

## **GREEK NATIONAL REPORT : CATEGORY 6.**

# **THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR WORKERS OF INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING**

### ***Social and Historical Context***

The industrialization of Greece began much later than in other European countries and it has never fully been transformed into an industrial society with an associated industrial working class. One of the main spurs to industrialization was the consequences related to the Asia Minor disaster of the 1920s (Vergopoulos 1978). This brought into a poor, rural Greece an inflow of a million and a quarter Greek refugees many of whom had been industrial workers<sup>1</sup> and were of urban origins. The expansion of the borders of the state and its population along with the availability of a trained and cheap labour force (Campbell, Sherrard 1968), stimulated the development of Greek industry in the 1930s, particularly in food processing, textiles and leather industries, in a country which until then had been marked by its reliance on subsistence agriculture and services.

This period marked the first real flowering of capitalist enterprise, protected from international competition by tariff walls and by the state. The size of industrial production rose between 1923-29 65% and 1929-38 by a further 65%. While Depression was occurring in Europe and the USA, in Greece employment was expanding. (Vergopoulos 1978) Nonetheless by 1940 and the outbreak of WWII half of the population were still rural while the majority of those in manufacturing were employed in small family firms.

After WWII and with the end of the civil war, American aid helped Greek industry to reestablish itself to its prewar levels from 1950 onwards. However the civil war and the slow expansion of demand for labour made many Greeks, particularly those from the villages, seek to escape political problems and economic poverty through

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the industrial workers were from the textile industry and from building .

emigration abroad and migration to Athens and Thessaloniki.<sup>2</sup> Wage labour in manufacturing and industry showed a small increase between 1951-61 of 15,000 people, in 1961-71 of 61,000 approximately and the largest increase in 1971-81 by 93,000 persons. However in this last decade while the index of urbanization was increasing from 53.2% to 58.1% of the population, the industrialization index in the same period was only 27% rising to 29.3%. This was the period with the highest percentage of people employed in industry, not only in the traditional industries already established associated with agriculture, clothing, footwear, electrification, but also in modern petro-chemicals, cement, metals and plastics. Those moving to the cities who were potential industrial workers, since they could not find employment in the industrial sector, created their own self-employment units. (Ioannou 1989) This characteristic of urbanization without associated industrialization is not a phenomenon that is unique to Greece but found in other Mediterranean countries. (Leontidou 1998, p. 85-6). This trend and even cultural preference for self-employment<sup>3</sup> continues with Greece still having the highest rate (36%) of self-employment in non-agricultural employment. In manufacturing 24.1% overall are self-employed (30.7% men, 10.0% women. (National Statistic Service, Labour Force Survey 1997)

**TABLE 1. Population : Economically active population: Waged employment**

	Population		Economically Active		%	Waged Employment		% of waged employment in active population
1928	6,024,7	81.3	2,603,6	91.7	42.0	663.8	63.5	25.5
1951	7,682,8	100	2,839,5	100	37.2	1,046,1	100	36.8
1961	8,388,6	109.9	3,638,6	128.1	43.4	1,220,0	116.6	33.5
1971	8,768,6	114.9	3,235,0	113.9	36.9	1,369,8	130.9	42.3
1981	9,739,6	126.8	3,543.8	124.8	36.4	1,730.3	165.4	48.8

Source: National Statistical Service data, quoted in Ioannou 1989

<sup>2</sup> The scale of Greek migration to the USA prior to the 1920s was also massive - it is estimated that more went abroad to the USA every year than the total employed in Greek industry. (Mouzelis 1978)

<sup>3</sup> Haratsis, Petraki-Kottis et al (1993) report in their study of newly self employed people that the advantages and preferences for self-employment were most important, while the risk of unemployment was not important as a factor in their choice.

**TABLE 2. TOTAL INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT**

1958	441,092
1963	471,564
1969	501,565
1973	604,042
1978	671,496
1984	684,145
1988	699,812

Source: National Statistical Service: Annual Labour Force Surveys

The small size of the overwhelming majority of industrial and manufacturing units where only 48% of workers are employed as wage labourers and the rest are self employed or in family units, contrasts with the 90% of workers in waged labour in Europe (Efstratoglou, 1987). This type of employment in small family businesses has resulted in there being little conflict between the interests of employers and wage labourers in these enterprises and thus little stimulus for the development of worker's unions. Conflict has tended to be concentrated in the few areas where a major employer is dominant and there is little alternative employment. One example was the town of Lavrion, Attiki, where the French mineral excavation company dominated the town from the beginning of the century with a concentration of 8-10,000 workers. Here the active workers came in contact with politicians and intellectuals, influenced by liberal ideas from Western Europe; the latter tried to "import" socialist ideas drawn from European trades unionism and promote them among these workers. These ideas were supported predominantly by workers who had lived abroad and who tried to organise the movement. Nikolopoulos (1983) states that in Greece the trade unions were imposed on the workers by the government and were not the result of grass roots activism. The subordination of the trades unions movement to political party interest has been a dominant feature of Greek trades unionism. The Liberals, influenced by sociologists, became active in forming the first Panhellenic Federation of Labour which gradually faded away under the indifference of the workers' organizations. The Venizelos government in 1911 supported the formation of the General Federation of Greek Workers, and till today the various governments finance the activities of the

Federation and appoint its leaders. (Ioannou 1989) The historical formation of the Greek trades union movement indicates the limited nature of modernization and working class consciousness, phenomena which persist to this day despite rhetoric. The past two decades have seen the major force in the trades union movement originating from those employed in the wider public sector, representing sectional and particularistic interests.

Another factor, already suggested, accounting for the lack of worker class consciousness arises from the substantive size of self employment, whether in agriculture, services or commerce, and again explains a lot about the formation of unionism in Greece and in particular craft and sectorial unions concerned with protecting their narrow trades interests.

Industrial production has historically mainly been located in four major industrial cities<sup>4</sup> as well as in some special site locations that developed industrial infrastructures by virtue of being near the major cities and centres of distribution. The progressive abolition of industrial protectionism, the two petrol crises of 1973 and 1979, industrial competition from countries with cheaper labour costs and higher productivity, and the introduction of new technology were factors that led to a reduction in the demand for industrial labour. Greek industry was internationally non competitive as the result of a lack of investment in modernizing production and its reliance on unqualified and low skill labour, and very little of it was in the high technology sectors or in areas with a high demand; thus the decline in employment in the industrial sector was not surprising. (Oikonomou 1990) From 1975 to 1990 the decline in industries such as metal and wood products, rubber and plastics, chemicals, leather and fur, and textiles led many to being “problematic enterprises”. During the 1980s the PASOK government, fearing the results of high unemployment and believing that it could overcome these difficulties under the right management, effectively nationalised them by putting them under state management through a state body called the Organisation of Economic Restructuring of Enterprises. However there were tremendous difficulties both in their effective management and in their modernisation. International competition made many of them vulnerable, but political interference and the desire to defend workers

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<sup>4</sup> Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos and Patras were the main industrial cities; however at different historical moments other large towns such as Serres, Kavala, Halkida, have seen a concentration of manufacturing units.

jobs - since the government was unwilling to bear the political cost of redundancies and unemployment - led to their survival under state control. High inflation rates and their ownership by the public sector meant that though their losses were subsidised they could not find adequate investment capital to make them competitive. After approximately 10 years some industries were sold off, others closed while some are still in the process of being sold.<sup>5</sup>

Industrial closures, concentrated in the major cities and specific locations, led to pockets of very high unemployment. One example cited by Petraki G. (1993) was that in four of the small areas (“Nests of unemployment”) strongly affected by the closure of industries, unemployment rose from 10% to 40% while 16,000 jobs were lost in these four areas. In the major cities unemployment also continued to rise; in 1993 Athens had a rate of over 10%, at a time when unemployment generally was 6-7%. By 1998 unemployment was running at 10.3% but in manufacturing it accounted for 11.4% of unemployment, with 20.7% of women compared to 7.1% of men unemployed in manufacturing.

The social and occupational groups most affected economically and socially were those with the least skills, education and qualifications, with young people and women being most vulnerable initially either by being the first to be fired or by not being able to find work at all in their area. (Tsartas et.al. 1996) The government tried to offer most protection to older industrial workers, who were also those most likely to be unionised, either by offering early retirement or by continuing to support the industry and letting it close down very slowly. One problem lay in the lack of social security support for the long term unemployed; thus benefits were only payable for a maximum period of one year and special emergency measures were introduced to start training programmes entitling participants to payment subsidy as a way of meeting this lacuna in social security. Many workers were not willing to relocate to look for work, though eventually those from the smaller areas hit by unemployment were forced to do so, but against a background of growing national unemployment. Those in long term unemployment were often desperate with no evident means of gaining any kind of livelihood. In the early 1990s local communities affected by closures were lobbying the

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<sup>5</sup> This takes place within a general framework of privatization or semi-privatization e.g. of banks, telecommunications etc.

government for special development measures while at the same time the unemployed were having to rely on charity<sup>6</sup>. Not surprisingly there were reports of serious depression amongst the unemployed<sup>7</sup> and such limited evidence as exists confirms this as a common response. (Sokou 1998)

In general older workers are increasingly more vulnerable in the labour market and though unemployment rates for those over 50 years are still lower than the average, they have been rising systematically over the past ten years. Additionally more people have been forced into early retirement.. Until the end of the 1980s older workers were partly protected by the fact that an employer firing them had to pay considerable compensation in line with the number of years they had worked. On the other hand relatively older workers also cost more to employ, receiving higher wages and bonuses, thus employers would also fire them in order to reduce wage costs, preferring unskilled, younger workers to replace them. Unskilled workers and women employed in the industrial sector are particularly at risk of being fired, relating to their lower education and lesser skills, resulting in lower productivity. (Kasimati 1989) and the fact that they are easily replaceable by others, especially in a period marked by high unemployment. Another factor that has serious repercussions on older workers is the low rates of retraining since employers prefer to invest in younger workers, while many older workers are also employed in smaller less productive units, often very small ones, which cannot afford training or else are unaware of its necessity. (Mestheneos, Ioannidi, 1996).

In Greece ex-industrial workers come out of different employment situations. Many are from small, non competitive industries and industrial workshops that are no longer able to compete with foreign products that are cheaper. Others worked in industries where the introduction of new technology has led to job losses or else the demand for new skills that they could not train for. Whether as small employers or as employees many Greek older workers can be said to have suffered from a lack of information and a lack of reflexivity as to the changes that they would be forced to confront them They lost sight of the fact that the international framework of industry

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<sup>6</sup> For example the Municipality of Lavrion arranged for food parcels to be distributed to the unemployed in the area - the food having been donated by door to door collections in Athens.

<sup>7</sup> Personal correspondence from PRISMA Company who undertook research amongst older workers in long term unemployed in Lavrion.

and membership of the European Union would force both Greek industry and the Greek government to adapt to these external and unavoidable structural changes, removing the protectionism, patronage and the promotion of sectional interests they had benefited from until the start of the 1990s.

As the majority of older industrial workers have a low level of formal education and their skills have mainly been learned on the job, it is difficult for them to be re-integrated into the current Greek labour market when losing their job. Only the privileged, mainly from the public sector and white collar employment, have been able to benefit from early retirement schemes. In contrast blue collar workers have rarely been offered the benefit of early retirement schemes. An additional problem is that since many were employed initially in industries that did not insure them, they may not even be able to complete their years of insurance contribution allowing them to have a pension. As a result this group are highly vulnerable to social exclusion not only immediately but in a long term perspective. Those who are currently unemployed have few chances of finding stable and permanent employment, and again have to resort to uninsured work in the black economy.

## **MAIN CASE - TOULA**

### **Biographical Data Analysis**

*Toula's mother comes from Tilos, a small island in the Dodecanese, while her father was born in Athens in a working class area, though his family all came from Ithaca, one of the Ionian islands. Toula's mother was from a very poor family and at the age of nine, after her mother died and her father began living with another woman, she was sent to Athens to work in a cousin's house. The cousin promised to send her to school and treat her as family but instead she worked as a servant. At the age of 19 she met her husband (Toula's father) who was from a better off family because they owned a taverna. They fell in love and got married, though the mother had only the clothes she stood up in. They went to live with Toula's father's parents and they all worked in the taverna, where Toula's mother was able to contribute by cooking new dishes.*

In this setting one hypothesis is that this couple, who come from similar island backgrounds, will possibly have many common cultural and value characteristics. There tended to be many shared features of social and cultural life between small islands e.g. open people, less conservative and gentle as compared with people from the mainland, in particular those from mountain villages. The fact that Toula's mother moved into a house without any possessions at a time when a dowry was considered essential confirms the fact that the parents were in love, but generates the hypothesis that perhaps she would not be able to have a significant voice in her new family of marriage. Another hypothesis is that she was very patient and hard working as she lives 10 years under poor conditions with the cousin's family and then accepts to live again with her husband's family. However the situation of poor relatives, particularly poor girls from villages, going to live and work as servants in the houses of Athenians was a common phenomenon of the 1950s. Although she was uneducated, she appears to have been creative and progressive, as evidenced in her willingness to develop the family business further e.g. adding extra dishes to the taverna. Another hypothesis is that the family into which Toula was born was a harmonious one, open and with a lot of social contacts through the taverna, influencing the later development of Toula and her siblings. Since tavernas are places where ordinary people go and eat in the evenings, often with live music and a friendly local ambiance where people find their entertainment, it can be argued that the children of the family will be sociable with an ability to communicate easily. Toula is likely to participate in the labour market as she has the model of a working mother, even though in a family business.

*Toula's parents have 6 children, starting with a girl, then 2 boys (twins) followed by the remaining three daughters. Toula is the last child, born 4 years after her sister. She is a very pretty girl, resembling her father and grows up spoiled by all the family members. When Toula is 9 her mother has a serious heart operation and she is unable to work in the taverna. All the children help at home and in the taverna and when Toula finishes primary school she also works in the taverna.*

During this period 10 people are living together and are economically dependent on the taverna. Even in the 1950s it was uncommon for urban Athenian families to have 6 children and since they had the sons as the second children and then went on to have



another 3 girls, there is a sign that they loved children and each other. The illness of Toula's mother generates the hypothesis that the family must have had some financial problems since she had been important in cooking for the taverna. As the family live in a poor area the level of profit from this work would have been fairly marginal, though still better than average wages. A hypothesis is that the oldest child was old enough at the time when the mother fell ill to have been able to develop a career path, while the other children, with the exception of the youngest, will bear the main burden of the mother's absence from the taverna. It appears that the model of the mother who was hard working is one that will influence her children. The desire for education, a common one shared by Greek families of all social class levels, would probably also have been a strong one in Toula's family. The hypothesis is that the parents will try and educate as many of their children as possible including Toula. Toula, as the youngest one in the family, would probably be the child who was most likely to be indulged, given that often the youngest child is the most spoiled. There is also the possibility that Toula being so spoiled and at the same time beautiful would not invest in education but rely on her looks for her future, and this might be a tendency in her family with respect to Toula. Another hypothesis is that since Toula began working at quite a young age in the taverna, she would have developed the social skills and some contacts necessary to obtain a job. Another model in Toula's family is that of family self-employment which may influence her in her future career choices.

*The eldest daughter finishes her education and becomes a primary school teacher and leaves home. The two sons finish high school and the father helps them to start their own business as graphic artists. Toula stops school early, which she doesn't like, and helps her mother at home and in the taverna. Economic difficulties in the family force her to start work in a clothing factory at the age of 17. Throughout her teens in the evenings she goes out with her brothers and their friends and meets a lot of people.*

The hypothesis that the family faces financial difficulties after the mother's illness is partly confirmed by the fact that Toula has to find paid work, but other factors such as the financing of the boys' enterprise and the possibility that the taverna was gradually less successful, have also to be considered. One hypothesis is that Toula, being spoiled, will not be very successful in her job, and she will try to find a good man to marry and

leave work. A counter hypothesis is that although she will marry, since she is attractive and sociable confirming the earlier hypotheses, she will continue to work since she has been brought up with the model of the working mother. A further hypothesis is that Toula will try to be successful in her job so that she can prove her worth to her successful, educated siblings. The fact that she left school early reinforces the hypothesis that Toula relies on her looks and is somewhat indulged. Since Toula left school early it is also possible that she will not invest in her job or further training, with long term consequences for her income and social position. During the 1960s jobs were available in factories for unqualified workers and Toula, since she does not understand the benefits of education as a means to work and social advancement may stay unqualified all her life. The probability is that Toula will fall in love with someone from her brothers' group of friends and acquaintances, especially since there is the model of her parents' love marriage.

*Toula spent all her money on clothes and her appearance, with the encouragement of her father. At 19 she meets a man through her brothers' friends. He is a worker who loves music and plays an instrument. She falls in love and at 20 becomes pregnant and she gets married. She continues to work at the factory and she moves into her husband's parents' house. At 21 she gives birth to her daughter.*

The hypotheses confirmed are that Toula's good looks will affect her life and choices; that she will meet a man from her brothers' social circles and that she will marry for love. She also continues to work as a married woman, confirming another earlier hypothesis. Like her mother before her, Toula moves in to live with her parents in law. This appears to have been positive for her mother and thus Toula repeats this form of behaviour recognizing the support that she will get, socially and economically by sharing a household. A new hypothesis is that Toula will have more children, like her mother, especially given that she has the help of her parents in law. A counter hypothesis is that she will adapt to the urban model of very small families, however it is unlikely that she will have only one child. Given that her husband is also a worker and Toula is in unqualified work, it is probable that they will always have some financial difficulties or limitations, especially in the case where one or the other stops work. This

may also limit the number of children that Toula can have. As she freely chose to marry she will probably get on well with her husband, as her parents have done.

*Shortly after the birth of her first child, Toula's husband lost his job as the owner of the workshop, where he was employed, was a communist and was sent into exile by the dictatorship. This led to economic problems and quarrels in the house since he worked only 3 nights per week playing a musical instrument in a taverna. Toula stops work as she has health problems that have arisen from her factory work.*

Toula's financial problems are caused by exogenous factors - the dictatorship which affected a lot of poor people's lives at this time, and a chronic health problem arising from factory work. Poverty and unemployment inevitably caused problems in Toula's marriage. However the hypothesis is that if she or her husband are able to get a good job again many of the personal relationship problems will disappear. Additionally they have no economic choices but to stay together and battle the problems out. It could be hypothesised that their bad personal relationship during this period will not permit Toula to have another child immediately. The hypothesis is that her husband will try to find another regular day time job and play the instrument for recreation and/or part time work while Toula will look for some work she can do, perhaps at home e.g. sewing since she cannot go back to a job in a factory for health reasons but needs the income. A counter hypothesis is that Toula will not look for another job but stay at home and try to recover.

*After 4 months of unemployment Toula finds another factory job but one that does not affect her health again. Her husband continues in the taverna three days a week but after some months he finds work as a traveling salesman. She gets pregnant 4 years after the birth of her first child and has a son. She stays in the factory for 4 years and after a quarrel with the manager, who doesn't allow her to learn new skills, she leaves. However she managed to learn some practical sewing skills.*

The delay in having the second child is confirmed as is the fact that she would have more than one child. Additionally her husband returns to full time work, something expected of men from this class. Toula's obvious desire to learn some skill may have

been the result of her previous experience of unemployment - and her husbands - with its attendant financial and personal difficulties and this may have been a factor making her appreciate the need for obtaining a skill.

Toula during this period may look for work at home as she may have realised that in a factory learning new skills is often not possible. A counter hypothesis is that she will seek for work in a factory again to use her existing skills and experience and to ensure a regular income. Factories for ready made clothing were developing throughout the later 60's and 70s in Greece and created a lot of new jobs for women.

*Toula buys a sewing machine and starts to work from her home, making clothes for her neighbours. She stays at home for three years as her mother in law can no longer look after the two children since she has serious mobility problems. When both her children are at school she finds work through her contacts in another factory making souvenirs. After 2 years, when the factory closes down, she continues to do the same work at home for the factory though without being covered by social insurance for a further four years. After this she goes to work in another factory as she wants to get a job that will pay her social insurance contributions. After another 4 years this factory moves out of Athens and she loses her job again.*

The hypothesis made initially that Toula will be a working woman all her life is confirmed. Also confirmed are Toula's social skills since she keeps up with her old contacts and finds work through her social networks. On the one hand the ease of finding work in the 1970s was set off against the fact that many businesses were opportunistic and not on solid economic foundations. Thus the later 70s sees an expansion of the black economy and the evasion of taxes and insurance contributions - a fact that has enormous repercussions for many workers subsequently. In this stage of her life Toula is already considering her pension since she recognises the fragility of her work situation. The possibility is that Toula will try to find work in a factory again although this is increasingly difficult as enterprises close and younger women workers become rivals for the few jobs. Thus her labour market situation gradually worsens as she has built up few skills, no qualifications and is in a tightening labour market with increasing unemployment especially for women and people in urban areas. Thus the counter hypothesis is that she will find seasonal or temporary work or will continue to

work from home. Another hypothesis is that Toula will try and ensure that her children get an education because of her and her husband's experiences where they recognise their fragility in the labour market i.e. their dependency on the stability of the enterprise, the good will of employers and their manual skills which were easily affected negatively by bad health. This will be enforced if she recognises that her siblings who did get an education have had a better life.

*Currently Toula lives with her in laws and her husband. He has health problems and works because he needs to complete his insurance contribution years. Toula works from home, making clothes for friends and neighbours. Her daughter completed studies at technical university and is currently unemployed, while her son is at university studying electronics. Toula is looking for permanent work in a factory again.*

The hypothesis that Toula will educate her children is confirmed and also that she will follow her mother's model, working but also caring for her in laws. The possibility is that she will find work in a factory again but this will once again be of a temporary nature. For Toula the lack of social insurance contributions and the fragility of the family income compounded by the difficulties her own children have in entering and finding work in the labour market, may well lead to poverty in old age for Toula. Her husband's health problems may lead to his early death and thus a reduction in Toula's income. The closing of factories in many sectors of economic activity and the replacement of labour by new technology makes Toula's situation increasingly difficult and there is a high probability of her not being able to complete her social insurance contribution record. Working at home sewing earns a low income and is not profitable as ready made clothing has replaced the demand for this, while other forms of home working have an oversupply of ready hands. She has not developed her skills sufficiently to be able to find alternative ways of earning a living. Toula runs the risk of social exclusion in old age, a common phenomenon in Greece amongst an increasing number of urban older people with limited family support. She will avoid this kind of future only through the intervention and support of her own children.

## **Self-Presentation**

1. Toula will present herself as a failure in comparison with her siblings who all obtained qualifications or skills.
2. Toula will present herself as a fighter who, although unskilled, has contributed to her family and her in laws.
3. She will present herself in terms of activities rather than in terms of self-reflection
4. She will give more emphasis to the personal rather than work and career,

### **THEMATIC FIELD ANALYSIS**

Toula begins her initial narration by describing how she was bound to be lucky since she was born with a caul<sup>8</sup> and indeed she feels that she is a fortunate person. She continues with an evaluation of her marriage, her husband and her children to indicate that indeed she was lucky. She gives the example that wherever she goes she brings good luck e.g. to shops and her family. However at this point she falters and asks the interviewer for reassurance that she should continue talking in this manner about whatever she likes. When the interviewer echoed the words of reassurance back to her, she then continues for an uninterrupted period of over half an hour. This time she continues speaking following the order suggested initially by the interviewer i.e. beginning with her parents, her childhood and her married life. She uses epic narrative when referring to her mother, events in her childhood, her health, and to the work she has done at home. For other important events in her life such as leaving school, or meeting her husband, or having her children she uses report. Frequently she uses evaluation when talking about periods of her life that she remembers with emotion, whether these be positive or negative. She spoke in detail of her life in the taverna of her parents and grandparents, and the good and bad times she passed there.

She continues her initial narrative by providing a lot of information about her brothers and sisters, describing their careers and lives right up to the present day. When she comes to discuss her husband in one line she mentions that she met him in the company of her brothers and their friends and she uses description and argument to explain how good he was in his work and that he was also an artist who played a musical instrument very well. When she talks about her career her speech is mostly in the form of evaluation and

argument, posing the relative weight of her responsibility for not having studied and trained, against the responsibility of employers who didn't let her train.

Toula uses many particular rhetoric phrases which make her speech very picturesque and expressive. She frequently laughs while telling her story, especially at those points where in using words or describing events it might appear that she was overstating her case. This may have been her way of defending herself against criticism by the interviewer and appearing modest.

## **CASE STRUCTURE**

In Toula's life there are three main determining and structuring features. The first of these was the fact she was born under circumstances which popular belief and sayings suggest confers luck in life. Her family and social environment constantly reinforced the idea that this first characteristic was enough in order to guarantee her a successful life with a good husband.

*When I was born my face was covered with a caul and they said that I would be lucky..... As a girl I would make a good marriage and that I would have all the good things in life. And that's how it happened. I made a good marriage, my husband is very good. My children are peaceful. I always remember my mother in law saying that I was a special girl that I could only do good things and to bring luck to others.*

Her second characteristic was her beauty - which was also taken as a proof of the first characteristic - her being fortunate in life from birth. While the third circumstance, being the youngest child in the family, also suggested that she might be indulged.

*I was the most spoiled, the youngest and the most beautiful..(laughs) I resembled my father . ... he was tall, with full lips and blonde hair. All the other children were dark, like my mother's side of the family. I was blonde like my father.*

*My brothers were like fathers to me. When I was young they looked after me since I was the youngest, they checked what food I was eating, where I was going out to play, where I went, and in my adolescence when I was going out they covered for me.*

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<sup>8</sup> A membrane covering the baby's face at birth

These three characteristics in combination prove lethal in terms of Toula's future in the labour market. Whereas the other siblings manage to receive an education and develop an active determination of their own future, Toula in contrast waits for her fortune to determine her future. When she first goes into paid employment she doesn't consider planning for a career but work is only as a method of earning cash to spend on her appearance. Her father reinforced this tendency since he believed that marrying well for a girl was a laudable goal. Although his other two daughters studied or began studying, the last and pretty one who resembles him is indulged and not pushed to be good in her studies.

*I stopped school at 12 and then I was helping in the taverna.... I was pretending to work. What I liked was the music they played and the dancing. I liked it more in the evenings because the taverna was full of men and they were drinking and drinking...*

*When I first started work in the factory I found it very difficult didn't want to stay there. But what could I do, I needed the money to buy dresses, shoes, handbags. I liked to be well dressed. That period in my life, all the money I earned I spent on my appearance. My father did not want me to help in the house, he used to say always "you are women, you should try to be beautiful in order to make a good marriage."*

Another feature in Toula's life is the belief and centrality of romantic love. The fact that her parents married for love constitutes a positive model for her since they managed to overcome their poverty and difficulties through the strength of their relationship. Thus when she is an adolescent she searches for her future husband not in terms of being suitable in class and background with appropriate economic resources offering a secure future, but one who appeals to her romantic nature.

*My parents, although they came from different backgrounds, suited one another and they lived happily. And their life was beautiful, full of love and I was born as a result of this love.*



*My other sister finished high school and wanted to continue and become a teacher like our oldest sister, but somewhere along the way she fell in love and .... suddenly she broke the news to us.... and thus she changed direction.... And she got married.*

Toula met her husband through her brothers; an important aspect of her presentation is that she does not mention their romantic love for one another, nor that his looks attracted her. The central description of him is that he is an artist and a good man. In both his work as a metal worker, originally, and in his hobby as a musician, she emphasizes his creativity. Despite the fact that he is a semi skilled worker and poor, the romantic image of him as an artist is enough to constitute the romantic basis for a love marriage.

*My husband was a worker.... a worker but an artist (laughs). He made decorative iron work for balconies. My husband learned this work from his employer, who had had him as an apprentice since he was a child... The money was not much but it was honest money and to his taste.... Because my husband, what can we do, he was an artist, he was not just an assistant. After some time he was the one who made the patterns and was responsible for the decorative work.*

*When the workshop closed he went to work in a taverna playing an instrument since this was his great love, he pined for it.*

In the above quotation Toula talks about her husband using the past tense which may be interpreted as that this aspect of the man, the artistic and romantic, has ended.

This coincides with two related events - the political dictatorship in Greece, that began in 1967, which in its turn was responsible for the closure of the workshop where her husband was employed through the arrest of the Communist owner. He loses his job, associated with helping to make beautiful villas and, when he turns to music as a semi profession, the romantic nature of it also dies for her as she faces the realities of his nightly absences.

*I loved to go with him to these big houses with gardens full of different kinds of flowers and water fountains... I was so impressed and I liked to walk out of these houses (here she means that when exiting from the house any passersby might believe that she was*

the owner) ... *I was a child, I wanted those things, I wanted to dream .... I wanted to go with my husband and his employer, and they knew this weakness of mine and they arranged to deliver on Sundays so I could be with them.*

*When he told me that he'd found work in a taverna I wasn't at all pleased. I thought that he would come home at different hours from me and when would he see the child? ... Another thing is that at that time if you worked as a musician, well it wasn't very respectable, they called them lazy people or hashish users. Anyway it bothered me. And then I thought it's better to have money than begging from my siblings, so let the people say whatever they like.*

This is the most difficult period in Toula's life since she loses her job because of a work related health problem. Despite the accumulating problems of her and her husband's unemployment and her small child she presents this period in the following way :

*That period we went through a lot of difficult moments, both financially and in our relation as a couple.... We said a few words to each other but now, looking back, I remember those moments like a black cloud that came, rained and left... It left no signs. This lasted almost three years.*

However though Toula denies it, this is the turning point in her life when with this rain, one could argue, she starts to grow - she matures and begins to consider her future and her need to develop some labour market skills. It is probable that at this moment the romantic love for her husband dies, to be replaced by her esteem for him as a good family man.

*At home we needed money... I was proud and I kept saying that everything was OK... I tried to hide our real situation. My husband had already found a second job as a travelling salesman when a friend told me that in a small factory they needed women as seamstresses. I started work there... If I tell you now that there I got the urge to learn.... I began to learn for the first time... I began to want to do something for myself, to do something... and I asked the employer to teach me how to sew, but she refused... I tried to catch on by stealing a glance when I could but it was difficult.*

After leaving this job she buys her own sewing machine and her dream was to make a lot of money to enable her to buy a lot of sewing machines and to start her own small workshop. Although she didn't manage this, Toula begins to make some plans about her future in the labour market. She changed various jobs, rarely out of her own initiative but as a result of the insecure or changing nature of the enterprises for which she worked. Self-employment as a seamstress is left as one of the few options open to her, though as she says:

*I sew clothes for my friends and neighbours.... I never became a good seamstress and this is because I never saw it seriously as a profession and because I never learned systematically but just by picking it up here and there.*

In the current phase of her life Toula feels satisfied that her main achievement is managing to get her children educated, something which she never achieved. Although her daughter is unemployed she feels that she has accomplished her task as a parent. It is noticeable that when asked about the happiest moment in her life, she says :

*Happy moments..... many and good years have passed till now. My husband is good, my children are good. But if you want to happiest moment I wouldn't be ashamed to say that this was when my son entered university. I was crying all day and you know for me it was unbelievable.... You know once my son told me "You know why I'm studying? I'm studying to escape as soon as I can from you and the miserable situation" and when he entered university I didn't know if he would take us with him so that we could all together escape the misery or he alone.*

From Toula's presentation of her life, everything appears to come out in the way she was initially promised, as the result of good luck and fortune. In her lived life, as the above quotation suggests, the reality of the home circumstances and low income, the health of herself and her husband, her unemployment and poor prospects for future work, are in marked contrast. In her told life she wants to give the impression that she was born with the lucky stigma and has probably come to believe that it really has made her lucky.

*I don't want to complain because it's bad, God is listening... food has never been missing, but simply we were not rich. We were workers who worked all the time but the salary was small.*

## **CASE RECONSTRUCTION**

### **Fate and Chance**

Toula's life has been affected by the general belief in Greece that if someone is born with good fortune - which may take the form of a sign at birth, good looks, a rich or socially active family, - then one does not need to take a very active role in one's own destiny. **Passivity with respect to activities related to the labour market may thus be the result of a culturally constituted frame of belief about how people achieve goals.** In the Protestant ideology success is the outcome of hard work, while in Greece the belief in fate and destiny, with its roots in ancient Greek mythology, has been sustained by the extended economic reliance on agriculture and sea commerce, neither of which being subject to human control, as well as political domination from external forces. The Renaissance which laid the foundations for rational thought, did not develop in Greece at all, partly due to the rule of the Ottoman Empire where again rationalism as a method of production, distribution or political rule was never well established. Toula is an example of someone who currently pays for this belief since through she had the opportunities, she was persuaded not to take responsibility for her own actions from her childhood onwards. She cannot complain since she fears that such "luck" as she does have, will be taken away from her by the gods.

### **Job selection and the effects of socio-political changes**

Toula's generation grew up in the 1960s when industry was expanding rapidly, creating many new jobs for the many rural people who came flooding in the two major cities. They required low levels of skill and training was minimal. However this was the period marked still by the aftermath of the Greek civil war and the continuing ban against Communists. Many workers identified with the Communist party and with the coming of the junta government, many suffered, through imprisonment, exile and their inability to obtain necessary permits and papers. Toula's family was also badly affected particularly when her husband's employer, a substitute father to him, was sent into

prison exile. For both Toula and her husband the dream of going on, gradually getting better off in a secure and friendly working environment, is brought to an end by the political structures of this period. For Toula the political circumstances are part of the reason why she changes and begins to think seriously about her future and her need to develop some skills.

### **Family provision of welfare**

The relative poverty of the families of both Toula and her husband have several consequences. Firstly their grandparents try to achieve a better future for their own children, e.g. through the creation of a small enterprise, through sending Toula's mother away from the poverty of the countryside. Her parents in law offered housing and child care, something that was appreciated by Toula's mother. In turn when Toula's mother fell ill initially she could rely on her own children. Toula and her husband reproduce these same sets of interdependencies - supporting their children through long years of education - and unemployment - but also expecting to receive some care and support in their old age. Toula recognises that this expectation depends on factors over which she has no control - the character of her daughter and that of her daughter in law. The central role of women as care givers and family welfare providers is underlined, as is the reality that women are those who, because of their own poverty, longevity and poor health, will require more care in old age. This is not a negative aspect of life for Toula but care giving is seen as an asset. She appreciates that her own children were cared for by her mother in law and her mother, and in turn when she was called upon to care for her mother in law with dementia, does not mention it as a problem or burden.

### **Health**

Inequalities in health in relation to social classes are well known. Occupation illnesses, the result of poor, stressful or unhealthy working conditions are factors that appear in Toula's life since both she and her husband suffer at some point from such illnesses. These illnesses have an effect on their subsequent access to their occupational life course. If Toula had not suffered from her hand injury while in her first job, she might well have been able to stay there to complete her working years or at least to complete more years of social insurance contributions. Her husband's illness makes it problematic as to whether he can even reach retirement age and obtain his pension,

while even if he does achieve this, ill health in old age with the minimal pension that they have, will cause problems of survival. Although there is a National Health System extra payments to medical personnel and private doctors are often deemed necessary in order to obtain adequate treatment.

### **Unskilled labour**

Toula's generation was one where in their youth as unskilled workers they could easily find work. The more able could learn skills on the job and rise in the occupational hierarchy. Others managed to learn enough to leave at a certain age and begin their own small enterprises. Most employers were very small scale, with low capital investment and many had limited skills themselves. This made them vulnerable to both internal and external competition. This may account for the unwillingness of many employers - something which is still characteristic of the majority of small businesses in Greece - to undertake the training of their employees or themselves. The restructuring of the Greek economy which has begun to occur more intensively in the past eight years, has reduced the demand for insured, unskilled labour. Thus increasingly those from Toula's generation who have not managed to establish themselves either within an organisation or in self employment, are very vulnerable to long term or insecure unemployment which in its turn leads to social exclusion, particularly in old age.

## **OTHER CASES**

### **1. ELENI**

#### **Biographical data**

Eleni was born in 1949 in Rhodes and at the time she was born, just after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, she described the poverty that was characteristic of the island. Her father was a fisherman on long haul trawlers and often didn't return for 6 months at a time to his family. Eleni grew up mainly with her mother and grandmother and the other three children, two of which were from the first marriage of her father who had been widowed. At that time it was difficult to continue her education beyond primary school:

*“We couldn't even dream about getting an education. It was very difficult to attend school. We didn't have books, everyone was poor then. We didn't have a high school in our village and in order to go to the town you had to rent a house there because there wasn't any regular public transport. Now we have a bus every hour, and there is a school bus for the children. My father used to buy one or two books for us and the rest we had to borrow from the neighbours. It was even hell to finish the primary school.*

*Our parents worked just to earn enough for bread, what dreams can you have about an education. After that what kind of dreams can you have?"*

Eleni did not like the life in her village and at the age of 15 she managed to move to Athens to her aunt's house. Her father also came with her to live in Athens because all the other children married in the island and since she was the last one, her father also wanted to get her married off. Thus her mother stayed on the island and her father stayed with her to check and control her, since he couldn't get her married off on the island. In Athens she started working in a clothing workshop and when she was 17 her father made her get engaged to a man whom he had met in the factory where he was working. Eleni did not like the idea because she wanted to meet somebody who was well off and have an easier life.

*"I left my village because I wanted to come to Athens and have a marriage the way I wanted it to be since I was a kid. I wanted to meet someone who was better than me... well educated... not to be like the men of the village.... How can I tell you, the lack of education that you find in the villages was something that I never did like. I didn't like the life women had in the villages. I wanted to dress like the women in the city, to behave like them, to live differently.*

After three years they got married and Eleni stopped work in order to start a family. She had two children and when her children grew up she had to find work because the family income wasn't adequate especially since they wanted to build a house in the country. She found a job in a factory and she was about 40 years of age. She stayed there for two and a half years but the employer didn't pay them every month, so she decided to leave. She found another job in ceramics, which was considered an unhealthy occupation. She stayed there for 5 years but had to leave when the factory cut back on the number of employees. Since this job she has been unemployed:

*"I'm looking for any kind of work, from cleaning houses to washing dishes.... The lowest jobs you can find. Workshops that are seeking unqualified people, but it isn't easy since they are looking for young girls with low salaries. They don't want us, so we older women stay unemployed. I have no qualifications. I know how to sow at an amateur level. In the workshop they want women who have experience and previous service in the same sector."*

Eleni at this point of her life appears to be depressed and when she was asked about her future plans she said:

*"The future? Well, I will disappoint you now. I'm not thinking about it.... It is so uncertain... And it is uncertain because of all these illnesses and accidents we hear about. Although I'm a very optimistic person I went through difficult moments in my life and now I'm disappointed. I'm disappointed about everything and everyone. I know it's not good to tell you this but what can I do? "*

It was noticeable that Eleni did not complain that she didn't have money to buy the beautiful clothes she always dreamed of but what she said she missed most was the money to go to the theatre, which she loves. She says this is the only pleasure in her life and when she was asked if she has any regrets she said:

*“Yes, I should have stopped this marriage, I shouldn’t have got married at 17. Marriage is a slavery .. I had dreams, I wanted to come to Athens to learn things. ”*

## **2. VANGELIS**

### **Biographical data**

Vangelis was born in Athens, his father being from Kerkyra and his mother originating from a village on the Greek mainland. He attended a private technical school to learn to be a skilled electrician. He found work through the intervention of his uncle who worked there, in a major Greek factory producing electrical goods for twenty years. Vangelis as a child had wanted to become a lawyer but he wasn’t a very good student in high school and for this reason attended the private school. When he finished the school he applied to enter the public electricity corporation but they were not hiring anyone at that moment so he went to the army for three years and then found the job. The factory was sold to German shareholders who brought in new technology and this meant that Vangelis lost his job :

*“ they replaced the job I was doing with a machine. They threw me out because they shut down the department where I was working. They threw me out without telling me the reason. After some time I heard that they hired just two people in the place I was working, two women. But my uncle wasn’t working there anymore so I lost my contact. ....*

*I went to the personnel officer and I asked “After 20 years, is there no job for me in the factory” and they said “No, there is nothing you can do here” ..... I understand those who started work again were those who had the right connections.”*

Vangelis got married recently and he had his first child just when he lost his job. His only concern is to find a job and complete his insurance contributions. His wife isn’t working and is looking after the child and after one year his unemployment benefit through OAED has stopped. Vangelis says :

*“I’m looking for any kind of job, through newspaper advertisements. My sister is looking everywhere. It’s very difficult because in all their advertisements they are looking for people 30-35. And the only thing I worry about is my child”*

He lives near his parents and sister in a central Athenian district.

## **3. Kostas**

### **Biographical data**

Kostas was born on a small island near Athens in a very poor family and at the age of 5 they all moved to Larissa, a city in Central Greece to be near an aunt who could house the family. His father found work there as a carpenter because in the island he had mainly been unemployed. Kostas finished primary school in Larissa and at the age of 11 he came to Athens because his father still had no permanent work. The whole family



moved to Athens and found work. Kostas did various jobs during the day while attending the evening high school for two years.

*“I didn’t go to high school because I had to but because I loved school. I had to help at home and that’s why I was forced to stop it... .. My father never had a steady job and I started very young to do various jobs. The first time I worked was at the age of 7 in a shoe shop.”*

His parents were old when he was born and he had to work from a very young age to contribute to the family income. His basic skills were as an electrician. He worked in various factories until 1993. At this time the factory closed down.

*“In the first factory where I worked I gained some skills because I was working next to the employer. I worked on all the stages, from buying the material, processing it, making it, manual work then because we didn’t have machines, and then handing it over to the client. But the money was not good and I left. Then I opened a workshop of my own but it didn’t do very well and in the morning I found work in another factory but I stayed only for three months. Then I went to the last one where I stayed till ’93. It started with 6 people, me included and we ended up being 20. Then the business started to go badly and the employer started reducing the staff to 15 at first, then 4 and then it closed down. After that I couldn’t find work in this field because now they import the whole product from Italy and Spain.*

From that time on he can’t find permanent work though he gets uninsured work on an occasional basis.

*“I have worked in various jobs without insurance because it’s very difficult to find work today. There are a lot of migrants from Albania, Romania and they prefer them because they are cheaper. I might work now in a camping site for the summer, I don’t know yet. When I heard about this interview on the phone I thought it would be about a job and I came. I have worked as a painter, in construction work.... anything...”*

In 1977 Kostas married a girl that he had known for many years, who was from his neighbourhood. They have two children now, both still attending high school, and Kostas stresses the fact that they have never worked in their lives. When he got married his wife was working in a cosmetics shop and she stopped work after marriage. For the past three months that Kostas is absolutely without any work she has been cleaning stairs for blocks of flats. He feels embarrassed that he is unemployed and says :

*“When I was working I looked forward to Fridays because I was getting paid and I knew that I could go to the supermarket with my wife to buy anything I liked, then we would go out with friends at night, we had money to spare. Now all this has collapsed. And then you get disappointed, like me. I’m disappointed. I keep asking myself “What am I going to do now?” Suddenly we aren’t able to go out anymore. Social life has stopped. I have been left with my motor bike and I come home and I feel inferior when I stay home. I’m ashamed that I have no job. And I’m not asking for something special. I’m looking for any kind of job.”*

Kostas currently relies on his wife’s money, who only works a few hours weekly, and economic help from his father in law. He is pessimistic about his ability to complete his

contribution years for social insurance and even if he does he knows that the pension will be very low to support his family.

*“Imagine, we are 4 people. If we all depend on a small pension, and we know that the pension is very little, it’s impossible. And if somebody like me wants to work, where is the job?”*

He is considering the possibility of attending a 4 month course to learn a new skill and find a job for which there is a demand, since he has realised that his old skills are no longer required. When he was asked if he had considered the possibility of going abroad to look for work he said he didn’t consider it since he knew no foreign language.

*“If I found any kind of job where a foreign language is not required I would go. I would consider emigrating but I think they (other countries) also have problems.”*

#### **4. VASSILIS**

##### **Biographical data**

Vassilis was born in 1951 in Piraeus and his parents were refugees from Moldavia. They lived with his father’s sister and in 1959 they moved to a block of flats that the United Nations had given to refugees from Russia, Romania and Moldavia. He is an only child and although his family was poor, he attended a private elementary school. He continued education, finishing a public high school at the age of 18. He did not continue his studies because he never wanted to force himself to try harder and study. He started work in a big electrical factory and when the factory moved out of Athens he travelled every day to its new location about an hour and a half in travelling time. In 1988 the factory closed down and from that time on he started doing various jobs working in a book shop, in a film processing company, and as a guard in excavations. At the time of the interview he had just found work again in the public sector as a guard, again for a six month’s contract.

Vassilis says with reference to work :

*“Generally others found work for me. I never managed to find a job when I was searching for one. I don’t think that it’s very easy for someone to find work by himself unless he has some special skills, some special qualifications and I believe that today you must know people in order to find work. I believe this from what I see around me.”*

Vassilis never married but has a lot of interests. He loves classical music, photography and he said that he had attended a school of photography. But he quit this because he feels very tired in the last years and isn’t in the right mood anymore. For long periods of time Vassilis has been unemployed, however he makes a clear distinction between two words that only well educated Greeks could do, since they have their origins in ancient Greek, - he effectively says:

*“I am without work, not without energy”*

About his future he said :

*“I don’t know if I want to start a family now. A steady relationship, yes. But even that is very difficult now. Life is very difficult and as the years pass by instead of becoming easier it gets more difficult. I am not a pessimistic. I’m worn down.”*

#### **5. NIKI**

*Biographical data.*

Niki was born in 1958 in a small, remote and poor village near Thebes. She was the first of three children born in a poor family whose father had fought with the Resistance and then the Communist army during the civil war. After this he found great difficulty in getting work and supporting his family. Niki, as a child, loved school and wanted to continue her education but after primary school her father explained that he couldn't afford to send her to high school.

*We went through difficult years, I was constantly sad and worried. We had a very poor house with one room and no bathroom. I remember that I loved school, I liked it very much, I wanted to be educated, to be someone. I had a dream... But the circumstances just didn't allow it.*

Niki at the age of 8 started distributing milk in the village as a way of helping the family finances.

*I was distributing milk in the village till late at night and then I was studying my school lessons by the light of a lamp. I remember my mother telling me "Go to sleep, I'm not going to make you a scientist, we can't afford it." But I loved school and I wanted to be a good student and I tried hard.*

At the age of 12 and a half she started work in a factory near her village where she helped move chemicals and fertilizers. This was illegal work and every time the labour inspectorate came she and other girls were hidden.

*When it was cold, raining, my father used to tell my mother not to wake me up early in the morning because he felt sorry for me but I always got up on time because if I was late I lost the day's wage. And they exploited us because we were doing a lot of work for very little money. At that time I couldn't realise this exploitation. Now when I look back and think about the many years when I worked without any insurance coverage, well they are lost years. I remember that we were not permitted as children to work and when the labour inspector came they used to hide all the children.*

Her family has an additional problem, that her brother got polio and required medical attention, much of it in Athens. Niki's mother spent most of her time with her son at various clinics in Athens and Niki remembers her father as being the person who kept the house going, as well as her grandfather, and this helped her develop a close relationship with her father rather than her mother.

*I didn't get to know my mother very well. I never got close to her. It was only my father who was with me. My mother was completely devoted to my brother. To a great degree she overprotected this child who was ill and I felt rejected but anyway I managed to survive with my grandfather whom we had living at home with us.*

She was offered the opportunity to train as a nurse by the factory but her mother would not permit her to go to Athens alone to study for a period of two years, this being a source of regret and also resentment towards her mother.

*The factory proposed that I work as a nurse (during a period the law required that each factory had a nurse) and since, as the engineer said to me, "You are a very active person, energetic and capable, why don't you study and take this position." .....My father didn't like the idea because in many factories women were sexually harassed... Also my mother didn't like the idea and she thought I would go to Athens and become lazy. She thought I would go there and relax. But I've always appreciated the engineer who encouraged me.*

She went to Lamia and learned elementary first aid but when she returned they didn't change her position in the factory but just had the paper from her to prove they had a "nurse" on the premises. Her salary didn't change. Niki was the only person who

complained about the working conditions in the factory and she was the only person who would speak out when the labour inspectorate came.

*Once when the inspector came I was sitting back looking out of the window and at one point he turned and said "What's wrong with you. Don't you have any problems? Why don't you participate in this conversation?" And then I got up and I said, "Why did you come here? You don't know anything about the working conditions here. Can you work for 8 hours under the same circumstances that we do? Every time we've complained nothing was done. So I believe that you've just come here to kid us." And then when he went to the office he said "That girl who talked to us like that must belong to that workers' association that Communists have, like her father". They invited me into the factory management and they accused me, saying that my father was a Communist. And I said "Because my father is a Communist I'm not going to pay for a lifetime." I escaped being fired and I went through many such situations in my lifetime.*

At the age of 18 she met her husband who was also an active trades unionist in another factory. They got married after two years and moved to live in his village, a bigger one and nearer her work. She continued working, from choice, but afterwards began to find difficulty in getting pregnant.

*We both worked and we managed to build this house. After the end of the junta my father managed to find a job and I felt more independent because I had spare money to buy things that I wanted. At that time the mentality was that a woman after her engagement would stay home and I told my husband that I wanted to work because at that time it was easy to find work and I wanted to get some money. And I was lucky because my husband was understanding and he also helped my family, my mother, my little sister managed to go to high school. After a year and a half we decided to have a child and I was too tired and we decided that I stop work.*

Niki for several years has to visit fertility specialists in Athens. After 5 years she gave birth to her daughter and after a year went back to work. She worked for 7 years - which she believes were probably the happiest, since both she and her husband were working and earning, and this allowed them to make their house comfortable, buy clothes, go out and have summer holidays. The factories in the area began to close down, or pass over to state control as problematic industries. This led to mass redundancies, insecurity of employment contracts and long periods of unemployment for both Niki and her husband as well as 75% of the people in the village.

Currently Niki is unemployed, though her husband has been employed for the past two years. Niki works a house cleaner, as well as growing crops on their land for sale. She also periodically gathers herbs and wood for sale, has attended paid seminars and she has tried to find money through a EU program to start her own small business, using land given to her by her father as collateral. She likes her village and wants to stay in the area. She has plans for her daughter in the form of getting her an education.

*I don't regret what I am. I am satisfied. I always compromise because I have been through such difficult situations and if one goes through difficulties he learns to live with it. If I'd had an easier life I don't know what kind of person I would have been and what character I'd have.*

## **Comparing the cases**

### **Fate and Chance**

Eleni's life and biography was radically determined by the fact that she was pushed at 17 to marry a man her father chose for her. This lack of choice, however much she respects her husband, has left her feeling that her life was predestined by this event which she should have fought against. Vangelis also refers to his life in terms of "bad luck" e.g. that he didn't get taken on for a job in the public sector, that when the factory cuts back its employees he no longer has his uncle there in a key role to support him being kept on. One hypothesis is that the less personal resources an individual has, the more s/he is likely to believe that fate plays a key role throughout the life course .

#### Social Reproduction in the Family and Education

Eleni coming from a very poor and large family in a remote rural community, had wanted to continue education beyond primary school level, but the poverty and remoteness defeated these ambitions. Priority was given to the boys in the family who were seen as the future breadwinners, while the girls were expected to marry. Vangelis had considerable educational opportunities and ambitions, being from a small family in Athens. His inability to pass into higher education forced him into private technical training. Kostas, also from a very poor family, was forced to stop schooling at the age of 12 and help his family, although he loved school and had wanted to continue. Vassilis, coming from a poor Greek refugee family from Russia, and as an only child, had the opportunity to continue his education but didn't beyond the age of 18. One explanation for this was that his family's refugee status made his studies or attitudes to studies more difficult. Niki loved school but as she was from a very poor family in a remote rural area, she was forced to stop and start work at an early age.

It appears that poverty, often linked to the size of the family or the insecurity of the father's employment, in addition to the relative remoteness of many areas in Greece during the 1950s and 60s, were factors forcing children out of education. Even in the cases of children who were able and willing and in families that upheld the dominant value of education, economic circumstances overwhelmed family attitudes and values. The poverty of the childhood of those interviewed appears to have affected their own family choices - Vassilis never married, Eleni who married at 17 has two children, Vangelis, Niki and Kostas just one each. However they mention wanting their children to study beyond the minimum.

### **Job selection and the effects of socio-political changes**

Eleni and Niki, with primary education only, entered the labour market as unskilled labourers. There was a demand for their labour since Greek industries were small and undercapitalized. Niki was initially employed as uninsured child labour. Neither had any choices about the type of work they would do and there were difficulties in obtaining any qualification of additional recognisable skill. However since they did not leave the labour market, even when they started their own families, as this was a period in the 1980s where labour obtains a better income and thus their contribution to the family was significant. This is the period marked by relative affluence. By the late 1980s the labour market situation changed again and they became more vulnerable to the major closures and labour cut backs marking this period onwards so that finding work is now very difficult. Both tried to survive and contribute to the family finances by doing small, unofficial work at home e.g. sewing, vegetable gardening, cleaning, but both wanted to find full-time work while recognising that they were marginal to the modern labour market. Vangelis, Kostas and Vassilis were all skilled workers who had risen in their factories to relatively senior positions or foremen. The introduction of new technology had made them redundant from their original jobs and since then they had found difficulties in getting steady work. Here external factors relating to international competition and the availability of new technology to replace skilled workers, affected their status in the labour market. From being amongst the better off, they ended up either with skills that were no longer in demand or else, by virtue of the age and previous years of service, too expensive for an employer to hire.

### **Health and Well being**

Eleni though not at all a passive person in her life course, evident throughout her narration, recognises that her current unemployment has affected her and at the time of the interview she was going through a depression. This made her pessimistic about the future and uncertain about the whole value of life. She was told to see a psychiatrist at this stage of her depression before her situation worsened and to avoid paralysis. Vangelis in contrast appears to have never been an active fighter. Currently his unemployed status has left him waiting for others, including his sister, to solve his problems. In his told life what emerged was a pessimism and a sense of being in a dead end in relation to his future life. Kostas in contrast is an active fighter, taking on all

kinds of temporary jobs and having a very active attitude towards the labour market. Nonetheless unemployment has made him feel depressed and embarrassed as well as inferior to others. This makes him stay at home and limits his social contacts and well being. Vassilis is similarly affected by unemployment. He used his social networks to find him work, but reported a similar feeling of depression and social exclusion since his income and failure to find work made him want to stay home and not contact his friends. Niki in contrast, still lives in her small community where her roles are multifaceted, not only as wife/mother and unemployed person, but as an unofficial leader of the unemployed women in her community . This activity provides her with a sense of meaningfulness and relative well being and additionally she has found a lot of ways of working and earning small amounts of money to help the family income.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The life course of this generation of ex-industrial workers has been greatly determined by the structural and external socio-political and economic transformation of Greek society. As a category their life strategies were often limited by the dire poverty of the families of birth which forced them into the labour market early. Though the desire for education appeared in the told life of those interviewed, the circumstances did not permit them to fulfill their wishes. However the expansion of Greek industry during the time they were entering the labour market gave them employment opportunities, not only as unskilled labour but also opportunities to learn on the job. These skills were not adequate to protect them against the closures and restructuring in Greek industry occurring from the mid 1980s onwards, that came from foreign competition and the introduction of new technology. While they lived for the first twenty years during a period of relative wealth and job security that generated an optimism in relation to continuing industrial expansion and employment, they did not have the opportunities through the state or their employers to adjust to the changing conditions in the labour market which required new skills.

The lack of a well developed welfare state that could protect unemployed industrial workers to some extent through unemployment benefits and social security has two consequences. On the one hand the unemployed are left completely on their own resources with a well known impact on their health and well being. On the other hand

knowing that they have to depend entirely on their own resources, they and their families and friends take on a more active responsibility for finding work of any kind. The women continue to receive more protection than the unemployed men, as the husband appears to have the main responsibility for ensuring an income. This does not mean that the women did not experience their loss of employment and status and the poverty that resulted from having to rely on one income. However the men who are also heads of households have the anxiety of not knowing how to feed their family. In comparison to Northern European countries, in Greece this category have all developed over their lifetime, personal networks which take an active interest in helping, where they can, and can be mobilised as a source of support. This form of support is mutual and people are not seen as losing prestige by asking for help. In this sense the older forms of generalised exchanges remain an important underlying element in Greek social relations. Families and friends plus any other network that can be accessed, knowing the problem of the unemployed person, try to find work for them especially those who are heads of households.

The other way out of unemployment for this category is their willingness to work in the unofficial labour market where to some extent there are still opportunities to earn a partial income. Here increasingly they come up against migrant labourers, who also disproportionately work in the unofficial labour market in many of the same kinds of jobs. The flexibility of the Greek labour market is evident not so much in the official labour market where part time working is still relatively rare, but in the existence of the unofficial labour market in the black economy as well as the possibility of starting your own business. This is a common dream and reality given that amongst those over 45 years of age approximately 48% are self employed or employers in the labour (National Statistical Service of Greece figures for 1993 ). This is evident in the narratives of those interviewed where reference is made to their efforts to start new self employment projects at various times in their adult lives, successful or not. In contrast to the young unemployed, especially the graduates who are paralysed in relation to entering the labour market as a result of not having developed their identity as independent adults, in this category this situation was not at all evident. They were active in searching for work and opportunities of all kinds - this included looking for opportunities for retraining, which the younger unqualified had not understood as perhaps offering a solution. With



approximately 20 years ahead of them, this group cannot contemplate the solution of an early pension since they have not paid adequate levels of contribution which provide entitlement, nor were they employed in the favoured state sector where all kinds of arrangements were made to provide early retirement schemes.

This category is particularly at risk of social exclusion if they are unable to re-enter the labour market on a permanent and insured basis. If they cannot achieve this and only secure temporary and uninsured work, their capital and personal resources are depleted and devalued. As they grow older their position will be increasingly marginalised in relation to the labour market, with longer term consequences for their pension levels.

In Greek society many families can still rely on their children for support in older age, However poverty is not a good basis for long term good relations between parents and children. Given the process of ongoing social transformation in Greek society, this generation of ex-industrial workers are quite likely to confront different attitudes towards the dependency of parents on children.

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