

# Introduction

## Southern European Perspectives when Dealing with Socio-economic Consequences of the Crisis

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The late 2000s crisis has transformed Europe. Especially in the south, governmental efforts to face the situation become visible in institutional changes in favour of austerity and which, at the same time, were detrimental for the welfare state, the democratic representation, and labour relations, finally set off social protests (ZAMORA-KAPOOR, A. & COLLIER, X. 2014). The implemented policies reduced the state's participation in the economy, which lowered the economic activity, increased unemployment rates, reduced consumption, and sank the image of the governments (ibid.).

In such dire political and economic scenario, citizens' increasing disaffection towards their traditional democracies and the handling of the crisis encouraged the rise of alternative forms of conducting politics: such as the surge of new political actors and innovative alignments of communities to deal with the socio-economic issues (ibid.). Civil Societies Organizations, for example, had to develop tactics of interaction, different tools of communication and be more flexible in management skills to solve pressing problems (EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE 2013: p. 3).

The transformation of the socio-economic relationships inside communities in Southern Europe and their perspectives when dealing with the crisis can be an opportunity to rejuvenate planning and enable different and potentially more productive and cooperative approaches to decision-making processes. The

***Learning about  
resilience***

following contributions provide insightful and critical examinations of some context in Southern Europe, their processes and some lessons to learn about resilience:

In Greece, the economic crisis and the fiscal consolidation policy resulted in deterioration of service delivery and caused serious discontent towards the local representatives. As a result, the local political system and the representatives were unable to sustain the political discontent of the local people who voted against them. „**Political Resilience in Times of Economic Crisis and Local Government Reforms**“ written by *Yannis Psycharis, Dimitris Kallioras and Evangelia Psatha* presents the case of the Municipality of Volos, Greece and examines the resilience of the local political system under the pressures for reforms and the implementation of restrictive policies during the period 2010-2014.

Using the city of Athens to carry out the argumentation, the paper „**Athenian Urbanism and Urban Resilience**“ written by *Thanos Pagonis* discusses the relations between the concepts of urbanism and resilience. By understanding “urbanism” as a collective condition that shapes the production of built space and social relations formed around it, the article claims that deep understanding of urbanism in a particular place is crucial for urban resilience planning.

In both Greece and Germany, the importance of initiatives has risen significantly in the last years. The third contribution from *Filip Śnieg, Lena Greinke and Frank Othengrafen* „**Community Resilience through the Influence of Grassroots Initiatives**“ shows how these solidarity movements can increase robustness and adaptability to various crises in their local context. It suggests that future practice and science should focus even more on the contribution that initiatives can make to community resilience and sustainability on different scales in cities.

„**Struggling Against Entrenched Austerity**“ by *Simone Tulumello* provides an overview of the housing politics in contemporary Lisbon, Portugal. By reflecting on housing crisis and struggles, the chapter takes two conceptual steps. First, it explores the entrenchment of austerity in the field of housing by

building on an understanding of austerity as the downloading of vulnerability to risk from the economic to the social sphere. Then, it questions the capacity of emerging social movements' potential to fight the social vulnerability brought by austerity and establish themselves as a 'resilient' alternative to the dominant models of economic development.

The fifth contribution „**Grassroots Economic Activism in Hard Times**“ written by *Riccardo Guidi* explores and questions “alternative forms of resilience” that citizens of Southern European countries have developed in response to the crisis. First, it illustrates the “alternative forms of resilience” perspective; then, it re-frames it into the more complex possible trends of grassroots economic activism in the shadow of crisis; finally it uses the case of alternative food networks in Italy in hard times to test the “alternative forms of resilience” hypothesis against competing ones. Although limited, the analysis shows that grassroots economic activism in times of crisis present a complex intertwine of persistencies and transformations.

Just like these contributions from scientists involved in the Summer School and other external experts, the research concerning socio-economic phenomena and various communal approaches enhancing social resilience should be continued, and their results shared in open scenarios where they can be used as a tool for development.

### ***Bibliography***

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