RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIAL SUPPORT ACTIONS AS FORMS OF BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AT THE ONSET OF THE CRISIS IN URBAN GREECE
The Case of Chania

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ABSTRACT: In the context of the recent global financial crisis Greece has faced an unprecedented recession with devastating impacts on individuals' lives echoed in record unemployment and poverty rates. Greek society has collectively responded by providing social support to those in need through the mobilization of social movement organizations, local authorities, different associations, the Orthodox Church etc. The chapter presents the findings of a study applying the quantitative approach of event analysis and based on a community resilience framework explores social support activity including soup kitchens, free distribution of clothes and other basic products, free health care, educational services in a Greek urban society, i.e. Chania. The results unveil the escalating trend in social support actions at the onset of the crisis and their main attributes as important components in building community resilience. The paper focuses specifically on the support activity of social movement organizations as the most active organizing agency during the period under study. It is recommended that future studies in communities severely affected from economic crises could enhance our understanding in social support actions as forms of building community resilience.

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1. Introduction

The recent global financial crisis has threatened the prosperity and economic security of Eurozone, with Greece being at the epicentre of the crisis and one of the member-states most severely affected. In order to avoid default, the country received massive bailouts by the Troika[1] that involved the implementation of radical reductions in government expenditures and austerity programmes that featured severe cuts in salaries, pensions and social benefits as well as sharp increases in taxes (e.g., VAT and property taxes). Although the structural adjustment and the austerity measures aimed at reducing the country's fiscal deficit, the Greek economy has been struggling, with no notable improvements of tackling the increasing sovereign debt. In 2013 Greece became the first developed nation to be downgraded from a developed to an emerging economy (MSCI 2013), indicating the failure of the implemented structural reform programmes to improve country's fiscal position.

Beyond the economic figures the recession has had devastating impacts on Greek people's lives as they have experienced an unprecedented decline in their living standards. Between 2010, i.e. the first bailout package (or the First Memorandum) and 2012, the official unemployment rate doubled from 12.7% to 24.5%[2] and the severe material deprivation increased from 11.6% to 19.5%[3]. Moreover, the acute public spending cuts in health and social security as well as other social benefits have led more Greeks to be exposed to poverty, inequality and inability to access primary services (Balourdos and Spyropoulou 2012).

As the Greek social safety net diminished, new socially excluded groups emerged which experienced all the major and extreme aspects of poverty and social exclusion.

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[1] The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Commission (EC).

[2] Eurostat, Unemployment by sex and age - annual average. Available from : http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_a&lang=en [last accessed 30/6/2016]

[3] Eurostat, Severe material deprivation rate by age and sex. Available from : http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_mddd11&lang=en [last accessed 30/6/2016]

The economic crisis has led to a sharp increase in homelessness and 'neo-homeless', i.e. a new generation of homeless people who up until recently had a satisfactory standard of living (Theodorikakou, Alamanou, and Katsadoros 2013). Moreover, an escalating number of patients have been seeking free medical care and services (Doctors of the World 2013) and there has been an alarming increase in individuals eating free meals in soup kitchens and food banks (Tsatsou 2012).

In times of deteriorating economic conditions, various social groups and associations have stepped in, to cover the gaps in social protection left by the Greek state. In response to the crisis, social support actions have been organized by groups of citizens, formal and informal community networks, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), different associations (e.g., charitable associations, professional associations etc) and the Orthodox Church (Sotiropoulos 2013a; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014). These activities (including soup kitchens, free distribution of clothes and other basic products, free health care and medicines, free educational services etc) aim to assist socio-economically deprived individuals to improve their means of subsistence and healthcare.

The present study applies the quantitative approach of event analysis to explore social support actions organized by various agencies and organizations in the urban community of Chania. The period under study extends from May 2010 to April 2012, i.e. the first two years since of Troika's Memorandum accompanied with austerity policies, which as argued earlier, led to the gradual deterioration of Greeks' living and working conditions. The specific period is considered as the first phase of the country's memorandum era, characterized by intense social unrest, ideological conflicts, massive protests (Kousis 2014) as well as the birth of new social movements such as the 'Movement of the Squares' (Tsaliki 2012; Simiti 2014). Moreover, according to Papastamou and Prodromitis (2016), it is also the time that the Greek society has just started to experience images of increasing homelessness, unemployment and poverty.

The study, based on a community resilience framework, considers social support actions as immediate acts of coping with crisis' socio-economic impacts (Vaiou and Kalandides 2015). Under such framework, it aims to explore specific facets of social support activity as critical components in the process of community resilience building. Moreover, the paper focuses specifically on the support activity of social movement organizations as the most active organizing agencies during the period under study.

2. Critical components of community resilience building

The term 'resilience' derives from the Latin word 'resilio', meaning 'leap or spring back' or 'rebound'[4]. Resilience has been employed in different scientific fields such as ecology, physics of material sciences and psychology denoting different concepts and theoretical perspectives (CARRI 2013).

Recently social scientists have incorporated the resilience perspective to develop the term of community resilience. Community resilience is broadly defined as a multidimensional, complex, multilayered process through which communities demonstrate a capacity to respond positively to adverse events (Wickes, Zahnow, and Mazerolle 2010). Despite this broad approach, the conceptualization of community resilience is a rather challenging task as there is no single generally accepted definition on what community resilience is (Mayunga 2007; CARRI 2013). Despite the lack of definitional clarity, community resilience is often understood in terms of community's capacity to respond to adversity and change[5]. For instance, Mayunga (2007, 3) advocates:

> …most authors use the term *capacity/ability* to define the concept of disaster resilience and confine the concept to people, a group of people, a community, or a society. This generally means that, there is an agreement among researchers that the notion of disaster resilience should be associated with the capacity/ability of people, a group of people, a community or a society to cope with disasters.

In line with these arguments, Coles and Buckle (2004, 6) define resilience as the "capacity, skills and knowledge" of a community to participate meaningfully in the recovery from disasters. Similarly other scholars define community resilience in terms of the community capacity to adapt to adversity and change (Timmerman 1981; Wildavsky 1991; Pfefferbaum, Reissman, Pfefferbaum, Klomp, and Gurwitch 2007; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, and Pfefferbaum 2008). Community capacity denotes community's ability to engage in collective action in the face of acute events through the usage of available resources in society (Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Francisco,

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[4] Available from: http://www.latin-dictionary.net/definition/33432/resilio-resilire-resilui
[5] Although Magis (2010a) recognises the overlap between community capacity and community resilience, the author argues that the former focuses broadly on all matters associated with community whereas community resilience involves issues related to community's capacity to adapt to change.

Schultz, Richter, Lewis, Williams, Harris, Berkley, and Fisher 1995; Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, and Vidal 2001). For instance, Chaskin (2008, 70) define community capacity as ''the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community". This capacity can operate through "the actions and interactions of individuals, organizations, and the relational networks among them, often informally, but also through targeted, organized action" (Chaskin 2008, 70).

Resilience building can be accomplished by actively developing the community capacity to adapt in an environment characterized by change (Magis 2010a). In this process, community resources, collective action as well as community members' active involvement and participation in community objectives are considered, among others, critical components in building community resilience (Norris *et al.* 2008; Kirmayer, Sehdev, Whitley, Dandeneau, and Isaac 2009; Magis 2010a; Frankenberger, Mueller, Spangler, and Alexander 2013; Berkes and Ross 2013).

Community resources refer to the available resources including human, cultural, political, social, financial and natural resources that enable communities to meet their basic needs (Fawcett *et al.* 1995). In times of adversity, community may develop these resources by expanding and improving them in order to respond to change (Ahmed, Seedat, van Niekert, and Bulbulia 2004). However, limited access to or deficits of these resources eliminate community's ability to absorb the negative impacts of adverse events (Frankenberger *et al*. 2013). Different scholars focus on different community resources in the process of community resilience building. For instance, Paton and Johnston (2001) consider community resilience as the capability to bounce back from severe events by using physical and economic resources effectively. Breton (2001) underlines the importance of social resources in building community resilience. The present study considers the importance of social resources defined as the groups of people, networks and voluntary associations that effectively mobilize community members to action (Breton 2001).

Community members' engagement in community objectives is considered a critical component in building resilience (Kirmayer *et al.* 2009; Magis 2010a; Wilson 2012; Berkes and Ross 2013). Community members' knowledge and understanding on the most critical consequences of adversity on their own well-being, makes them the most adequate actors in deciding effective ways to respond to crisis (Berkes, Colding, and Folke 2003). Hence, their active participation in response planning as well as their involvement in community events and organizations are critical in the process of resilience building (Chandra, Acosta, Stern, Uscher-Pines, Williams, Yeung, Garnett, and

Meredith 2010). In line with these arguments, Magis (2010a) underlines that community members are primary and active agents in their own well-being; hence instead of adopting a passive role they should take a leadership one through their active engagement and participation in actions targeting the betterment of the community.

A complementary critical component of community resilience building is associated with collective action (Norris *et al.* 2008; Magis 2010a). Community resilience can be developed through the collective effort of community members to accomplish communal objectives in order to cope with and adapt to acute events (Chaskin 2008; Norris *et al.* 2008; Berkes and Ross 2013). In crisis situations, the work of a singular individual or even a group of individuals is insufficient; community actors should work together to achieve the shared goal of an effective response (Berkes *et al.* 2003). Collective action primarily manifests through collective efficacy, political partnerships and problem-solving skills (Norris *et al*. 2008). Collective efficacy refers to the ability of community members to be organized into networks and make decisions that will improve the well-being of the community as a whole (Zakour and Gillespie 2013). The interdependence between community resilience and collective action becomes evident in Pfefferbaum *et al.'s* (2007, 349) definition of community resilience as the "the ability of community members to take meaningful, deliberate, collective action to remedy the effect of a problem, including the ability to interpret the environment, intervene, and move on".

Recently different studies have explored collective activities as responses to the Greek crisis. For instance, some studies focus on networks of exchange and solidarity economy (Sotiropoulou 2012, 2015; Petropoulou 2013; Rakopoulos 2013) whilst others chart the number and attributes of social solidarity groups that emerged during the crisis (Sotiropoulos 2013a; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014). Other scholars underline the development of local social movement and informal organizations in crisis-ridden Greece "as emergency relief mechanisms prioritizing well-being and resilience as key targets" (Jones, Proikaki, and Roumeliotis 2015, 37). Despite the merits of these studies, to the best of our knowledge, there is a lack of empirical works interpreting social support activities as forms of community resilience in the context of the current crisis.

The study at hand provides data on social support activities including soup kitchens, free distribution of clothes and other basic products, free health care and educational services, organized by various agencies such as social movement organizations, local authorities, the Orthodox Church etc targeting to assist community members severely affected from the economic crisis in Chania. Under a community resilience framework, the study aims to capture a vivid picture of actions' time pattern, the main organizing

agencies, the forms and aims of social support activity. Moreover, the study explores actions' specific attributes (such as the usage of social resources, community members' participation etc.) that, among others, are considered critical components of the community capacity to adapt to adversity in the process of resilience building. Additionally, the paper focuses specifically on the support activity organized by social movement organizations as the most active agencies during the period under study.

Literature on social movements is extensive and definitions abound, however all involve the concept of collective action (Hall 1995). Therefore, the social movement can be defined as "a collection of people who organize to change their environment, improve conditions, or resist change and who act collectively to achieve organizational goals" (Hall 1995, 3). Although social movements are about organizing people, recourses and ideas, these do not necessarily take place through formal organizations (Armstrong and Bartley 2007). In their classic formulation, McCarthy and Mayer (1977, 1218) distinguish between a social movement and a social movement organization defining the latter as a "complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals". Social movement organizations vary with respect to their goals but also to their action types, repertoires, strategies as well as organizational models (Della Porta and Diani 2006). For instance, Edwards and Foley (2003) argue that whilst many social movement organizations are quite large, formally organized and with professional staff, most are small, less formally organized groups operating at the local level.

The present study identifies different types of social movement organizations that despite their differences they act for the same goal during the recent recession, i.e. organize social support actions to assist socio-economically deprived individuals. These organizations include local collectivities, formal volunteer organizations (such as NGOs and local volunteer organizations) as well as professional unions and associations.

Local collectivities include organizations/groups "with low levels of formal structuration but strong participatory orientation" (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 149). Local collectivities have increased in many Greek cities in the last two decades, mainly targeting to assist immigrants, fight xenophobia and promote anti-discrimination (Skleparis 2015). Such groups are characterized by direct-decision making processes, independence from the state and anti-systemic orientation. According to Simiti (2015, 26), during the recent economic crisis local collectivities have developed practices that foster citizens' engagement and ''couple social support with political objectives''.

Formal volunteer organizations, ranging from small, community-based organizations to large, professional NGOs involve a broad spectrum of goals and activities. The

professional orientation of many NGOs questions their relation to social movements (Lopes de Souza 2013). However, their formal organizational structure can be considered as an advantage in promoting their goals (Della Porta and Diani 2006). In Greece, the formal NGO sector, although weak and state-dependent, since the onset of the crisis has enlarged its activities providing social services to people in need (Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014; Skleparis 2015). In addition, professional unions and associations mainly aim to develop their own social support networks by collecting food, material staff and financial support for those in need (Simiti 2015).

3. Method: A Social Support Action Approach

The present study explores social support actions in the urban community of Chania which is the second most populous city in Crete and the capital of regional unit. Chania is a modern Greek urban area with rich cultural background and well-developed local economy primarily based on agriculture and tourism. The city has a long history in philanthropic and volunteer organizations mobilized in the past to assist vulnerable community members. Elements of such mobilization can be detected in the actions of 'Spanzia', a philanthropic organization which since 1963 has provided free meals to poor people. Moreover, since 2005 the 'Social Steki- Steki of immigrants' has been supporting immigrants organizing -among others- multi ethnic Festivals in the city (Vardaki 2011).

Despite the prosperous economic conditions, the budgetary recession following the first Troika Memorandum in May 2010 has resulted in the increase of local population's unemployment and poverty[6]. The average annual unemployment rate in the area increased from 9.3% in 2010 to 23.1% in 2012[7]. At the same period an increasing number of people seeking free healthcare and access to food has been reported by various local organizations and the municipality's social services (Fountoulaki 2012).

The method applied to explore social support activity in Chania stems from protest event analysis, a quantitative approach based on protest action data collected from

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[6] However, it should be noted that although poverty rates have been increased in all Greek regions, the social impacts of economic crisis are more obvious in metropolitan areas like Athens, rather than in the periphery of Greece (see for instance, Artelaris and Kandylis 2014).

[7] GSEE/ Labor Institute, Employment and unemployment in Greece in 2012 (in Greek). Available from: http://ineobservatory.gr/peretero-epidinosi-ton-sinthikon-diaviosis-ke-tis-ftochias-gia-to-2013-stin-ellada-katagrafoun-ta-prosfata-stichia-tis-eurostat/ [last accessed 30/6/2016].

newspaper reports (Koopmans and Rucht 2002; Earl, Martin, McCarthy, and Soule 2004). In the present study, instead of using protest events, the method is adjusted to identify, organize and analyze social support actions. Social support action is the unit of analysis and the newspaper report/announcement is the unit of data collection. The first step of the methodological process involves a systematic manual search in all the printed daily editions[8] of the local newspaper 'Chaniotika Nea' in order to detect the published social support action announcements/reporting[9]. Afterwards, the designed coding tool allows for the coding of the main variables related to the action as stated in the newspaper report/announcement, i.e. the date of the action, the main organizing agency, the co-organizers, the aim and the form of the action. Overall, 229 direct and indirect[10] social support actions have been reported/announced in the local newspaper during the period under study.

The main source of press reports is the center-oriented daily local newspaper 'Chaniotika Nea'. Since its first publication in 1967 the specific newspaper has the most central role in local media. It should be noted that despite the economic crisis, the percentage of regular readers of the newspaper increased from 43.2% in 2009 to 51.8% in 2011 indicating 'Chaniotika Nea' as the most popular local newspaper in the country[11]. Given its popularity, it is expected that most social support actions are primary announced in 'Chaniotika Nea'. However, it should be noted that one of the major limitations of the method applied is that it excludes from the analysis social support actions that have been neither announced in 'Chaniotika Nea' nor in other local media (e.g. other newspapers, radio etc). Although it is expected that the organizing agencies announce their actions in the local media; specific agencies are refrained from doing so. For instance, the anti-authoritarian group 'squat Rosa Nera' does not announce their social support actions in mainstream media including 'Chaniotika Nea' but usually use websites, online social networks and printed posters[12].

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[8] 'Chaniotika Nea' is not published on Sundays.

[9] The printed daily editions of 'Chaniotika Nea' are available in the public library of Chania sorted by date, month and year of publication. Since 'Chaniotika Nea' does not include a specific sector associated with social support activity the manual search on the whole newspaper was crucial in order to capture the total number of actions reported in the newspaper.

[10] Direct support actions refers to actions that target directly the beneficiaries (such as free medical examinations, soup kitchens, provision of clothes etc.); whereas indirect support actions refers to actions that aim to assist agencies that have permanent support structures (e.g. social clinics, social groceries etc.).

[11] Available from http://www.haniotika-nea.gr/94783-ekriksi-anagnwsimotitas/

[12] Social support actions organized by 'Rosa Nera' include food and clothes collection and distribution to people in need. Available from http://rosanerasquat.blogspot.gr/ (in Greek).

4. Analysis

4.1. Overall Social Support Activity

Figure 1 illustrates the time pattern of social support actions between May 2010 and April 2012. The figure clearly demonstrates a periodical occurrence but also an increasing trend of social support activity with peak periods on Christmas and Easter months. The results are in agreement with specific traits of the Greek Orthodox culture which demonstrates a plethora of philanthropic actions during these important events of Orthodoxy. However, the sharp escalation of actions between, for instance December 2010 (22 actions) and December 2011 (57 actions) can be interpreted as the outcome of the dramatic increase in needs that emerged due to the economic crisis. Although social support actions were present before the crisis, the analysis indicates the increasing trend in social support providing evidence of the local community's capacity to respond to adversity and cope with crisis' detrimental effects on community members' well-being.

Figure 1: Total social support actions between May 2010 and April 2012
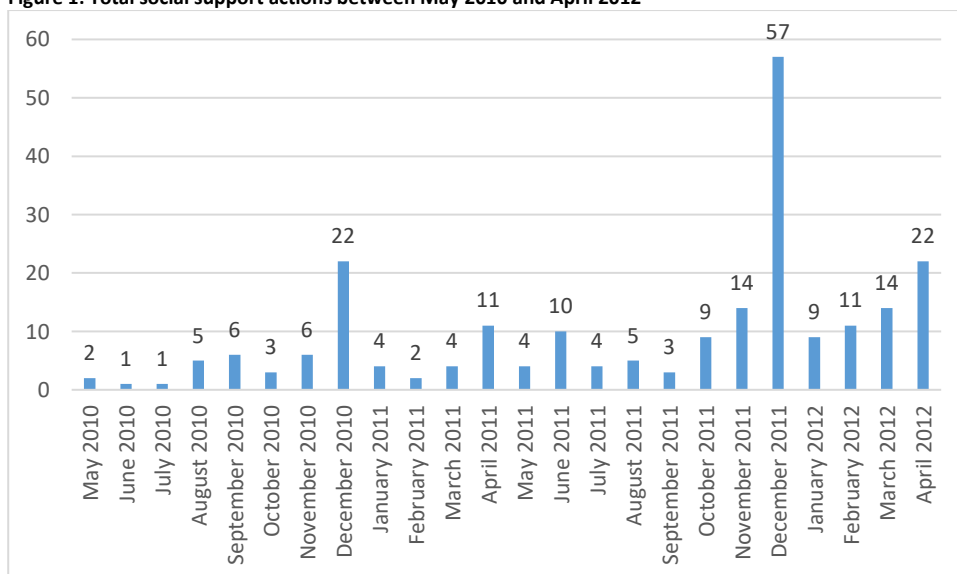
Further, Table 1 presents the distribution of social support actions according to the main organizing agency. The results illustrate a dynamic community as a whole and capture the most active agencies that organize such actions during the period under study. The most active main organizing agency is the social movement organizations (including local collectivities, NGOs/local volunteer organizations and professional unions/associations) organizing 32.75% of the total social support activity. A dynamic presence of social support activity is also detected for citizens' associations (12.66%), local authorities (12.66%) and public schools (10.04%).

Table 1: Social support actions from main organizing agencies between May 2010 and April 2012

Main organizing agency	Number of actions	(%)
Social movement organizations (local collectivities, NGOs/ local volunteer organizations, professional unions/ associations)	75	32.75
Citizens' associations (e.g., cultural clubs, women associations etc.)	29	12.66
Local Authorities	29	12.66
Public schools (with the participation of students)	23	10.04
Private sector (e.g., small enterprises, private schools etc.)	17	7.42
Orthodox Church	14	6.11
Citizens' initiatives (e.g., group of artists, group of friends etc.)	12	5.24
Welfare Institutions for children (e.g., caring for children with disabilities)	10	4.37
Political Parties	8	3.49
European Union EU (e.g., free food distribution program)	7	3.06
Scientific agencies (University of Oreon)	4	1.75
Associations with common social characteristics (e.g., association of multi-child families)	1	0.44
Total	229	

It should be noted that except for the local authorities[13], social support actions organized by the rest agencies are primarily based on their members' voluntary contribution. The results are in agreement with Sotiropoulos and Bourikos' (2014, 6) conclusions that after the onset of the crisis "volunteer groups involved in social protection expanded their activities and made their presence felt". Moreover, other scholars underpin an upward trend in volunteering since the beginning of the crisis specifically in solidarity groups/organizations that target to assist vulnerable socio-economic groups (Jones *et al.* 2015; Clarke 2015). Social support actions organized and conducted by volunteers entail the capacity to bring together people from different groups, i.e. facilitate collective action in the process of adapting to adversity (Chaskin 2008; Berkes and Ross 2013). Active volunteering in social support agencies can be interpreted as a critical component in the process of resilience building, especially if taking into consideration the low level of formal volunteering in Greek society before the crisis (Jones *et al.* 2015). Moreover, the significant contribution of public schools involving the active participation of students (10.04% of the total number of actions) demonstrates youth engagement in social support activity.

In addition, an interesting feature deriving from the data is that only the EU free food distribution program represents a central institutional support organized beyond the community of Chania[14]. All the rest actions are organized by agencies within the local community indicating that social support is primarily based on community's own social resources, i.e. people, networks, community services and voluntary associations effectively mobilized to act for the betterment of individuals' well-being (Breton 2001). Overall, the high involvement of local organizations as well as citizens' voluntary mobilization in social support activity provides some indications of community's capacity to activate its social resources in the process of resilience building.

Further, Figure 2 indicates the aims of social support actions highlighting that food and healthcare are top priorities of tangible help. The high percentage (41.9%) of actions that aim to gather and provide food or meals and the 37.1% for health support reflect the alarming situation of vulnerable community members to cover their basic needs. Moreover, educational support actions (5.7%) include free tutorial lessons to students with poor family income or Greek language lessons to immigrants. A

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[13] Local authorities primarily organize actions which are carried out from their social services departments; however also a volunteer sector which partly supports social support actions has been established by the municipality of Chania.

[14] EU free food distribution program represents an indirect support action. The food is distributed to local agencies that participate in the program and maintain permanent support structures (e.g. local authorities).

significant percentage of the actions aim to gather and provide clothing (15.7%) and other basics (12.2%) to people in need or improve shelter conditions for the homeless (2.2%). Actions of direct economic aid to vulnerable members of the community are also reported (3.9%).

Figure 2: Percentage (% on total number of 229 actions[a]) of social support actions with respect to their overall aim of support
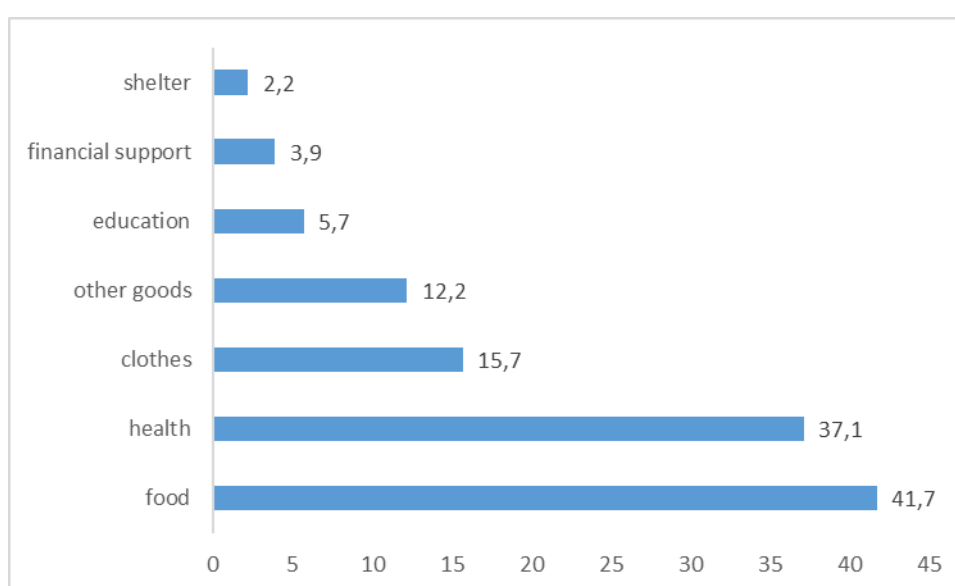
Note: [a] The percentage (%) extents 100% as one action may has more than one aim

The analysis focuses on specific types of actions that encourage inclusive community participation. Those include 'general call' actions, i.e. actions that address a general call to the whole community to participate by supporting actions. For example, cultural events, calls for food and clothes collection as well as exchange and gratuitous bazaars invite community members to participate and actively contribute[15]. The analysis shows that 'general call' actions account for 56.8% of the total support activity. Under a

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[15] On the contrary, forms of actions that mainly concern direct support (for instance, free medical examinations or free lessons) imply participation only by the members of the organizing agency.

resilient framework, 'general call' actions promote community members' active participation and reinforce collective action, i.e. the involvement of people from different groups acting together toward common ends (Magis 2010a).

In addition, an interesting element is that some actions (18.77%) take place in the public space, thereby sending a message to the broader community to participate. For instance, cultural events take place in public squares and school courtyards, food and clothes are gathered in street markets or in front of public buildings. The use of public spaces is considered a critical precondition for people to come together and act collectively (Magis 2010b); hence such forms of action encourage community members to act collectively in the process of resilience building (Chaskin 2008).

4.2. Social Movement Organizations' support actions

4.2.1. Social Movement Organizations included in the study

As depicted in Table 1, social movement organizations (including local collectivities, NGOs/local volunteer organizations and professional unions/associations) is the most active agency with 75 support actions, accounting for 32.75% of the total activity during the period under study. It should be noted that from the social movement organizations local collectivities is the most active organizing agency (13.97%) from all the agencies included in the study. NGOs and professional unions account for 10.92% and 7.86% of the total activity, respectively.

Local collectivities include 'Social Steki-Steki of Immigrants' and 'Immigrants' Forum' both with a long presence in the local community of Chania. 'Social Steki-Steki of Immigrants' is a political and social collectivity established in 2005 by a group of natives and immigrants to assist people mostly in terms of their political rights. The specific collectivity emphasizes the "need for solidarity and common fight against injustice and exploitation"[16]. 'Immigrants' Forum' established in 2007 has a similar structure and agenda to 'Social Steki-Steki of Immigrants'; however the latter is more politically-oriented and focused on immigrants' rights[17]. Additionally, during the period under study two newly established local collectivities 'Social Kitchen' and 'Network of Exchange' have been active as social support organizers. 'Social Kitchen' was

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[16] Available from http://www.stekichania.gr/ (in Greek).
[17] Available from https://fmkritis.wordpress.com/ (in Greek).

established in 2011 by a group of people from the 'Movement of the Squares'[18]. 'Network of Exchange' was also established in autumn of 2011 inspired from movements of alternative trade and abolition of official currency[19]. Each of the above collectivities is accommodated in its own building where members meet and/or carry out their activities. Especially 'Social Steki-Steki of Immigrants' operates a lively social space that also accommodates various support actions as well as discussions, cultural events, exhibitions and a collectively operated coffeehouse.

NGOs identified in the study as social support organizers include the local branches of 'Red Cross'[20] and 'Doctors of the Word'[21]. Further, two well-known to the local community volunteer organizations are identified as social support organizers, i.e. 'Splantzia' and 'Orizontas'. The former is a charity organization officially established in 1963 providing primarily food, dental care and direct economic aid to people in need[22] whereas 'Orizontas' was established in 2004 to financially support children with cancer[23].

Moreover, professional unions and associations that are actively involved in the social support activity during the period under study include Medical Doctors' Association, Pharmacists' Association, Union of Secondary Education State School Teachers (ELME), Union of Primary Education State School Teachers and Chania Traders Association. Further, support actions have been recorded by the Union of Open Market Vendors, Unions of Vegetable and Olive Producers, Association of Workers in Alzheimer Center of Chania as well as Association of Hotel Owners.

4.2.2. Main characteristics of the social movement organizations' support actions

As Figure 3 illustrates the time trend of social support actions organized by social movement organizations follows a similar pattern with the one presented in Figure 1[24].

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[18] Available from http://koinonikikoyzina.blogspot.gr/ (in Greek).

[19] Available from http://www.diktyoantallagonxanion.gr/ (in Greek).

[20] Available from http://www.redcross.gr/ (in Greek).

[21] Available from http://mdmgreece.gr/ (in Greek and in English).

[22] Available from http://sissitiasplantzia.blogspot.gr/ (in Greek).

[23] Available from http://www.horass.gr/ (in Greek).

[24] However, it should be noted that the rapid increase in support activity betwen December 2010 (22 actions) and December 2011 (57 actions) as presented in Figure 1 is primarily due to the actions organized

Social movement organizations' most intense mobilization is observed after the summer of 2011; this finding is partly due to actions organized by newly-established local collectivities and partly due to the increased activity of social movement organizations already existed in Chania.

Figure 3: Social support actions from social movement organizations between May 2010 and April 2012
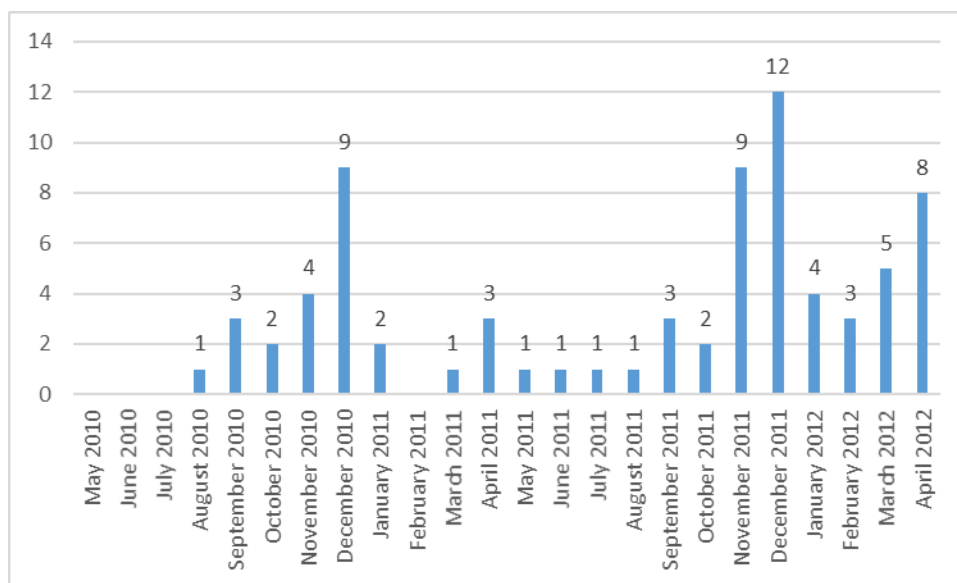
The findings in Figure 4 illustrate the primary aims of social support activity organized by local collectivities, NGOs/local volunteer organizations and professional unions/associations. The primary aims of local collectivities' support mostly involve the collection and distribution of food (62.5%), clothes (43.8%) and basic necessities (37.5%). Moreover, a considerable percentage of actions target to provide educational support (15.5%). Such actions include free lessons of Greek language to immigrants or other language courses (e.g., Spanish, Arabic etc.) as well as free tutorial lessons to high school students with insufficient family income to pay for private tutoring[25].

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by citizens' associations and public schools and to a lesser extent by social movement organizations (12 out of 57 actions).

[25] Private tutoring is considered a determinant factor for Greek students to achieve high performance (see for instance, Sianou-Kyrgiou 2008).

Further, 6.6% of the actions target to provide adequate housing to homeless people. The main forms of food, clothes and basic goods distribution include gratuitous and exchange bazaars. Also, direct actions of providing clothes to prisoners and blankets to homeless have been reported.

A popular form of support actions organized by local collectivities involves cultural events (e.g., theater performances and concerts) where instead of paying tickets individuals provide food products (such as pasta packages, milk cartons etc). Further, art and photography exhibitions are organized to collect money and support the two soup kitchens; the first operated every Sunday by 'Social Steki-Steki of Immigrants' and the second operated daily by 'Social Kitchen'. An imaginative action organized by 'Social Kitchen' in order to collect money and food is the singing of Christmas carols. However, the lyrics are changed to depict the severe living conditions and to criticize the austerity policies implemented by the Greek government and the EU.

Figure 4: Percentage (% on total number of actions[a]) of social support actions organized by local collectivities, NGOs/local volunteer organizations and professional unions/associations with respect to their overall aim
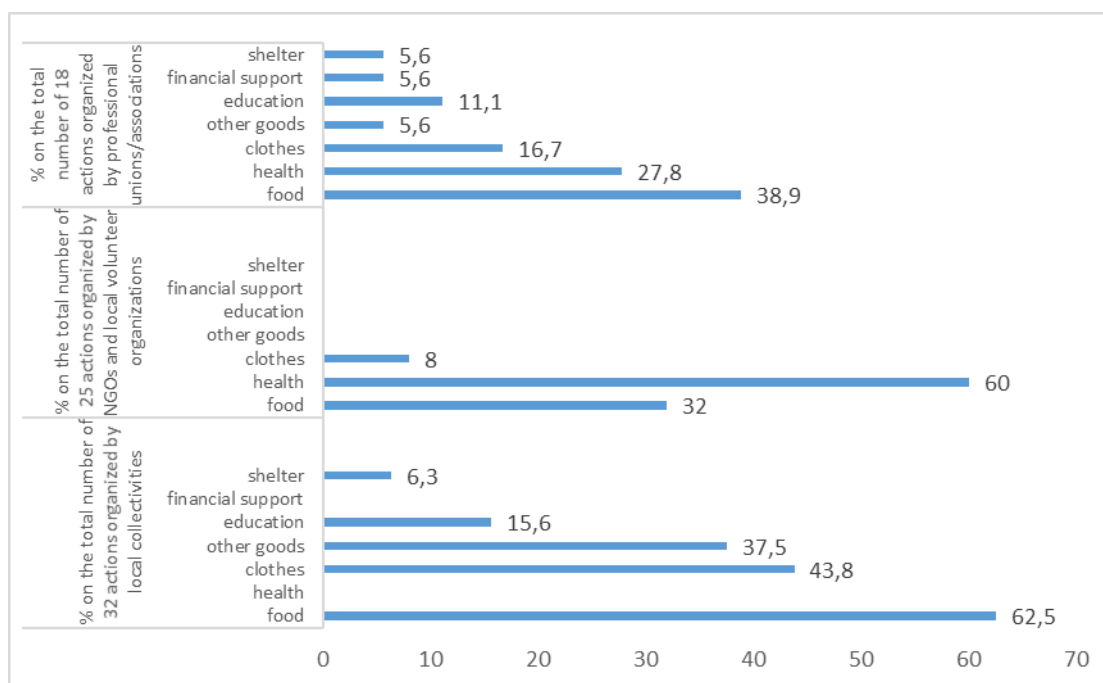
Note: [a] The percentage (%) extents 100% as one action may has more than one aim

Moreover, Figure 4 illustrates that a significant percentage (60%) of actions organized by NGOs and local volunteer organizations target health support. The high percentage is mainly due to actions organized by the local branch of 'Doctors of the World'[26]. Such actions include direct free medical examinations by volunteer professional doctors to inhabitants of isolated villages, Roma population and homeless people. Further, 'Doctors of the World' organize actions of indirect support (e.g., cultural events) in order to financially assist their multi-clinic, operating daily for people with no access to the National Health System (ESY). Likewise, 'Orizontas' organizes actions such as bazaars and cultural events in order to accomplish its primary aim i.e., help children with cancer. Also, a considerable number of actions target to improve the living conditions of vulnerable community members in terms of food (32%) and clothes (8%). Such actions are organized by the local branch of 'Red Cross' and the volunteer organization of 'Splantzia'.

A considerable percentage of actions organized by professional unions and associations targets to collect food (38.9%) and clothes (16.7%). Such actions are organized by the Union of Vegetable Producers, the Association of Workers in Alzheimer Center as well as Chania Traders Association. Actions aiming health support (27.8%) include free medical examinations by Medical Doctors' Association while educational support (11.1%) includes free tutorial lessons to students by the Union of Secondary State School Teachers (ELME). Additionally, the Association of Hotel Owners provides matrices to homeless people and the Union of Primary School Teachers collects school supplies for students with poor family income.

4.2.3. 'General call' actions and public space

The analysis indicates that the social movement agency which mostly acts in the public space is local collectivities; 18 of their total 32 actions (56.25%) take place in school yards, public squares and open-air markets. Additionally, 22 actions (68.75%) address a general call to community members to actively participate indicating a high degree of pursued interactions between local collectivities and community.

NGOs and local volunteer organizations also involve 'general call' actions but to a lesser extent than local collectivities. The analysis shows that 11 out of 25 of their actions (44%) invite community members to participate, however only 2 of their

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[26] However, due to the increasing needs, at the end of the period under study a Social Clinic run by Medical Doctors' Association was established.

actions (8%) take place in the public space; the rest 'general call' actions take place in private places (e.g., entertainment venues).

On the contrary, professional unions and associations' actions are mainly based on the contribution of their own members/volunteers; just 2 of their 18 actions (11.11%) address a 'general call' to the local society to actively contribute to social support activity. However, a distinctive type of action that takes place in the public space is identified in professional unions' activity. Such actions (16.66%) are organized by vegetable producers and include free vegetable distribution to all community members. The distribution of products takes place in public squares as forms of providing social support as well as of protesting against policies that force the producers to sell their products to middlemen in low prices. Social support agencies' 'general calls' as well as actions taking place in the public space can play an important role in the process of resilience building. These actions promote collective action by inviting -directly or indirectly- community members to actively participate in social support activity that targets to assist those in need.

4.2.4. Supportive interactions and collaborative networks

Furthermore, the analysis investigates supportive interactions and collaborative networking between social movement organizations (including local collectivities, NGOs/local volunteer organizations, professional unions/associations) and the rest social support agencies under study. Given the methodological boundaries of the quantitative approach applied, supportive interactions and collaborative networks are quantified as: a) the number of actions co-organized with other agencies, b) the number of supportive actions from social movement organizations that aim to assist the activity of other social support agencies and c) the number of supportive actions from other agencies that target to support the activity of social movement organizations.

With respect to the local collectivities, the results illustrate limited supportive interactions and collaborative networks. More specifically, from the 32 actions 3 (9.37%) are conducted in cooperation with other agencies during the period under study. These include providing 'free lessons' (together with ELME) as well as an exhibition co-organized with a group of artists to support the Sunday soup kitchen operated by 'Social Steki-Steki of Immigrants'. In addition, 2 actions (6.25%) target to assist the activity of other social support agencies. Both of them are cultural events

aiming to support the daily soup kitchen of 'Splantzia'. Also, one supportive action, a cultural event organized by students of a secondary school to collect food and clothes targets to help the activity of 'Social Steki-Steki of Immigrants' and 'Social Kitchen'.

Limited collaborative networks, in terms of co-organizing activities, are also reported for NGOs and volunteer organizations. From their total 25 actions, just 3 (12%) are conducted in collaboration with other agencies, including co-organizing a concert with 'Doctors of the Word' and municipality of Chania in order to support NGO's multi-clinic. Also, two actions aiming to provide free medical examinations as well as food and clothes support to inhabitants of isolated villages were co-organized by 'Doctors of the World' and 'Immigrants Forum'. None supportive action towards other agencies was recorded. However, it should be noted that 42 out of the total 229 (18.34%) social support actions captured in the present study are organized by other agencies to support the activity of NGOs and local volunteer organizations. These include cultural events and bazars organized by local authorities, private enterprises and cultural clubs for 'Orizontas', collection of medicines organized by public schools, political parties and informal groups of people for 'Doctors of the Word', food collection by public schools for 'Splantzia' etc.

Collaborative networks, in terms of co-organizing activities, are not detected in the activity of professional unions and associations. However, 8 out of the 18 actions (44.44%) organized by professional unions and associations target to assist other social support agencies. These include collection of medicines by Medical Doctors' Association for 'Doctors of the World', food offering by vegetable and olive producers to 'Splantzia' and social grocery (established by the municipality of Chania), clothes by Chania Traders Association and Association of Workers in Alzheimer Center of Chania to local authorities' social services and local parishes and financial support by the Union of Primary Education State School Teachers to the soup kitchens of the Church.

5. Discussion

In the context of the recent global financial crisis, Greece has been severely affected enforcing a severe austerity regime that has put an enormous strain on the Greek society. Greeks have experienced an unprecedented deterioration in their living conditions echoed in wage and pension reductions, public spending cuts in health and social security, record unemployment and poverty rates. Most importantly, an increasing segment of the population has become unable to cover basic needs (such as food, clothing, education and healthcare) that are considered essential for a decent standard of living (Matsaganis 2013). Under such devastating conditions, the Greek

society has collectively responded through the mobilization of social movement organizations, local authorities, and different associations, the Orthodox Church etc. providing social support to socio-economically disadvantaged individuals (Sotiropoulos 2013a, 2013b; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014).

The present study explores social support actions at the onset of the crisis as the community capacity in Chania to cope with and adapt to the recession's detrimental consequences in the process of resilience building. It should be noted that the concept of community resilience has been primarily applied for natural and human-caused disasters (e.g. hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, floods etc.). However, as some scholars underline the economic (e.g. extreme poverty) and socio-political dimension of adversity that triggers the process of community resilience building (for instance, Adger 2000; Pfefferbaum *et al.* 2007); the present study applies the concept in the context of the Greek economic crisis.

The findings indicate the increasing trend of social support activity during the period under study, providing some evidence of the local community's ability to respond to adversity and change. Magis (2010b, 410) underlines that whilst community capacity is a necessary condition for building resilience by its own is insufficient as "Developing community resilience requires action taken, not simply the capacity to act". Further, the study illustrates actions' attributes that, among others, play a critical role in the process of community resilience building. More specifically, the social support action taken in Chania mostly derives from its local organizing agencies which are primarily based on their volunteers' contribution indicating that resilience rests on the ability of the local community to draw upon its own social resources, i.e. people, networks, community services and voluntary associations in the face of adversity (Magis 2010a; Chandra *et al.* 2010).

Also, the findings signify the critical component of undertaking collective action by providing different types of support (e.g. food, health care, clothes, education etc.) that benefit individuals most severely hit from the crisis (Chaskin 2008; Norris *et al.* 2008; Frankenberger *et al*. 2013). Collective action is further facilitated by local agencies' 'general call' actions to society to participate and contribute to actions' aims. The significant percentage of actions addressing the community as a whole to collectively act can be interpreted as a component of 'participation' and engagement in community objectives. Such actions are more likely to empower community bonds through a common sense of concern and responsibility for those in need, hence strengthen the "sense of community''(Norris *et al.* 2008, 139). Moreover, 'general call' actions taking place in public spaces promote higher levels of involvement by all

community members who become active agents of resilience building via their participation to social support activity (Magis 2010b).

Finally, the study underlines the critical role of social movement organizations as the most active social support agency in Chania during the period under study. The focus on social movement organizations unveils their active presence in the community capacity of Chania to remedy the impacts of the acute economic crisis to socio-economically disadvantaged individuals in terms of food, clothes and basic necessities (particularly by local collectivities and professional unions/associations) as well as in terms of healthcare (particularly by NGOs). The results highlight the significant extent of 'general call' actions organized particularly by local collectivities and their dynamic presence in the public space promoting community members' active engagement in the process of resilience building. However, despite their active role in the overall social support activity captured in the study, local collectivities are characterized from limited supportive interactions and collaborative networking with other agencies. It should be noted that collaborations and supportive interactions between community organizations capture a joint capacity in the process of resiliency building that effectively minimizes the impacts of acute events (Kapucu 2014; Jung, Song, and Feiock 2014). The limited collaborative networks of local collectivities can be interpreted as the outcome of their politicized character along with their distrust towards the state, local governments and formal agencies (Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014). Despite these findings, the analysis demonstrates the significant supportive character of professional unions and associations' activity towards other agencies whereas NGOs and local volunteer organizations are the social movement organizations that most frequently receive supportive help from other agencies.

The study inspired from the theoretical framework of community resilience, provides some preliminary evidence of community capacity in Chania to cope with and adapt to the crisis' impacts by providing social support to individuals most severely affected from the crisis. Despite the potential merits of the study it should be noted that the quantitative approach of event analysis is limited to the publicly announced organized social support actions in a specific local newspaper. The full extent and attributes of the activity goes beyond these announcements, either due to actions not published in the press or due to characteristics not mentioned in the announcements.

Moreover, whilst the period under study (i.e., May 2010 to April 2012) captures the first phase of the country's memorandum era, extending the survey after 2012 would allow a deeper understanding of how social support activity is formed as the economic conditions deteriorate and whether the local community of Chania continues to mobilize its social resources and collectively respond. A similar study of social support activity conducted with the same method between December 2009 and June 2013 in

another urban community of Crete (Heraklion) captures similar time patterns, main organizers and actions' aims (Velonaki 2015) with the ones in the present study. However, further research is needed to map similarities and/or differences in social support activity at different phases of the Greek crisis across various local communities. Moreover, the quantitative approach of event analysis could be further enriched with qualitative approaches. In-depth interviews with organizers, volunteers and beneficiaries as well as qualitative analysis of action-announcements/reports would allow a deeper understanding of how social support activity is framed in association with key components of community resilience building.

Acknowledgments

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