**RESEARCH**

# Discursive Styles as Minority Strategies to Reconstruct Democracy as Hegemonic Social Representation: The Case of Young Adults' in Greece Before and During the Financial Crisis

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## Abstract

This paper provides a theoretical and methodological contribution to the study of lay thinking on democracy, between a constructivist understanding of social representations and discursive psychology (Batel and Castro, 2018) and at the interface of individual and collective dynamics. Young Greek adults, feeling a lack of efficacy in the public sphere, were interviewed over time on their understanding of democracy. The discursive analysis utilised draws from seminal work in pragmatics, and concepts developed both by Ducrot & Anscombre in France (i.e. 1983) and Roulet and Rossari in Switzerland (i.e. 1990) on the importance of linguistic connectors for social interactions. The results present two discursive strategies used to claim ownership of democracy and to contest the mainstream constructions present in the public discourse. The paper discusses how lay thinking constructs conflicting positionings and power dynamics, using a "*hegemonic social representation*" (Moscovici, 1988, Magioglou and Coen, 2021) such as democracy, as the canvas. It offers an alternative reading of *hegemonic social representations*, as axiological representations where an appropriation of "values" becomes central for the debate between different groups (Staerklé et al., 2015; Gillespie, 2008).

**Keywords** Democracy · Young adults · Hegemonic Social Representations · Discursive strategy · Qualitative approach

## Introduction

This paper makes a theoretical and methodological contribution to the study of lay thinking on democracy between a constructivist understanding of social representations and discursive psychology (Batel & Castro, 2018) at the interface of individual and collective dynamics. Young adults, feeling a lack of efficacy in the public sphere, have been interviewed

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over time on their understanding of democracy, in Greece. The results show two discursive strategies used to claim ownership of democracy and contest the mainstream constructions present in the public discourse (Magioglou, 2014).

The paper focuses on the way lay thinking constructs conflicting positions and the power dynamics using a "*hegemonic social representation*" (Magioglou & Coen, 2021; Moscovici, 1988) such as democracy, as the canvas.[1] It offers an alternative reading of *hegemonic social representations*, as axiological representations where an appropriation of "values" becomes central for the debate between different groups (Gillespie, 2008; Staerklé et al., 2015). Existing research on the social representations of Democracy focuses on its semantic content, less attention has been paid to the asymmetries of power and the strategies involved (e.g. Moodie et al., 1995; Staerklé et al., 2015; Batel and Castro, opcit; Voelklein and Howarth, 2005). Theoretically, the present analysis is embedded in three traditions: a. that of critical and discursive psychology with origins in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, b. a constructivist understanding of social representations, and c. insights from cultural psychology (e.g. Valsiner, 2007). On the methodological side, it draws from seminal work in pragmatics, and concepts developed both by Ducrot and Anscombre in France (i.e. 1983), and Roulet and Rossari in Switzerland (i.e. 1990) on the importance of linguistic connectors for social interactions.

The analysis of the over-time research on the way young adult's *lay thinking*, constructs the meaning of "democracy", in Greece,[2] where non-directive interviews were conducted with young adults, between 18 and 30 year's old, from different social backgrounds and regions yielded two discursive styles.. The linguistic analysis, was based on the way propositions were articulated and compared in the same phrase, in order to create meaning –oppositions or similarities- used linguistic indicators to identify different styles in participants' discourses. This type of articulation is considered extremely important for the positioning of the social actors, and their "socio-political" strategy against a canvas of unequal positions. The methodology adopted a qualitative, grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The linguistic analysis of the data presents a confrontation between a majority, using a "**dualistic**", or *oppositional* discursive style, compared to a moderate minority with a "**gradual**", consensual discursive style. The two discursive styles are presented as ***cultural and symbolic resources*** people can switch to (Valsiner, 2007; Zittoun, 2007), available to different populations, related to the socioeconomic conditions, and **not** as permanent characteristics of individuals or groups. They are conceptualised as manifestations of *lay thinking* or *common sense* (Moscovici & Hewstone, 1984), presented in social psychology as a type of social thinking, different from scientific logic (i.e. Moscovici, 2015; Moscovici & Hewstone, 1984). *Lay thinking* on democracy, is differentiated from *ideological* and from *expert* thinking in this paper (Magioglou, opcit) in terms of a. the way each form of thinking establishes its reading as "hegemonic" b. the absence/presence of an institutionalized social control on what content is legitimate or not, and c. their dialogical or monological style (Hermans, 2012; Markova, 2003).

"Democracy" is approached as a multi-layered concept, embedded in ambiguity (Moodie and Markova, opcit; Staerklé et al., opcit): invented in Greece but re-appropriated

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[1] The work presented here Is part of a conceptualization of lay thinking in the case of Hegemonic Social Representations, presented (Magioglou, 2005); it is also the object of a 2014 research seminar at the EHESS with Obadia and a forthcoming special issue.

[2] Detailed presentation of the overtime research in forthcoming book (Magioglou, forthcoming).

by contemporary Nation-States who followed the model created by the influence of the Enlightenment, the French revolution and crystalized in the Western republics (Tziovas, 2001). Democracy in the public discourse and dominant media, is considered as constitutive of Greece's cultural heritage and national identity. The education system is also insisting on the importance of ancient Greece and democracy, in a discriminatory way compared to other more recent historical periods (Frangoudaki & Dragonas, 1997). This reflects a political choice in the construction of a national social identity (Billig, 1996) as a hybrid of both a dominant and a dominated social group (Herzfeld, 2016). Young adults have already acquired a knowledge of the theory, but also of the practices and institutions (e.g. school, university elections, mobilizations), building up to their understanding of democracy as a political system and set of values.

Regarding the etymology of the word democracy in Greece**,** democracy is a composite word, composed of the words "δήμος" and "κράτος". "Demos" signified the "municipality", in the same way as in contemporary Greek, but also "the people" in the sense of a community (Babiniotis, 2019). "Cratos" was used in the sense of power, but also government (Koutsogiannis, 2025; Liddell & Scott, 2007). *"Democracy"* in ancient Greece, characterized the political system established in ancient Athens(e.g. 500 BC), and adopted by many other city-states. "Demos", signified much more than an aggregate of people, it was a politically constituted community whose Assembly, known as "Ekklesia", was invested with the authority to take major political decisions as part of this political system. The first steps in this direction were the laws of Solon and later of Cleisthenes**.** Important philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle were not favourable to democracy, considering it a regime that allowed participation in the decision-making by those who were not part of "elite". These criticisms are echoed by contemporary elitist political thinkers influenced by Schumpeter's approach (Best et al., 2010). However, democracy was vindicated by a group of practical philosophers and orators, the Sophists, such as Protagoras, whose positions are known through the writings of Plato (Plato, 2000; Billig, 1996; Mossé, 2014), as well as the historian Thucidides (2009). Although it is difficult to speculate what ancient Greeks thought of democracy, we can learn through art work, archaeological findings and historical texts, for example, through the History of Thucidides (opcit) we learn about the clash that opposed the Athenian democracy not only as a regime, but also as a culture, ethos and life style, to the oligarchic and authoritarian Sparta. Throughout the long history of Greek language and its evolution empires, such as the Roman, the Byzantine and the Ottoman, ruled in the area where Greek language and cities existed, were very different from the direct democracy of the ancient Athens. There is a hypothesis from political philosophy regarding the culture of autonomy of city-states that persisted in the times of the empires (Contogeorgis, 2018), but there is not extensive research data to confirm or disprove it. The re-invention of democracy in the time of the French revolution, influenced Greek rebels, and it was reintroduced in Greece referring to a new political system. In the nineteenth century, revolutionary constitutions, for the future independent Greek state were written, influenced by the resurgence of democracy after the French revolution. We encounter again the principles of freedom, equality and justice as part of a political system. However, Greece after its liberation and constitution as a nation-state was, under the imposition of the time's great powers, a monarchy (Clogg, 2021). It would take new revolutions to claim for rights, constitution and later elections, for the banishment of constitutional monarchy in 1974 and the establishment of a parliamentary democracy. The re-invention of democracy and the parliamentary system predominated in modern Greece. The Greek nation, as any nation is constructed through a series of institutions and the notion of community (Anderson, 2006; Castoriadis, 1987). "Democracy" is taught in Greek schools as an important contribution

of the Greek culture (Frangoudaki and Dragonas, opcit) and, as demonstrated in contemporary surveys, 82% considers it as the best regime (Ioannides, 2024). Howeve*r, there are significant criticisms* regarding its quality (Eurobarometer, 2023). Despite the crypto colonial reconstruction of democracy (Greenberg & Hamilakis, 2022), theorists such as Billig in psychology (1996), recognize the importance of a culture of dilemmatic thinking, where democracy is understood as the possibility to integrate debate with the principles of equality and justice. There is research on the attitudes to democracy or the social representation of politics (Geka, 2014) or citizenship (e.g. Kadianaki & Andreouli, 2017), but the social representation of democracy for the Greeks has not been a common object for study (Magioglou, 2008; Bowman et al., 2022). In this paper, the "grounded" theoretical construction serves as an organizing principle for the structure of the presentation, despite the fact that it constitutes the last step of the research process, for clarity purposes (e.g. Flick, 2014; Sandelowski, 1998).

## Method

### Individual Interviews and Participants

Over-time, non-directive interviews (n= 61) were conducted on the lay thinking of the Greek Youth for democracy were conducted with a population of young adults from 17 to 30 year's old, citizens who have already the right to vote. Interviews were conducted before and during the economic crisis. The present paper compares results from interviews at the end of the 90's just a few years before the Olympic Games when the pro-European socialist Simitis was prime-minister (n= 30); Compared with interviews conducted from November 2015 to February 2016 (n= 31 interviews), one year after the first election of the Left anti-austerity party, *Syriza*, with the "*Independent Greeks*". At the time the 2015 referendum regarding EU economic restrictions and the refugee crisis intensified existing political dynamics. This period is argued to constitute another turning point in contemporary Greek political thinking.

All the participants were born during the $3^{rd}$ Greek republic, after the end of the dictatorship in 1974. They have grown up during the "good times" of relative social and political peace, and economic growth (with the exception of those who were 18 in 2016 and would have been adolescents when the effects of the economic crisis were experienced in everyday life).

The sampling strategy was purposive, approaching participants with diverse backgrounds and interests, which may contribute to different constructions of democracy (i.e. Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Interviews were conducted in Athens; ** had been brought up in Athens, and a third (n= 10) had arrived from different regions, looking for a job or to study. Athens, the capital of Greece and birthplace of the ancient democracy, comprises half of Greece's population. The city is composed of neighborhoods with different economic, social and political cultures. The already existing forms of social segregation and inequality, have been intensified with the effect of migration in the recent years (i.e. Maloutas, 2014). Participants' had diverse occupations, literacy, parental litearacy, employment status, and family revenues. Their profiles cover a broad spectrum of possible political positions including apolitical. In each study, the participants were different individuals but the sampling criteria remained the same. They were approached using

either a snowballing technique, or directly contacted at their work, study (i.e. hairdresser, student,) or a public space (i.e. café).

Non-directive research interviews are initiated by a unique, introductory question: "*If I tell you the word Democracy, what comes to your mind*"? The length of the interviews is on average 1 hour and a half, ranging from 35 minutes to 3 hours. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

## Analytic Method

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, including identification of pauses, laughter and emphasis. The linguistic analysis, presented in this paper, has been developed to analyse this data and draws upon theories in pragmatics on the role of connectors (i.e. Anscombre & Ducrot, 1983). It reveals *how* the participants express themselves and the *way* the different themes are articulated and linked together. It focuses on discourse, as an interdisciplinary practice, entailing "*the interplay of language, practice and context. The question is to account for the practical uses that are made of language by certain people at a given time and place*" (Angermuller, 2015). The analysis is based on the use of linguistic material and, most importantly, on the different types of linguistic connectors, serving as indicators. The indicators selected differentiate two *discursive styles* and were decided on for this study in collaboration with linguists Oswald Ducrot, and Marion Carel (Magioglou, opcit).

More precisely, the analysis relied on the theory of integrative pragmatics developed by Anscombre and Ducrot (1983): *polyphony of the discourse*, *argumentation*, role of the *opposition* and *negations*, as well as on the work of a group of linguists based in Geneva, on the role of the *reformulation connectors*, i.e. **"in other words"** where the proposals of a phrase are differentiated without cancelling each other (Roulet, 1987; Rossari, 1997).

The discursive styles identified are characterized as **"ways of thinking"** and are expressed through the use of specific linguistic connectors. They also characterize a form of argumentation and a strategy to position oneself as a social actor. In the case of "gradual thinking", democracy is composed of notions, practices and values which can be present "to a certain degree", in certain cases and temporalities. There is not an absolute truth.

The interviewees engage with the ideas and thoughts they raise. They are mostly using reformulation connectors (Rossari, 1997; Roulet, 1987). We split our participants into an "optimistic" group as to their own position and expressed a feeling of empowerment. And a pessimistic group also using opposition connectors such as "**but**", and *negative phrases* (Piaget, 1974), canceling the meaning of the first part of the phrase. The majority, using an absolute, "all or nothing", dualistic logic, advances by opposing what is considered as contradictions. An ideal democracy, or society they endorse, to a negative reality.

"*Democracy* is the Ideal, **but** it doesn't exist in reality"

This formulation is characteristic of "dualistic thinking" in the study.

The following extract, from the first study, before the financial crisis, compares the two ways of thinking. Katerina, is a 19-year-old, a rebel in her upper-class family. Her parents are both well educated, "successful" professionally, well-off and cosmopolitan. She has failed her school exams and is repeating the last grade. She is an aspiring artist, politically active and she has already confronted police violence while taking part in demonstrations. During the interview, she adopts "dualistic" and all or nothing thinking, while she

attributes the "consensual or **gradual** thinking" to her father, a 55-year-old corporate director of a multinational:

> "… democracy doesn't exist, nowhere, nowhere, nowhere, I am telling you, nowhere, for me. Ok, maybe what I say is pessimistic, it is, but I think that those who pretend democracy exists, just lie. If you asked my father if democracy exists, he will tell you 'it exists in general, nevertheless, in certain cases it doesn't'. This is not right. What does it mean in this case it exists and in the other it doesn't? Either democracy exists everywhere and always, or it doesn't exist at all. Democracy doesn't exist".

Katerina considers that there is an absolute form of truth: One form of logic represents "truth" and the other, her father's is "a lie". A consensual form of thinking, on the other hand, is characterized by a form of relativism and the compartmentalization of experience, as well as the importance of different temporalities (Table 1).

## Analysis

An overarching pattern, two "ways of thinking": a "gradual"/consensual and a "dualistic/ oppositional" thinking

### Gradual Way of Thinking About Democracy

Gradual/consensual thinking indicators.

- Reformulation connectors i.e. "in other words" (Rossari, 1997; Roulet, 1987), also allowing to distinguish different types of experience. « In this case", "in another case"
- Use of specific terms (e.g. indicating a specific individual, my mother, my friend Yiorgos, or a specific time and space)
- Use of conditional and hypothetical phrases (e.g. if we were still living in the middle ages, we wouldn't need electricity)
- Use of rhetorical Questions
- Laughter
- Use of the proposition "I don't know", as a way to open other perspectives on something that has just been said

For the gradual way of thinking, ideas are not presented as either true or false. Interviewees take distances and endorse partly what they describe. There is a form of relativism we identify in their discourse. Their subjective experience is in a way "compartmentalized", in different cases, fields, temporalities, with different norms.

Rossari (1990) specifies that when we have a phrase "p connector q", reformulation connectors introduce a change of perspective of the speaker, which brings a reinterpretation of the previous proposition. In this way, the new proposition is "added" to the first one without rejecting or opposing it. There is no choice to do, as it happens in the argumentative, opposition connectors such as "but".

Rossari (ibid) distinguishes two types of reformulation; in the first case, there is a sense of equivalence between the two propositions. Connectors like "**in other words**", are an example of this type. In the second case, reformulation connectors such as "*anyway*" or "finally" introduce a proposition with a new interpretation, and can create a distance from

Table 1 Presentation of the two "ways of thinking", Gradual and Dualistic, with the indicators that characterise them

| WAYS OF THINKING | Gradual/Consensual way of thinking | Dualistic/oppositional way of thinking |
| --- | --- | --- |
| INDICATORS | Reformulation connectors (i.e. in other words); (Rossari, 1997; Roulet, 1987) | Use of argumentative connectors "**but**" and all the synonyms, as a form of opposition (Anscombre & Ducrot, 1983) |
| Does there need to be something in these boxes? Or should indicators be moved up? | Specific terms (indicating a specific individual, my mother, my friend/specific time and space....) | Use of *negative* propositions (i.e. democracy doesn't exist in reality); Piaget, 1974; Ducrot, 1990 |
| | Use of conditional and hypothetical phrases | Use of generic terms –nouns- (the people, the Greeks, the youth); (Kleiber, 1990) |
| | use of rhetorical Questions | Use of generic terms –nouns- (the people, the Greeks, the youth); |
| | Laughter | Serious |
| | Use of the proposition "I don't know", as a way to open other perspectives on something that has just been said | Use of **inclusive** adverbs and adverbial phrases: "nothing" "everything" "always", "never", ...., |

what has just been said, without contradicting it. This second interpretation is added to the interpretation of the first proposition of the phrase. So, when two propositions are linked with this type of connector *"p connector q"* there is neither an opposition nor choice between *p* and *q*, in the way that argumentative connectors suggest.

By using and phrases like "***I don't know", "It seems to me",*** as well as questions, the use of adverbial phrases like "**maybe**", the truth of the phrase pronounced is "suspended" (Martin, 1987). Introducing doubt or uncertainty, can also be used as a strategy in argumentation, as a way to face potential criticism and to introduce an idea which is considered politically "incorrect" or belonging to a minority.

## Analysis of the First Study: A Form of Relativism and Compartmentalization of Time and Experience

Around one third of interviewees adopted a consensual or **"*gradual*"** way of thinking before the crisis(Magioglou, 2005; Magioglou, forthcoming). Democracy is represented as a step-by-step process and there is a possibility for them to act in a way that they see effective, in what they call their "microcosm", the space between the private and public sphere. In other words, they concentrate on their "private interest" (Hirschman, 1983) and focus on their financial situation or their personal career.

> 2. *"democracy, … you want me to speak in general? Freedom of thinking…or … democracy in what field? Democracy as a political system, or in the family, with your friends? In what sphere of life, do you mean?" (YiannisA, 26 year-old).*

They consider the public sphere and the "public interest" as something to deal with "later' in life. They are citizens "in waiting", and they feel minors when it comes to the public sphere and their actual financial independence, even if they are 23 or 26 years old. There are different periods in life, and ideas become ***gradually*** more important as time goes by, for example:

> 3. *"… politics is not something that interests me, … **I don't know** why, … **actually, I** have never thought for what reason, … **you see,** I do what I have to do, I don't harm anyone, neither my country nor other people, **all right, because** I know my limits, **apart from that, … honestly, I think that** it is irresponsible what I do, **if** everybody said the same thing **there wouldn't exist anything, there would be** … chaos **? How could I express that?...**" (Persa, 23 years old).*

This extract belongs to a 23-year-old young woman who has studied English literature and is about to start working by giving private lessons. She is living with her parents and the money she earns is for clothing and entertainment. Interviewees who share this position not only feel politically and financially dependent, but they feel "minors". They consider that their participation in the social and political affairs of the country just does not count, it is their parents who deal with that. Political and financial integration seem to arrive at about the age of 50 (approximately the age of their parents). The style is consensual/gradual in the sense that ideas do not contradict each other, even if they differ: the interviewee is not interested in politics, at the same time she admits politics being important. Even if she concedes that not being interested in politics is irresponsible, she mentions that:

> 4. *"Democracy exits, as I understand it, exists, **I think tha**t nowadays democracy exits, … eh, … **when it comes to the field of politics**… where you don't*

*have democracy, **it seems to me**, is **in the psychological field**, where you need to improve your social status, … to compare yourself to others …".*

Propositions like "*as I understand it*", "*I think that*", "*it seems to me*", are ways to introduce a doubt, offering layers to the original proposition, that democracy exits. Apart from the field of politics, there are others, such as what the participant calls "the psychological field", the stress of social comparison, which could also be related to social inequalities.

5. "*I am not **sufficiently** informed on political questions; I cast a white ballot most of the times. What I do is **not very** responsible, **however**, **in this way**, I don't influence the choice of those who will be in the government. **It is probably** because I don't have serious problems, I live with my family who protects me. **If I were** at the place of my father I **would be** interested in politics; he works, the laws influence him directly, they don't influence me **for the moment**. I have only just started working".* (Persa).

Adverbs and adverbial phrases such as "**sufficiently**", "**not very**", "**for the moment**", allow this gradual way of thinking to present **layers** of meanings, able to coexist peacefully without opposition. "*Not being sufficiently informed*" is not the same as "*not being informed at all*". "*For the moment*" opens the world of possibilities. It is the particular position as a young adult, which involves focusing more on personal development than civic action. Both are valued, and temporality is important as to the degree of dedication for each. This category of young people is, in a way, more privileged, in the sense that its members are more optimistic about their chances of personal success. However, they do not all come from well-educated or financially well-off families. They think they are following the "Zeitgeist", which is pointing towards a model of society, where financial activities, the private sector, technical know-how and the hard sciences are privileged compared to activities in the social, cultural, or artistic sphere (Magioglou, opcit).

## Second Study: 2015- 2016

In 2016 participants are more politicized and informed than the socially equivalent group of the first study. With 50% youth unemployment in 2016 (OECD, 2015), both the public and private sector have been affected. These participants use a "gradual" way of thinking and position themselves against the politics of the 2015 elected government (Syriza-Anel). They blame the situation on the "uneducated" multitude which is going against what they see as the necessary changes, that is, structural reform of the economy and austerity measures.

They are interested, informed and participate in the public sphere and politics, in opposition to those expressing themselves in a gradual way of thinking before the crisis, who seemed relatively apolitical. They still adopt a gradual and consensual logic, trying to keep a distance, and use a form of irony, even if they are themselves involved with different political parties.

The following extract belongs to the interview of a young adult who has spent two years studying in the US, and is using occasionally English words to highlight this fact. He comes from a well-off family, who pays for his house and maintenance. He would prefer an aristocracy to democracy, and feels part of the elite who has the necessary education to decide. The use of irony and laughter, rhetorical questions and "I don't know" to moderate his statement, are characteristic of this form of thinking:

6. *"democracy **what could I say**, **ha ha**, … I think **in general** that democracy **could** only be practiced in societies where people **would have** a very high education level, **access (in English)** to quality information yes, **I don't know**, … **finally** I think that it is **more** an **illusion (in English)** that everyone is equal in a democracy, **and** not a reality, **yes, ha ha, what else to say**? … **on the other hand** they say that it is more just as a system, **because who could** say **who** has a bigger **say (in English)** and who has a smaller, … eh... **for example**, **whose** opinion has **more** importance **and whose** has **less**, … **personally, I wouldn't mind** if I didn't have the right to vote **for example ha ha**, **of course**, it doesn't sound that nice, **ha ha**… **but** I think that **if you give** the right to participate to everyone **and** they don't respect their right **I don't** think that this produces what is best for a society…**yes**… **despite this, maybe**… a form of aristocracy **would be** better…"* (Xenophon, 26-year-old).

The extract which follows comes from the interview with another young man whose parents have a higher education and who holds a masters degree in economics from a German University. He also adopts a detached style, but he is clearly favorable to the structural reforms proposed by the parties opposing the Syriza-Anel government on the right. Here again, the majority of the people are represented as influenced by the government's populist discourse. In his discourse, there is a question of efficiency of the state as a service-provider to the citizens-clients who contribute with their taxes:

7. *"Democracy, eh, voting, **I don't know**, people, 'demos', Parliament, Greek, **to be honest, ha ha,** political party, disagreement, eh… unfortunately, **to be honest, I also** thought of demonstrations and violent incidents, … I follow the news a lot now, … forms of government, communism, dictatorship, … **I don't know,** that's all… eh, elections **for sure, ha ha**… **how do you call these**, projects of law… they name them… something of legal content… they are adopted every day… **I don't know**… those who speak of too much state are the liberals, like part of the party of 'Nea Dimokratia', those close to Mitsotakis, "Drasi", "To Potami", the financially liberal parties… **there is** a big intervention of the state **not only** on the economy **but also** in the way someone is influenced by the state, **for example, who benefits** from the public service? **Does it function** in order to be of service to those who contribute financially through their taxes? **Or what kind of support should you have** in order to start a business… the **clients**, I mean the **citizens** who have interactions with the public sphere … it is obvious from the data…"* (Patroklos, 25-year- old)

## Dualistic/Oppositional Thinking (Majority of the Participants)

– **Dualistic thinking indicators**

- Use of argumentative connectors "**but**" and all the synonyms, as a form of opposition (Anscombre & Ducrot, 1983; Kalokerinos & Karadzola, 1999)
- Use of *negative* propositions i.e. democracy doesn't exist in reality (Piaget, 1974; Ducrot, 1980; 1990)
- Use of generic terms –nouns- (the people, the Greeks, the youth); (Kleiber, 1990)
- Use of **inclusive** adverbs and adverbial phrases: "nothing" "everything" "always", "never", …,

The ***dualistic*** way of thinking is characterized by an "***all or nothing"*** logic and the use of the argumentative connector marking opposition "***but"*** (or its synonyms) shows a strong opposition between the two connected statements. If two statements, P and R are linked with this connector, there are two possible outcomes opposing one another: "*P but Q*" means "*P as a result R*" and "*Q as a result R*". The two options are incompatible according to the interviewees adopting this form. The use of a negative proposition also implies the presence of an alternative which is opposed by the second proposition which corresponds, according to those who use it, to the "reality" they disapprove of.

The use of "general terms" refers to words which are not specific in time and space. They may also refer to a group in its entity, such as "the human beings" or "young people". Adverbs such as "everywhere" or "always" are also examples of this type of general terminology. As a result, according to Kleiber (opcit), when we are in front of a choice, we have to accept it in its totality, or to reject It completely. In the case of democracy, it is presented as something all-encompassing, involving all possible aspects of life:

For the interviewees who adopt a *dualistic*, an "*all or nothing*" logic, democracy doesn't exist in reality, before the crisis. They compromise with situations they do not agree with, because they consider that there is no hope of improvement. In the second study (2015–2016), many participants feel politically more empowered and there are cases where they declare themselves ready to fight for democracy, which is threatened in their eyes, for example, a 24-year-old woman, volunteering with an NGO helping the refugees arriving in Lesvos Island, without feeling optimistic for the possibility of change.

### First Study Before the Crisis: "I don't work, I don't vote, I only exist to be dominated"

This extract is from the interview of Petros, a 23-year-old man who is working part-time at the store of his father, selling women's underwear. The rest of the time he tries to decide what direction to take in life. He declares that he "exists only to be dominated" and seems to be resigned in this situation. He adopts a dualistic way of thinking. Democracy and anything "good" do not exist, and they are only possible as an imaginary construction:

8. "*what **democracy** dreams is **beautiful**, **but**, it cannot be realized because **the human beings** mess with it and ruin everything.*
9. "*democracy is something **ideal**, eh… that **everyone**, for example, independently from their job or other things, can be equal for the law, **but**, I **don't think** that this happens in reality*".
10. " ***the police*** ought to protect … the citizens, **the judges** are there in order to apply the law, …**but**, everything is corrupted " (Petros, 23-year-old).

Sofia, a second-year philosophy student whose parents are a pharmacist and college teacher, also expresses herself in a dualistic way. Democracy encompasses all aspects of life, everything that is "good" and precious, like art, culture, love and respect.

12. " ***Democracy is… everything***, everything emanates from democracy, if democracy exits, there are also things like art, civilization, well, this is known to **everyone**, there are **good** human relationships, there Is ethos, there Is respect among human beings…"

Democracy is intrinsically linked with the meaning of life, peace and harmony in the world. Generic nouns and generalizations are characteristics of her narratives, as well as an all or nothing, dualistic logic:

*13. " …we **didn't** understand that our **only** reason for being on this plant Is to live in peace and to respect each other, **this is the meani**ng of life and the meaning of democracy" (Sofia, 23 year old).*

Another participant, Heleni, thinks that since the common good in its absolute form cannot exist in reality, the only way to govern is to use extreme measures, such as an international revolution:

*14. "…for democracy there is **no hope any more**, unless there is a revolution of an international scope, … **but** even that Is only possible in our imagination..……or the destruction of the human species by choosing a collective suicide … :*
*15. " … I **don't see** any possible solution, **the only thing left** is to commit a **collective suicide**, (laughter).*
*16. "democracy will **always** be an objective, **but**, It Is **impossible** to exist in the future, … I mean that we will be satisfied with our democratic societies **but** how many people will realise that **only** two or three people in every country control the power? I **don't have an idea** about what we should do to resist; maybe only a nuclear explosion to **destroy everything** in order to start from scratch…", (Heleni, 18 year-old).*

## Second Study, 2015–2016

Yiannis, a 28-year-old living with his parents and working only a few of hours during the week-end to afford a cup of coffee with his friends, also adopts dualistic thinking:

*17. "Democracy is about the question: to live, or to survive"*

Democracy is now part of the participants' everyday discussions, and they mention that as the interview starts. Democracy, still as an ideal is associated with *living*, developing a moral personality, becoming a social and political actor. Surviving is the reality, spending all day in alienating and exhausting jobs in order to pay the bills while staying with one's parents or flatmates.

The following extract belongs to Yorgos, a 29-year-old man with a high education level, a master's in anthropology and a broad culture. He is active both in the academic and in the art world as an aspiring musician. His father owns property on the island of Crete and he is financially comfortable for this reason, but he is still dependent on his father. Despite the fact that he enjoys a form of material security, Jason, as a homosexual, feels part of a socially discriminated group. He mostly adopts a dualistic and oppositional way of thinking, which seems to correlate with this social identity.

18. "Well, ok, democracy, because I had a recent discussion I will give you the same answer I gave on that day, UTOPIA, in one word. Would you like me to explain it? Why Utopia? Eh, … because I consider it is an excuse to do the opposite, … as a political system, I consider that there are no longer democratic societies, in the Western world, … I am not talking about the Eastern which, you wouldn't think of qualifying as democratic…I consider that a lot of things happen in the name of democracy, which is used as a legitimation, clearly, and if we observe a little bit how, … these societies are constructed, no, … there are different social groups, social classes, … of course, this has nothing to do with democracy as we have it in our minds...
19.- Starting for example from the French Revolution, equality, fraternity, what is the third? Liberty, eh… I don't remember, eh… but you know, if we start only from equality, we understand that it doesn't exist, and equality is for me one of the most

important elements in a society… but it doesn't have to be economic equality, … people should be equally respected for their life choices, their sexual orientation…" (Yorgos, 29 year-old).

In the following extract, Ismini, a 28-year-old woman who has studied French literature at the University of Athens, works as a waitress. Her mother, who has given up her job to become a mother and housewife, objects to this choice, wishing a form of upward social mobility for her daughter. She considers that being a waitress is degrading for someone with a university degree. However, this idea belongs to the pro-crisis aspirations and the mother refuses to accept that. Democracy for Ismini, as for most of the participants using a dualistic form of thinking is not limited to the political system and the public sphere. It is a way of being, so the relationship to her mother is a sign of the existence or of the lack of democracy.

Ismini is living, as most of the interviewees, with her parents in a "popular" neighborhood of the city. When it comes to politics she identifies with "the people" and she criticizes the political elite. There is another category, "the poor" who find themselves at an even worse situation. Having supported Syriza at the elections she uses a dualistic form of thinking, but there is also a form of empowerment, especially when she prescribes what "should" be done.

20. *"The first thing that comes to my mind is the **democracy** which is related to the political system, the expression of the citizen and the people through its representatives and it is not one person who decides and commands, and … **imposes his will on everyone else**… **In principle,** I consider that parliamentary MPs are our representatives, **but in reality,** they **don't express the people's needs**… they are simply decorative, they are there only to show up, they **don't** defend the essence of their role, … I think that the Parliament is a little world in itself that has **no idea** of what is happening to the rest of the Greeks, … they speak theoretically, one turns against the other, **without** producing anything concrete and useful, … I think that they **deviate** completely from their role… Their role **should have been** to defend the rights of those who are less fortunate, to protect the interests of the simple, poor people who… gather the leftovers from the street market, … there are a lot of people who lack the essential, … **and** this starts to be the norm … in a country where we used to have a sort of abundance, … so **democracy, yes, it is freedom, but** there are limits … for those who **abuse** their power, in order to prevent **dangerous** situations… democracy **could also mean** foresight… a way to prevent our actual **dead-end**…"* (Ismini, 28-year-old).

19-year old, Iro, first year philosophy student, distributing leaflets part-time and helping her mother who is a cleaner. She is politically active in the public sphere, in demonstrations and also supports Syriza:

21.*"democracy starts from Greece, but today, **there is no democracy**, things have changed so much… the people… **everything** has changed because we allowed it, … I am thinking that we the young, they say we can accomplish everything **but they don't let as act**, private interests get involved and mess up with it, … the different institutions, the police and the politicians mess with it and their own private interests… I demonstrated for the commemoration of Polytechnio against the dictatorship, and the cops were trying to observe faces and control who was there, so young people feel angry and they want to show their anger… I voted in every election and I heard someone next to me, younger than 30, saying why vote? … I think voting is impor-*

*tant, … he was dressed up with his golden watch, not a real one, a fake… he wants to pretend to be the leader, but he ends up being an idiot… probably a waiter, someone working at a car… my mother is working as a cleaner, and I have helped her, but this is pretending that you belong to a certain elite, but you don't really…" (Iro, 19 year-old).*

## Discussion

"Ways of thinking" are conceptualized in this paper as discursive strategies young people use to claim ownership of democracy, either by contesting a dominant version, or by adding to it their own understanding and practice. "Ways of thinking" are understood as cultural resources which organize young adults' lay thinking on democracy. These resources participate in the construction of social identities and set the stage for oppositions between what the participants represent as *mainstream* and *underdog* positions. The majority of the participants in the two studies adopt a "**dualistic**" way of thinking opposing "*good* principles" to the *deceiving r*eality. This style correlates with a feeling of being in a dominated position compared to what they perceive as dominant. Those who adopted a *"gradual" or consensual* way of thinking before the crisis, postponed adulthood and public action with the hope of achieving their personal financial and social objectives in the *future*. As a result, the majority of the participants justified their **lack of public action** before the crisis either feel "dominated" or still "too young" at 23 or 26. This lack of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) is congruent with results on the importance of intergenerational inequalities (EKKE, 2012; 2018). The intergenerational divide is also present in the rest of the studies.

Batel and Castro (2009) use the term "reification" and "consensualisation" to describe "discursive formats" of communication, where *reification* is close to a monological style and *consensualisation* is related to a dialogical form where different positions are accepted and debated. Similarities can be observed between "*gradual/consensual* thinking" and "*consensualisation"*, as well as between "dualistic thinking" and "*reification*. Nevertheless, the conceptualization adopted in this paper focuses more on the linguistic style and it constructs differently the power differences of the different actors.[3]

In the second study, those adopting a "gradual" or "consensual" way of thinking, identified either with their parent's generation judging "*them*" the "*youth*" as immature, or with "those who are educated" and who consider "**efficiency**" and **knowledge** as more important than "justice". There were no clear-cut oppositions as in the case of the dualistic style, nevertheless, they favoured one of the options presented. The ***dualistic way of*** thinking, relies on a **moral** framing of the question, it sets the stage for a form of dilemma: it is the one or the other, and ambivalence is not tolerated by the person who is being interviewed. The participants focused on certain themes and underplayed others. The dualistic form took a moral stance, close in certain respects to what has been described as an "underdog" culture or identity (Diamandouros, opcit; Triandafyllidou

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[3] The conceptual differences similarities between the two conceptualisations are further discussed in a forthcoming paper (Magioglou, (forthcoming). Discursive strategies and power relations in the Theory of Social Representations. In *JTSB*).

et al., 2013; Ntampoudi, 2014). In this study, it is conceptualized as a ***strategy*** *of a group, feeling dominated* and trying to challenge the mainstream, and not as an aspect of the Greek culture.

If the gradual way of thinking manifests a "cognitive openness" characterizing, according to Moghaddam (2016), a democratic citizen, the preoccupation with moral principles is another democratic characteristic, present in the dualistic thinking. Dualistic thinking implies contestation, because those who use it, oppose a reality they don't approve of, to their representation of democracy. It could be related to different forms of action or inaction: staying at home refusing to engage (instead of doing something considered alienating, from job seeking to political action), participating in civil society groups or revolting, occupying and demonstrating. Until the second study, a dualistic discursive style of lay thinking did not represent a specific political ideology, but a variety of positions, from all the political spectrum (from Golden Dawn to leftwing, anarchist and moderate). The second study in 2015–16 is the more politicized, in the sense that most of the participants were informed and participated in the public sphere. Higher education participants were found both among those adopting a gradual and those adopting a dualistic style.

The Dualistic way of thinking, close to what has been characterized as underdog, is thus understood as a strategy of a group constructing a positive social identity as "defenders" of a hegemonic social representation which has been "abused", such as democracy, or the nation for the extreme right. On the other hand, a gradual and relatively moderate style can prioritize individual strategies to promote social and financial integration by those who feel part of an elite group, making their choice based on the principle of realism and efficiency. Dualistic style as a strategy, deliberate or not, has been used by groups challenging a status quo in other contexts (Economides and Monastiriotis, 2009; Magioglou, forthcoming). They are not considered "permanent" characteristics of groups or people, on the contrary there is proof that the same person can adopt different ways of thinking not only at a different temporality but also in different contexts (i.e. cognitive polyphasia Wagner et al., 2000). Ways of thinking do not describe a Greek exceptionalism in any way, at least not in this study. However, future research might investigate further why a majority of young adults construct a social identity feeling either powerless or alienated by the political system.

This form of methodology and conceptualization proposes a way to articulate structural, cultural and collective dynamics in lay thinking with individual feelings and meaning co-construction or deconstruction. Research in pragmatics offers the methodological tools to study ways lay thinking challenges and co-creates meaning. Further work using the same methodology for textual data analysis (i.e. for the analysis of comments on social media) will enable us to develop further this methodology (Magioglou, forthcoming).

## Declarations

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