field; thus the relationship
between habitus and field, transcends the usual antinomies between the
individual and society (Bourdieu 1984; see also Christoforou and Lainé
2014). That is to say, young adults are not only shaped by the social reality
they encounter, but also by that of previous generations via the trans-
mission of resources and values, especially through institutions like the
family and the educational system. At the same time, they respond to the
changes in the social reality they face by means of adaptation, which not
only implies making optimal choices in a constrained environment, but
also gradually changing this environment to adapt to new understandings
and practices that reflect what individuals consider now to be valuable in
life and society.

However, young Greeks nowadays face a volatile and uncertain envi-
ronment. The economy is going through a deep recession with very
high rates of youth unemployment, while the welfare state is unable to
provide significant social assistance to the armies of unemployed due to
fiscal consolidation that was implemented to deal with the crisis. Even
the family safety net has recently come under pressure, as parents face
job losses and pay cuts. It has been estimated that 27% of all persons
aged 18–29 in 2013 lived in households with income below the poverty
line (Matsaganis 2015). The Youth Guarantee Project has been set up to
address the peculiarities of the Greek socio-economic environment and
enhance youth employment (Cholezas 2013), but results remain to be
seen. In view of their critical position and the pressing need to secure
a living, young adults may mobilize all the physical and mental strengths
they have developed, as well as the economic and non-economic resources
they have access to, so as to realistically assess and balance their own
capacities with those available in the labour market and business world
to find employment. Earnings and security become so precarious and
restrict access to economic, social and cultural capital to such a degree that
they are bound to further curtail young people’s ability to manage and surpass these difficulties. Moreover, under these circumstances, economic self-sufficiency, identified as reliance on one’s own work and income and independence from family and state support, certainly does not suffice to meet one’s basic needs and expand one’s capabilities to become truly “independent”.

Perhaps it is important to re-define economic self-sufficiency, especially within an environment that is already re-defining itself. What is it that makes a person economically self-sufficient? What kind of work, what level of income? Would it suffice to return to a “culture of necessity”, where young people are complacent with striving for material well-being, and call this “independence”? Short-term solutions may involve cost–benefit analyses and choices of constrained maximization at the individual level in view of constricted resources and opportunities in the labour market, especially in the aftermath of a deep recession. However, according to Bourdieu, the effective ambition to manage the future is proportional to the effective power to manage it, so individuals with restricted capital resources fail to effectively develop a habitus oriented towards achievement and success. This not only condemns the economically and culturally disadvantaged classes to maladaptation to the field; it also implies that even if some manage to get rid of all limitations, these “imaginary” desires will reproduce social structures “but in the reverse, the rarest positions in reality being the most frequent in ideal” (Bourdieu trans. Grenfell 2014: 237).

In economics, there are alternative theories whereby individuals mobilize to overcome these constrictions individually and collectively by reflecting upon and re-defining the means and ends of work and welfare on the basis of cooperation, trust and reciprocity. One such theory is Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach. The capabilities approach conceptualizes the ends of well-being, justice and development in terms of the expansion of people’s capabilities to function, i.e. of the opportunities available to individuals to effectively undertake the actions and activities they wish to engage in, and be whom they wish to be (Robeyns 2005). These actions and activities, called human functionings or flourishings, constitute “what makes life valuable” and would thus include “working, resting, being literate, being healthy, being part of a community, being respected, and so forth” (ibid.: 95). Ultimately, what becomes important is that people have the freedoms to live the life they choose. This contrasts
with views that concentrate on people’s happiness or desire-fulfilment, or on income, expenditures or consumption.

The capabilities approach advocates an evaluation of the political, social and cultural context within which individuals are embedded, so the selection of people’s capabilities set and the ways of achieving it become a task of moral reasoning and public debate. This implies the creation of values and institutions that rely on inclusive and participatory principles in business, the state and civil society (Robeyns 2005). The dissemination of these alternative forms of social and cultural capital can be achieved by adjusting the transmission belt so families and the education system would instil values of democratic participation in younger generations. This is consistent with early perceptions of social capital as civic education to create bridging and linking ties across diverse groups (see Farr 2014). It is also in line with Bourdieu’s interpretation of the social space as a space of struggle where younger generations should reflect on current economic and social conditions and act to reclaim their freedom and life (Bourdieu 1998). Moreover, it underscores perceptions of education as culture or civilization, attributed to the Greek term *paideia*, which has been much valued in Greek society for centuries and is not confined to the functional or instrumental aspects of contemporary, often market-driven, conceptions of education. Education as *paideia* is associated with individuals’ responsibility to serve their community and to promote values of equality, autonomy and democracy, elements which determine their humanity (Castoriadis 2012). In other words, reviving dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders in society is of utmost importance if a solution is to be found in dealing with the crisis and youth unemployment (Coquet 2014). Our current study does not touch upon these issues, but they might provide a useful direction for future research, if the objective is to develop and secure a genuinely independent and flourishing environment for generations to come.

**References**

Andriani, L., & Christoforou, A. (2016). Social Capital: A Roadmap of Theoretical and Empirical Contributions and Limitations. *Journal of Economic Issues, 50*(1), 4–22.

Andriopoulou, E., Kanavitsa, E., & Tsakloglou, P. (2020). *Decomposing Poverty in Hard Times: Greece 2007-2016*. GreeSE Papers, Hellenic Observatory
Discussion Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe, Paper No. 149, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Bank of Greece. (2016). *Annual Report of the Bank of Greece for the Year 2015*. Athens: Bank of Greece (in Greek). [http://www.bankofgreece.gr/BogEkdoseis/ekthdkth2015.pdf](http://www.bankofgreece.gr/BogEkdoseis/ekthdkth2015.pdf). Accessed 27 May 2017.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2014). The Future of Class and the Causality of the Probable (M. Grenfell, Trans.). In A. Christoforou & M. Lainé (Eds.), *Re-Thinking Economics: Exploring the Work of Pierre Bourdieu* (pp. 233–269). London and New York: Routledge.

Castoriadis, C. (2012). ‘Paideia’ and Democracy. *Counterpoints*, 422, 71–80.

Chevalier, T. (2016). Varieties of Youth Welfare Citizenship: Towards a Two-Dimension Typology. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 26(1), 3–19.

Cholezas, I. (2013). *Youth Guarantee in Times of Austerity: The Greek Case*. International Policy Analysis Series. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Christoforou, A., & Lainé, M. (2014). *Re-Thinking Economics: Exploring the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*. London and New York: Routledge.

Coquet, B. (2014). *Policymaking Under Extremely Severe Economic Conditions*. The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Greece. Report for the Task Force for Greece. European Social Fund Contract VC 2013/1146.

Dendrinos, I. (2014). Youth Employment Before and During the Crisis. Rethinking Labour Market Institutions and Work Attitudes in Greece. *Social Cohesion and Development*, 9(2), 117–132.

diaNEOsis and Laboratory of Demographic and Social Analyses (University of Thessaly). (2016). *Population Growth in Greece (2015–2050). Report A*: Current Population Projections and a New Estimation of Greek Population*. [http://www.dianeosis.org/research/demography/](http://www.dianeosis.org/research/demography/). Accessed 2 June 2017.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1999). *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

EUROSTAT. (2019). *Unemployment Data*. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat). Accessed 25 May 2020.

Farr, J. (2014). The History of 'Social Capital'. In A. Christoforou & J. B. Davis (Eds.), *Social Capital and Economics: Social Values, Power and Social Identity* (pp. 15–37). London and New York: Routledge.
Ferrera, M. (1996). The ‘Southern Model’ of Welfare in Social Europe. *Journal of European Social Policy, 6*(1), 17–37.

Folbre, N. (2013, April 1). The Future of the Gender Bend. *The New York Times*. https://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/01/the-future-of-the-gender-bend/?ref=business&_r=0. Accessed 30 May 2017.

Karamessini, M. (2006). From Education to Paid Employment: Empirical Investigation of the Labour Market Integration of Youth in Greece. *Social Cohesion and Development, 1*(1), 67–84 (in Greek).

Karamessini, M. (2007). *The Southern European Social Model: Changes and Continuities in Recent Decades*. Discussion Paper Series No. 174. Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies.

Lazaretou, S. (2016). The Greek Brain Drain: The New Pattern of Greek Emigration During the Recent Crisis. *Economic Bulletin, 43*, 31–53. Athens: Bank of Greece.

Lyberaki, A., & Tinios, P. (2014). The Informal Welfare State and the Family: Invisible Actors in the Greek Drama. *Political Studies Review, 12*(2), 193–208.

Matsaganis, M. (2015). Youth Unemployment and the Great Recession in Greece. In J. J. Dolado (Ed.), *No Country for Young People? Youth Labour Market Problems in Europe*. A VoxEU.Org eBook (pp. 77–87). London: CEPR Press.

Ministry of Interior. (2017). *Legal Migration Statistics, April 2017*. Athens: Ministry of Interior (in Greek). www.ypes.gr/el/Generalsecretariat_Population/directoratEthnikas_migratation/diefthinsi_metanasteftikis_politikhsNEW/themataMetanastfsis/StatistStoixMetan/. Accessed 27 May 2017.

Mitrakos, T. M., Tsakloglou, P., & Cholezas, I. (2010). Determinants of Youth Unemployment in Greece with an Emphasis on Tertiary Education Graduates. *Economic Bulletin, 33*, 21–62. Athens: Bank of Greece.

OECD. (2014). *Greece—Country Note. Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD.

O’Reilly, J., Eichhorst, W., Gàbos, A., Hadjivassiliou, K., Lain, D., Leschke, J., et al. (2015). Five Characteristics of Youth Unemployment in Europe: Flexibility, Education, Migration, Family Legacies, and EU Policy. *SAGE Open, 5*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015574962.

Pierrakakis, K., Makantasi, E., Tsakloglou, P., & Christoforou, A. (2017). *CUPESSE Two-Generation Survey: Greece*. Athens: diaNEOsis/CUPESSE.

Robeyns, I. (2005). The Capability Approach: A Theoretical Survey. *Journal of Human Development, 6*(1), 93–114.

Rothstein, B., & Stolle, D. (2003). Social Capital, Impartiality and the Welfare State: An Institutional Approach. In M. Hooghe & D. Stolle (Eds.), *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 191–209). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Asimina Christoforou is Adjunct Professor at the Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece. She has a Ph.D. in economics and has published on topics such as social capital, local development, European integration, ethics in economics and the social economy.

Evmorfia (Fay) Makantasi is Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Department of Accounting & Finance of the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB), Greece and the Senior Research Analyst of diaNEOsis, Greece. Her major fields of interest are customs unions, international trade theory and policy, industrial organization, game theory, education economics and public economics.

Kyriakos Pierrakakis is the Director of Research of diaNEOsis. His research interests lie in the areas of international political economy, regulatory policy, political science and technology policy. He is a Ph.D. student at University of Heidelberg, Germany, where he is supervised by Professor Dr. Jale Tosun. He is also a graduate of MIT’s Engineering Systems Division (Master in Technology Policy), the Harvard Kennedy School (Master in Public Policy) and the Athens University of Economics and Business.

Panos Tsakloglou is Professor at the Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece. His research focuses on questions of inequality, poverty, social exclusion, returns to education and social policy (especially, the redistributive role of the state). He is Research Fellow of the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA, Bonn) and Senior Research Fellow of the Hellenic Observatory (LSE, London). During the period 2012–2014 he was Chairman of the Greek Government’s Council of Economic Advisers.