

# Book Review

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**Kozaitis, K. *Indebted: An Ethnography of Despair and Resilience in Greece's Second City* (Issues of Globalization: Case Studies in Contemporary Anthropology). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, 256 pages.**

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*Indebted* offers readers an eloquent theoretical analysis and ethnography of the Greek debt crisis, which reached formal status in late 2009. Kathryn Kozaitis, a scholar of Greek descent, focuses on the transformation in the lives of middle-class people, an economic class that almost vanished during the crisis. She examines the debt crisis by employing an in-depth and systemic analysis of Thessaloniki, Greece's co-capital, and second largest city in Greece after Athens. What results is insightful research and analysis by a "non-native, native" observer. Initially intended to be a study on the socioeconomic integration of immigrants, the book turned into what Kozaitis describes as a real Greek tragedy: the debt crisis was rapid, real, and harsh, even as it played out on the global stage.

The history of the city of Thessaloniki is filled with turmoil, which Kozaitis unveils with engaging theoretical insight, reasoning, and quotations, providing insight into the timeless structural problems faced by the Modern Greek state, especially regarding its vulnerabilities and dependence on inflows of international capitals. *Indebted* gives insight into how this impacts people's lives, showing the economic cost of the debt faced by the middle class, and its values and its feelings of dignity within society. The book juxtaposes this with the way the global market dealt with the problem, as the EU and the Greek governments share a responsibility for their vision of development, which led to the crisis. *Indebted* combines theoretical discussion with in-depth ethnography, through hundreds of interviews, participatory practices, and observations.

Chapter Two turns to Kozaitis' return to the field, this time with a new research agenda. The transformations in the cityscape and the economic concerns of its citizens were prominent in the narrative, as well as the stress provoked by the media's exaggeration in their coverage. Kozaitis turns to her interlocutors and their words, often in Greek—a glossary and a phoneme guide allows the reader to read the quotations within their context. The author, always accompanied by her camera, draws on pictures and snapshots of everyday life, which help the readers better understand the texts. Her switch from theory to ethnographic narration and interpretation creates a credible and interesting ethnography.

The analysis moves on by outlining the basic components of Greek society and family. Rich narratives depict the rupture between the expectations of the middle-class family, and the imposed shift in direction brought about through the financial struggle. The agonies, the embarrassment, the uncertainty, and the precarious future are all portrayed through these narratives, laying the explanatory foundations for the transformation of Greek society's interest from one that is family-based to wider collectives, amid economic disaster. Causality of the new situation remained important despite the harsh times.

Chapter 4 touches upon declarations of blame and accountability, escalating from the state officials to the EU and global policymakers, technocrats and bankers, financiers, and, in this ethnography, Greek citizens. The narratives depict some of the notions that prevailed across all of Greece and reinforce the theoretical argument; *Indebted* argues that the amount of money people spent and what they spent it on were mostly practical items that people needed. Nonetheless, to maintain a sense of normality, people continued to present a well-groomed image of themselves.

Through their narrations of their changing daily routines, Chapter Five brings to light the transformations in the life of the citizens and their aspirations for a positive future outcome for the systems that were perceived as being accountable for the crisis and those that could offer a substantial and sustainable opportunity for development and prosperity.

Chapter Six is an ethnography of the younger generations in Thessaloniki, who only remember an always lively and prosperous city with ample potential for everyone to study and have a career in their preferred domain. The struggle to cope with the new reality and its dilemmas and agonies is eloquently depicted for people born in the 1980s and 1990s—families in transformation, unable to

maintain their former status quo. A new generation of potential immigrants arose, as Thessalonikians painfully discovered how a crisis spells the end of some ways of life, strengthens others, and generates new ones. Yet, the crisis also led to the emergence of new and more creative ethical orientations. Decisions and actions became more founded in the practical and were adapted to the new reality.

Chapter Seven involves a discourse analysis, presenting a theory of a crisis as liminality and setting the global context that contributed to Greece's economic vulnerability. It is a wider discussion that helps readers understand the narratives of the previous chapters and Kozaitis' ethnographic interpretation.

The epilogue serves as the catharsis to the Modern Greek tragedy, delineating the processes aimed at the social engagement of Thessaloniki to maintain its cherished multicultural profile and attract tourists. Young adults are once again the main parameter of the discourse, with the focus shifting to their potential within and outside of the country's borders, their tendency to turn to NGOs and civil society, and to expand the interests of people from family to larger entities. The preservation, resilience, and agency that individuals emphasized in 2011 and 2012 emerged in subsequent years as collective responses to economic decline and austerity, that in Kozaitis' words, are associated with a new notion of a set of valuable lessons that in 2019, the time when the book was finalized, formed the impetus of an enlightened and participatory citizenship.

*Indebted* is a deeply ethnographic work, with, at its epicentre, the ever-transforming living experience of the ordinary members of the community of Thessaloniki. With her analysis, the author eloquently illustrates the development of a society in turmoil, one that sought a way out and a route towards sustainable development. *Indebted* is for people wishing to engage in ethnographic work in modern Greece.