

Haris Malamidis, *Social Movements and Solidarity Structures in Crisis-Ridden Greece*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. ISBN: 9789463722438 (cloth); ISBN: 9789048551460 (ebook)

“No one alone in the crisis”. This has been one of the most popular slogans in Greece since 2010, and reflects a double reality: on the one hand, the reality of loneliness and vulnerability created due to the harsh austerity measures; and, on the other hand, the reality of solidarity and empowerment generated through the polymorphous grassroots movement that sought to collectively address the increased needs of people living under austerity. In the last ten years or so, the geographies of counter-austerity have attracted the interest of scholars in the fields of radical geography, sociology and political theory who sought to document and theorise the underlying thread of grassroots anti-austerity initiatives. Haris Malamidis’ book, *Social Movements and Solidarity Structures in Crisis-Ridden Greece*, which was developed as part of the author’s PhD research at Scuola Normale Superiore,¹ refocuses our attention on anti-austerity movements in Greece, or what the author calls “alternative repertoires of action” (p.15).

In this book, Malamidis introduces the term “boundary enlargement”, around which the whole analysis is structured. Boundary enlargement refers to “a process where previously defined boundaries are extended” (p. 12), enabling social movement organisations (henceforth SMOs) to expand their practices and fields of action. The book’s point of departure is that the 2010 crisis has been the driving force and catalyst of a process of boundary enlargement for SMOs in terms of both their internal organisation and their relationship with institutional actors. According to the author, while boundary enlargement can be identified in various processes, austerity has motivated a shift of SMOs’ activity from claim-based repertoires to service-oriented forms of action. Thus, Malamidis’ goal in *Social Movements and Solidarity*

¹ And is available as an open access ebook: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv18x4hxs>

Structures in Crisis-Ridden Greece is to identify “the mechanisms that constitute the process of boundary enlargement between 2008 and 2016” (p.16). Bringing together an innovative conceptual framework with a rich grounded analysis of SMOs in Greece and beyond, Malamidis contributes to social movement theory by confirming it or by often challenging its classic agenda and some of its well-established ideas.

Conceptually, the book provides an innovative approach for theorising social movements. Building his analysis on social movement theory and employing the framework of Contentious Politics (McAdam et al. 2001), Malamidis recognises that movements are “dynamic entities which change over time” (p.33). Moving beyond the dichotomies between structuralist and cultural approaches in social movement theory, Malamidis constructs a synthetic conceptual framework in which the two approaches complement each other. He studies both the organisational structure and resources *and* the factor of identity of the SMOs under scrutiny with a view to bridge the two often-conflicting theoretical frameworks. The value in this approach is that the author succeeds in providing a coherent and holistic picture of SMOs by shedding light on their different aspects and dimensions.

However, Malamidis does not rest on applying the theoretical framework to the specific case of SMOs in Greece. Rather, he provides a re-reading of traditional social movement theory: while he employs terms and definitions that predominate in social movement theory, he gives new explanations and meanings based on the rich field research in Greece. In doing so, Malamidis focuses on three social movement scenes: food (markets without middlemen, collective and social kitchens and collection and distribution of food parcels); health (social clinics); and labour (social cooperatives, workers cooperatives, recuperated corporations). The basic criterion for the selection of these three scenes is that these fields were most acutely affected by austerity measures. Indeed, the reduction in welfare spending, especially in the fields of health, social care and education, was one of the most severe consequences of

austerity measures, and impacted negatively on people's ability to sustain themselves and their families (Daskalaki et al. 2021).

In methodological terms, Malamidis offers a grounded analysis of SMOs in Greece, having undertaken primary ethnographic research with 50 organisations in the two largest cities in Greece, Athens and Thessaloniki. Based on a rich methodology which comprises interviews, document analysis and participant observation, the author simultaneously offers a deep understanding of each different social movement scene under examination whilst also paying attention to the wider picture, drawing out a comparative analysis and tracing similarities and differences. To do this, Malamidis dedicates one chapter to each of the three scenes, where he explores the enlargement of their boundaries along the axes of the organisational structure, resources and identity (Chapters 3-5), and he also brings findings together under a comparative perspective (Chapter 6).

Comparisons between the three social movement scenes are being drawn at two levels. First, Malamidis discusses a within-case comparison, where he points out the similarities and differences in the course of development of the three scenes. For each of the three axes, the author examines key features and compares research findings among the three scenes but also with dominant ideas in social movement theory. For example, when discussing the organisational structure, the author demonstrates that in contrast to the classic agenda of social movement studies, the existence of networks of collaboration and support between the different repertoires of action (e.g. markets, clinics and cooperatives) was not a prerequisite for their development but the outcome of their action. Second, Malamidis engages with a comparison of the different trajectories observed at the social movement scenes under examination and highlights the mechanisms and sub-mechanisms that contribute to the enlargement of their boundaries. It is exactly at this point of the book where it becomes clear to the reader that the author manages to fulfil his promise; after a necessarily detailed examination of the three different scenes, the contentious

mechanisms that shaped the development of the alternative repertoires are clearly identified and explained.

While the key concern of the author is to analyse SMOs as developed in Greece, Malamidis also engages in a very interesting and thought-provoking exercise by trying to make connections outside the Greek context (Chapter 7). In doing so, he brings Spanish and Argentinian perspectives on SMOs to the forefront by exploring the provision of unofficial welfare services by social movements. Based on secondary literature, this part of the book persuasively argues that the boundary enlargement process can be applied to various socio-political contexts. In the Spanish case, for example, Malamidis focuses on SMOs active in the fields of housing, health and education, and discusses the municipalist trend and feminisation of politics. In the Argentinian case, the author focuses on the unemployment workers' movement, neighbourhood assemblies and recuperated factories, and analyses them under the lens of affective politics – “an embodied form of politics that relies on the human capacity to understand, listen and cooperate” (Dinerstein 2015: 137).

Motivated by the discussion of the feminisation of politics developed in Chapter 7, I find that the analysis on boundary enlargement would be greatly enriched by more frequent references to feminist work on social reproduction and the gendered aspects of social movements. The shift from claim-based protests to service-oriented repertoires clearly marks a move towards struggles that are preoccupied with issues of social reproduction and initiatives engaged in its collectivisation. By now, there is a rich scholarship that documents the gendered aspects of austerity policies and politics emphasising that women have been disproportionately hit by austerity measures (Daskalaki et al. 2021; Vaiou 2014). In parallel, there is literature in the fields of radical geography and feminist political economy that points out that although anti-austerity initiatives have not been predominantly structured around feminist ideals and demands, they have been associated with a feminist praxis and a move into the realm of social reproduction, care ethics and “quieter” politics (Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021;

Hall 2018). Building on this body of scholarship, it would be interesting to apply a feminist lens at the book's analysis to understand the gendered relations and dynamics that have been at play within the SMOs examined, and to understand how these affected the process of boundary enlargement.

To conclude, *Social Movements and Solidarity Structures in Crisis-Ridden Greece* is an excellent resource for scholars and activists who wish to dig deeper into anti-austerity mobilisations but also to understand more recent solidarity initiatives. It vividly explains how politicisation in Greece has become a process linked to everyday life under austerity, and how individuals without an activist background became deeply engaged in collective solidarity initiatives. The significant contribution of the book lies in the coherent and innovative framework built around the concept of "boundary enlargement" and supported by concrete empirical evidence. In this way, Malamidis succeeds in giving fresh insights in social movement theory, and manages to build a framework that can be useful for explaining more recent social movements, like the refugee solidarity movement or the mobilisations emerging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Matina Kapsali

School of Architecture

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

kapsali.matina@gmail.com

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