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Abstract

This paper is about Greek university students' violation of the smoking law in public venues and their understanding of rights, duties and responsibilities. Thirty-one students (21 smokers) were interviewed and asked to describe and discuss their own and other students' behaviour in relation to smoking in closed public places in terms of rights and duties. Additional material from the printed and electronic press has been used to provide a context to the students' statements. Participant-smokers' systematic violations of the smoke-free law spring from a peculiar view of rights, duties and responsibilities. Both behaviour and its theoretical underpinnings are reinforced in the context of the students' leisure time "community of practice." All those involved, that is, cafe owners/staff, customers and law-enforcers, contribute to encouraging smoking by rewarding those who violate the law and discouraging law-abiding behaviours. The authorities in charge usually avoid monitoring public venues for transgressions, which reduces to a minimum the danger of being caught and sanctioned. Cafe owners/staff tolerate smoking, which is interpreted as informal permission. Smokers invoke both customers' behaviour and the staff's tolerance as a justification for their own violations of the law. The paper ends with considerations about the status of school knowledge: somewhat weak if compared to the compelling authority of the informal knowledge people acquire in everyday interactions.

Keywords

Greek University Students, Rights and Duties, Communities of Practice, Smoke-Free Law, Smoking Behaviour

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Greek University Students and the Smoke-Free Law: Learning about Rights and Duties in a Community of Practice

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This paper is about Greek university students' violation of the smoking law in public venues and their understanding of rights, duties and responsibilities. Thirty-one students (21 smokers) were interviewed and asked to describe and discuss their own and other students' behaviour in relation to smoking in closed public places in terms of rights and duties. Additional material from the printed and electronic press has been used to provide a context to the students' statements. Participant-smokers' systematic violations of the smoke-free law spring from a peculiar view of rights, duties and responsibilities. Both behaviour and its theoretical underpinnings are reinforced in the context of the students' leisure time "community of practice." All those involved, that is, cafe owners/staff, customers and law-enforcers, contribute to encouraging smoking by rewarding those who violate the law and discouraging law-abiding behaviours. The authorities in charge usually avoid monitoring public venues for transgressions, which reduces to a minimum the danger of being caught and sanctioned. Cafe owners/staff tolerate smoking, which is interpreted as informal permission. Smokers invoke both customers' behaviour and the staff's tolerance as a justification for their own violations of the law. The paper ends with considerations about the status of school knowledge: somewhat weak if compared to the compelling authority of the informal knowledge people acquire in everyday interactions. Keywords: Greek University Students, Rights and Duties, Communities of Practice, Smoke-Free Law, Smoking Behaviour

Background

The latest Greek smoke-free legislation (Law 3868/2010) bans smoking from enclosed public spaces, providing for heavy fines for cafe owners and customers in case of violations. Greek teenagers interviewed just before the law came in force declared that Greek people are too rebellious to comply and would either resist or reject it (Tamvakas & Amos, 2010). In fact, like similar legislation before, this law, too, has not been implemented (e.g., Bouloutza, 2015, 2018), due to the political cost involved (Drimiotis, 2014; Mitsos, 2014) and the traditionally strong link between the Greek state and tobacco industry (Bechrakis¹, 2016). Also thanks to a national programme implemented in schools, there has been a decrease of about 33% in the numbers of smokers below the age of 24 (ibid.). Data from the Hellenic Statistic Authority for year 2017 shows that the percentage of smokers among 16-24 youth has sensibly reduced (HSA, 2018). However, almost no enclosed public space are really smoke-free yet. Lack of enforcement is particularly evident in hospitality venues, with full ashtrays and a thick fog of smoke in most cafes, bars and restaurants (Bouloutza, 2018). Posted signs indicating the smoking ban has not proved effective and ashtrays, retained in most shops, encourage noncompliance (Vardavas et al., 2013). Perhaps most worryingly of all, however, "MPs smoke

¹Prof. Panagiotis Bechrakis, a pulmonologist, is chairman of the National Committee for Tobacco Control and the European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention (ENSP).

in Parliament, generals in training camps, and even in hospitals doctors do the same” (Bechrakis, 2016, para. 15). Most people were exposed to second-hand smoke when visiting bars/night clubs (90%), restaurants (more than 70%) and universities (more than 40%; WHO 2013, p. 28). According to a survey of the Academy of Athens, 99.2% of respondents declared that, during the previous year, they had been exposed to passive smoke in public venues (Bouloutza, 2013). Moreover, 92.8% reported violations in centres of entertainment, 87.1% in restaurants and 73.7% in tourist accommodation/ facilities (ibid.). The issue that “laws exist but they are not implemented,” a frequent topic for complaint among citizens, has recently been raised in Parliament (Bekiris, 2011) and in the press:

Lately you will hear people everywhere repeating monotonously the well-known remark: “Laws exist but they are not applied!” Why? [. . .] Could it be [. . .] that the citizens know beforehand that all these will be abolished in practice? And the big question that follows is: Could it be that we have got *used* to faring like this? [. . .]. (Bezios, 2015, para. 1, Emphasis in the original)

Actually, several authors argue that people in Greece *have* “got used to faring like this” (e.g., Mandravelis, 2011; Siakandaris, 2011; Theodoropoulos, 2015). A study conducted among Greek university students has found that non-smokers tend to be rather annoyed by smokers’ behaviour. All the same, they tend to classify law violation as “normal.” They do not stand up for their rights for fear of being ignored, laughed at or insulted (Benincasa, 2017).

On the basis of the students’ accounts of theirs and others’ smoking behaviour, the following research questions are investigated: In the context of the recently passed smoke-free law, to what extent do they comply? How do participants understand the concepts of (smokers and non-smokers’) rights, duties and responsibility? What factors can influence student theory and practice?

Literature Review

Learning in a Community of Practice

One of the assumptions behind school teaching is that pupils can be taught explicit, general knowledge disentangled from the context of its use, thus acquiring or internalizing cognitive skills that will be available for general application in all situations (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991). First introduced by anthropologists Lave and Wenger in the study of apprenticeship (1991), the concept of community of practice offers an alternative framework for understanding mental processes and learning. Small or large, formal or informal, face-to-face or online, communities of practice have a set of common traits. They are “groups of people who share a passion or concern,” an interest for some topic or domain, around which they develop a shared identity (Wenger, 2006, p. 1). In this perspective, learning is the product of people coming together as a community of practice and learning from one another. In this sense, it is a *social* phenomenon (Team BE, 2011).

Whereas learning may be an objective for the community, it may as well be “an incidental outcome of members’ interaction” (Wenger, 2006, p. 1). Compared to intentional pedagogy, everyday practice turns out to be a more powerful source of socialization (Lave, 1988, p. 16). This raises the issue of the relationship between school learning and the implementation of that learning (Wenger, 2006, p. 2). When it comes to citizenship rights and duties, what insight can be gained from adopting Lave and Wenger’s perspective? Before we proceed, it is necessary to explain how the concept of community of practice can be used in this study.

Greek Students and Communities of Practice

Smoking is a habit that young people learn on average around age 17 (range between 10 and 27) (Sofianopoulou, Efthimiou, Charila, Karadimas, & Kalantzi-Azizi, 2012), when they are members of the communities of practice of primary or secondary education. Recent data about Greek youth show that “at the age of 12-13 around 1% of the pupils smoke. [. . .]. The strongest influence comes from peer-smokers,” who function as models (Tountas, 2010, para. 1, 4). According to a nationwide study conducted with 28,088 Greek Lower Secondary Education pupils (grades 2 and 3), one out of ten smokes systematically, while two out of ten smoked their first cigarette before the age of 10. On the whole, the majority of these pupils smoked their first cigarette before they were 13 (Lakasas, 2014). Research shows that “the cafeteria, the internet cafe, teenagers’ night recreation centres but also school toilets are places where new smokers are produced” (Bechrakis, in Tsoulea, 2009, para. 9). Moreover, “it seems that in Greece the production of smokers goes on—and often is increased—after school, in the years that coincide with their participation in university life” (Filippidis, 2012, p. 3). Among university students, Greece has the highest percentages of smokers internationally: 39% of students at Athens University and 38.5% in peripheral tertiary institutions (Sofianopoulou et al., 2012).

Always a symbol of lifestyle and a tool in communication, socializing and recreation, in Greece the cigarette has been associated with defiance and rebellion. Especially after the recent smoke-free law entered in force, smoking is even more a symbol of freedom, a totem, a “right” which one is ready to defend at all costs (Bastea, 2009). The apparently only qualitative study available on the topic found that young Greek people view smoking as a “social need” and a form of communication, which facilitates socializing with friends and meeting new people (Tamvakas & Amos, 2010). According to both smokers and nonsmokers, a cigarette facilitates release of stress (Lloyd and Lucas, 1998). As a symbol of relaxation, it goes together with a cup of coffee in good company. A vital part of the Greek culture, drinking coffee daily with friends in a busy cafe has important social functions (Tamvakas & Amos, 2010), among which discussion or gossip with friends (Bamman, 2014; Kira & Karakosta, 2015) and, above all, relaxation (Efthimiou & Sofianopoulou, 2007).

Methods

Research Design

A research design is a plan of how to go about finding answers to the research questions: To what extent do Greek university students comply with the recently issued smoke-free law? How do they experience rights and obligations in the context of smoking in public places? What factors can influence students’ learning in this field? These questions (To what extent? How? What?) and the broader aim they represent (understanding the students’ perspective), require a qualitative research design (Lee, 2014). I use a generic (Kahlke, 2014) or basic interpretive research design (Merriam, 2002), that is, one that cannot be described in terms of a distinct research tradition (e.g., ethnography or phenomenology), procedures, theoretical framework or methodology, but comprises the basic components of qualitative research. Because of this, a generic research design allows the researcher to find the best fit between the research decisions and the specific questions. Generic qualitative studies, probably the most common form of qualitative research found in education, share the same concerns with all qualitative research about eliciting understanding of how people construct and experience their world, and make sense of it (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003; Kahlke, 2014; Merriam, 2002).

The Data

Data consist mainly of respondents' accounts about how they practise and experience rights and obligations in the context of smoking in public places. The thirty-one participants, all students at a university in Northern Greece, had taken part in an interview study on academic cheating and students' relationship with rules and regulations carried out by the author of this paper (Benincasa, 2013a). The interview had been designed to include questions on smoking behaviour, with a view to use them independently. Both smokers (21) and non-smokers (10) were asked to describe and discuss their own and other students' behaviour in relation to smoking in closed public places. Six of the participants were interviewed by postgraduate students who had been trained in interviewing. The initial question, meant to elicit descriptions, was: To what extent do you and your fellow students respect the smoke-free law when you are in public venues? Other questions were generated as a reaction to each respondent's words. For example, when a student explained violation as the unavoidable result of the smoker's dependence (*You can't stay two hours without having a smoke*) he was asked how he thinks smokers manage during a flight. Other prompts were such as "What do you mean by that?" and "Could you give me an example?"

In a generic qualitative study, like in all qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, carrying out the three fundamental activities of all qualitative research: experiencing (also through the senses), enquiring and examining materials produced by others (Wolcott, 1999). Therefore, though the main data come from the interview (Wolcott's "enquiring"), I have used, where suitable, printed and electronic articles about the relevant public debate (Wolcott's "examining"), either to provide background to my findings or to support some of the strands in the discussion. This additional information provides the context in which the interviews excerpts become meaningful. During my long stay in town, I gained experience of educational institutions and I have often visited public venues: this goes under Wolcott's label "experiencing," which relies on seeing and hearing (Wolcott, 1999). I have often observed students at the department (classes, examinations, corridors and cafe), the library (hall/cafe) and public venues in town, taking notes of what I see or hear and occasionally interacting with them. Thus I gradually built a picture of the social reality that constitutes the context of students' behaviour and discourse: what is tolerated, what is taboo, etc. The generic design here adopted allows me to make use of what I saw and heard there and in other settings, in spite of the fact that this information has not been systematically collected.

Elaboration

Interview analysis was carried out on the transcribed texts. With the help of the research questions, I grouped the emerging topics, naming them. I then grouped them into broader coherent themes. More technically, I have identified *codes* and grouped them into *categories* (Saldaña, 2009). Whenever the processes of coding and categorization made me remember something I had heard or seen, I searched my archives for relevant notes and newspaper cuttings, to see whether a connection could be established. Other times, the process was more conscious. Starting from the students' words, I then looked around for patterns in the social life of this "community of practice" (Agar, 2006). What have I seen or heard? What have insiders (whether professional researchers or simply educated members) observed and written about this? Minor news nation-wide were especially interesting under this respect because, like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle, they contribute to build up an image of the cultural context in which these students, law-enforcers and cafe owners operate, thereby adding meaning to what they say and (say that they) do.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

A generic qualitative study cannot disregard the principle that a rigorous research process produces more trustworthy findings. I have supported my findings with quotations from the interviews or from other events I have “experienced” and with documents as well. My being a non-native member of society, combined with my long-term engagement with the field may add to the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Below, I describe my “position” in relation to the topic, which should help the reader evaluate the credibility of my account.

Position

Something about my motives, values and disciplinary background should also be said (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). As a non-native inhabitant of Greece, I have had to learn local cultural knowledge from scratch as an adult. Like an ethnographer engaged in participant observation, I have always tried to read between the (“social”) lines, in order to understand the logic of local behaviours and make out the underlying cultural rules. As a pedagogist, I have also tended to figure out how and where people acquire certain behaviours and cultural norms. Where is this kind of cultural knowledge available? As time went by, my interest in the pervasive anomie in Greek society and local concepts of rights and duties led me to produce several publications about academic cheating (Benincasa, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2015a, 2015b) and the pedagogy of traffic policies meant for unruly drivers (Benincasa, 2015c).

I have a troubled relation with the phenomenon here examined. For a long time, I would have liked to carry out a study like this. At the same time, I believed I would be too emotionally involved to produce something credible. Being a non-smoker myself, I often find myself in the unpleasant role of “passive smoker,” experiencing a range of negative emotions, from irritation to annoyance to anger. Moreover, I believe that people should observe rules and regulations: I tend to do so and disapprove of those who do not. That is why I had carefully avoided doing research on the topic, until I dared to and my efforts were rewarded with publication (Benincasa, 2017). That is why I decided that I could dare again.

Organization of Results

For the findings to be more manageable, I have organized them in six smaller units. Two of them refer to participants’ central statements about laws, thus reflecting the main concern of the paper. The remaining four units refer to categories of people that cover different roles in relation to the phenomenon: (a) customers, law-enforcers and cafe-owners/staff, who make up the students’ immediate community of practice and (b) society members whose relevant behaviours and statements, captured in the press, provide a background to the participants’ deeds and words. This organization proves useful when viewed from the vantage point of a “community of practice,” which is done in the discussion.

My university did not require formal statement of a third-party approval for me to conduct this study. This, of course, does not exempt me from holding to basic ethical principles. Informed about the reasons for the interviews, all the participants granted their permission for my use of the data. I do not reveal the participants’ identities. I refer to them using names of fantasy, chosen by each participant at the beginning of the interview.

The Context and the Participants

The context is that of a teacher training department at a university in Northern Greece. While in the yard, even before entering the building, any visitors from a different culture would notice instances of wild parking while a lot of regular parking places remain empty. This is explained by the fact that, be they students, administrative staff or teaching staff, many drivers' main criterion is to park as close to an entrance door as possible. A similar attitude is often visible in more academic aspects of university life. For example, according to the participants in a recent study (Benincasa, 2013), cheating is just "normal" behavior.

The university in question is in the province, and students come from all over the country. The 31 participants were from various towns all over Greece. Aged between 18 and 22, they included both smokers (21) and non-smokers (10). I was not able to construct a more homogeneous sample, as I had planned to do, because students were unwilling to participate in a study about rules and regulations. When no one accepted my invitation (sent to all by group mail) I necessarily turned to more personalized approaches, directly asking the most talkative students who had attended (and successfully passed) my courses.

Findings

A Law that "*simply is not observed*"

There is general agreement in describing the smoke-free law as a law that has remained on papers: It "*simply is not observed*," as Filippou said with emphasis on the word "*simply*"). Within the university, smoking may take place not only in the corridors but in teaching halls as well: "*Students smoke everywhere—in lecture halls, everywhere*" (Panayiotis, non-smoker). I happened to hear that at least two department teachers smoke during classes and allow students to do the same. The no-smoking signs do not seem to be very effective: "*Signage is for formal reasons*" (Filippou). Most participants focused on describing public venues: "*In cafes, the no-smoking sign is not even decorative because decoration is something you do pay attention to. Signage, instead, is ignored*" (Lavinia 1, smoker).

Some respondents are rather critical of the law. According to Alcestis (smoker), "*This total ban everywhere, by force, is a little exaggerated*" [. . .] *Therefore, I believe that the law didn't get enforced and we didn't let it pass*. She means that, though the law passed in Parliament, the people "did not let it pass": it remains unapplied *because* it was "exaggerated," that is, too demanding. In the public debate, a great many voices evoke this stance, reaching levels of rhetoric worthy of the speeches delivered in school on national celebrations. A regular collaborator of a popular magazine commented as follows: "There has started the rebellion (Gr. *antartiko*), the resistance [. . .] of the eminent strugglers of smoke and smoking [. . .]. The Greeks weren't frightened by Xerxis, are they going to be afraid of Avramopoulos?² They're going to smoke where they want. [. . .] Here it's Greece" (Diamandis, 2009). The same article invites people to "start again the battle [. . .] for freedom" (ibid.). It is easy to perceive open approval and even pride in the way authors describe both law violations (e.g., "Greece, with her anarchical circus, resists and insists," Raptopoulos, 2010) and the owners' sabotage, labelled as "rebellion" or "revolt" (Fotiadi, 2010b). Pride is also evident in the way some authors make fun of Italian smokers for their prompt compliance with the smoke-free law. Others resort to humour, for example, by defining unruly behaviour as "an absolutely creative implementation of the new law on smoking" (Diamandis, 2010, p. 21) or by posting samples of such creativity on the web (e.g., "All is fair in love, war and Greece;")

² D. Avramopoulos was then Minister of Health [N.o.A.].

<http://hysteria.gr/11668/>). While this paper was being written, I heard one of my students say, “We Greeks don’t easily get into moulds.” My notebook (I always take notes of such “cultural” events) testifies that I heard exactly the same words from an old man many years ago. This must be what they mean by “cultural persistence.”

To be sure, there exists a completely different approach in the press and the public debate—much less in the limelight—which blames the “Greek crisis” exactly on such attitudes, that is, on the “the permanent revolutionary syndrome of the Greek nation” (Iordanidis, 2009) and the “insubordination [that] is deeply rooted in Greek society” (Fotiadi, 2010a). For 35 years “Greek Anarchy” had mainly practised “low intensity violence, confrontation with the police, and property destruction” (Boukalas, 2011, p. 301) until in 2005 it caused the death of three people. The economic crisis that exploded soon after saw the response of wide sectors of society and the “fetishisation of the ‘revolutionary’ identity” (Boukalas, 2011, p. 304). Tamvakas and Amos’s young respondents (2010) rightly foresaw that both smokers and owners would find ways not to implement the smoke-free law (“Smokers will not accept it”).

Some students spontaneously compare their university with the ones they visited abroad, usually on the Erasmus European student exchange programme. Filippou’s comparison, rather generic, is with France, where allegedly the law is implemented because the people observe it: “*In France the law that prohibits smoking in public places is respected*” (Filippou). By “respected” he means “observed by the citizens.” Filippou argues that, for a law to be implemented, some amount of popular support is needed:

because [in France] the people themselves can support that. In Greece, the fact that something is forbidden doesn’t mean anything. We’re a little...How shall I put this...The fact that a law exists doesn’t mean that it is observed. And that’s not only about smoking, it’s the same in many other things. (Filippou)

Andreas’ statement evokes an international comparison, as well. He blames widespread law violation on to the fact that in Greece people are not afraid: “*There should be fear of punishment. And here in Greece there is no fear.*” A non-smoker, Andreas was rather pessimistic throughout the interview, at the end of which he stated: “*Law doesn’t exist. Laws are made to be broken.*” Over the years, I have heard the same statement hundreds of times before, together with statements like, “Laws are for the stupid to respect.” There is no monitoring, and, above all, no sanctions are applied—as Andreas remarked. Non-smoker Filippou, on the other hand, argues that law abidance should not be dictated by fear but by respect for others. Asked about who should be held responsible for implementation, non-smoker Orestes maintained that it ought to be a shared responsibility: “*Shared between the people who violate the laws, the cafe-owners and the law enforcers who are expected to apply sanctions.*” Yiolanda’s theory goes even further:

Should even one person smoke in a cafe in which others don’t, even if you are not annoyed by the smoke, you ought to speak and say that they should put off their cigarettes, because there are people here who are *annoyed*. (Her emphasis)

Yiolanda’s practice, though, is not necessarily up to her theory. In fact, shortly after the interview I saw her smoking in a lecture hall where she and other students were waiting for the lecture to start.³

³ A discussion about the social desirability bias is beyond the scope of this paper.

Complying with “*their laws*”

A series of student statements point to the smoke-free law and laws in general as something foreign to the population. Some participants argue that smoking in public venues is not a real problem compared to say tax evasion: “*Do all the other things work all right?*” asked Alcestis. She obviously means that things do not work right at all, so why should we start from smoke free regulations? She clearly ranks wild smoking at the bottom as a very minor problem. More than this, in times of crisis, the state should not load people with more burdens: “*In all this maelstrom, now they’ve discovered the issue of smoking*” (Markos, non-smoker). Thus, Markos blamed smoke-free law violation on the ruling elite: “*Since the rulers and legislators have not behaved as they ought to, they do not have the right to expect that the citizens will comply with their laws.*” The keyword in his philosophy is the phrase “their laws.” Laws are presented as foreign to people, conceived by individuals who do not belong to the people/the citizens and cannot understand what their real needs are. Legislators/rulers and the citizens are conceived as two separate blocks, responding to different interests. Alcestis, too, was rather critical of laws in general. The elites, she said, conceive laws in absentia of the citizens: “*After all, what purposes do laws serve? To what extent do they really take into account our life and how we want to live?*”

Though one can never know the policy makers’ real reasons for conceiving the smoke-free law (e.g., they might have just been following an EU directive) the institutional voices in the public debate emphasized the need for protecting passive smokers. Alcestis, instead, interprets the law as an attempt to force smokers to give up smoking: a case of state interference with the private choices of citizens, who should instead be free to engage in self-harmful behaviours, if they so wish. All participants share this interpretation and so do the Greek teenagers participating in a recent study (Tamvakas & Amos, 2010). Participants might on purpose interpret the smoke-free as they do so as to present themselves as victims of an invasive state and justify their smoking as a form of resistance. Thus, the smoke-free law (and potentially any other law) acquires the character of oppression and violations are more likely to be justified by all stakeholders.

Far from being a peculiar trait of the participants, such a stance is widely echoed in the media. In this perspective, complying with the smoke-free law is defined as “giving up individual rights” (Diamandis, 2011, p. 25). In order to illustrate the alleged authoritarian, even “fascist” nature of the smoke-free law, one article stresses that Hitler, Mussolini and Franco were all anti-smokers (Andipa, 2009). Along similar lines, a poet-writer complained that “in times when people are bombed with violence, smokers, like Jews of other times or like gypsies, are subject to a real pogrom” (Gounelas, 2010). Drawing a comparison with the imaginary state described by Orwell in *1984*, one more educated member foresees similar developments: “If today it is smokers who are persecuted, tomorrow it will be the turn of the obese, those who conduct a sedentary life or have a lot of sex” (Diamandis, 2011).

About Customers

What happens in cafes or on the university campus is the result of the joint action (or non-action) of customers, law-enforcers and cafe-owners. How do the participants portray their own and other customers’ behaviour? To the question of why they smoke in public places, most participants answered: “*Everyone else smokes.*” This would seem a non-answer. Yet, as we proceed through the data, the logic of participants’ answer will be apparent. Thus, interviewed in the university library hall, a male student explained:

Everyone smokes here. I don't disturb, I don't smoke inside the library. Besides that, the hall is ventilated.⁴ Let alone that if it's cold outside you can't go out. When I'm here [in the library], studying, I pop out here [in the hall], I have a smoke and I get in again. [Q. Did they ever reprimand you?] No, never. [Q. Not even once?] No, never. I told you that I don't smoke inside. *Everyone* does smoke here in the hall. (Lavrios 2, His emphasis)

So, the fact that, in that place, everyone smokes seems to be the reason why the speaker, too, lights a cigarette. The situation is similar at the student's restaurant. Manos admitted to having lit a cigarette there sometimes:

Normally, the right thing would be to restrain from smoking because the law forbids it. It's just that we're all swayed by this --*within quotation marks*—offence of not implementing the law. Thus, someone is smoking in a closed venue, where smoking is forbidden. Someone else sees him and says "Why not me, too? That one over there, how comes he smokes and nobody tells him not to?" E, that's how it goes, little by little. (My emphasis)

Manos' words give us greater insight into the link between the statements "everyone smokes" and "I smoke, too." The fact that that others' violation is not sanctioned encourages the next one to do the same. In a different way, Alcestis presents other smokers' behaviour as an alibi for her own. Asked to think of non-smokers who are likely to feel annoyed, she said: *This isn't [. . .] something that only I do. That is, it's something that others do as well. However, if you're close to me and tell me "I'm eating, your smoke disturbs me . . ."* In this case, in a restaurant, Alcestis would put her cigarette off. However, she would not do so in a bar: *"Because a glass of wine just goes with a cigarette."* Besides pointing out the influence of context on human behaviour, this quotation evokes the link between smoking and popular social activities such sitting in a bar or a cafe—a link that people often experience as necessary (Nooz, 2015). On campus, anyone may "teach" lessons in anomie: for example the driver of the bus that takes students to the university. In fact, I have repeatedly seen the driver smoking, his only concession to non-smokers' rights being to keep the cigarette out of the window between one puff and the next.

Besides smokers, non-smokers as well are ready to justify violations. This is how non-smoker Sotiris expressed sympathy with those who smoke in public venues: *"Smoking creates dependence. You can't stay two hours without having a smoke."* When I asked him how he thinks that smokers manage during air flights, he replied: *"That's the journey procedure. When one goes out for their cup of coffee, e, then they need their cigarette, when they relax"* (His emphasis). The heart of this statement evokes other students' words: Coffee, wine and relaxing "demand" a cigarette. Actually, this is a statement I have heard innumerable times by adults of all ages during my (informal and forced) participant observation in a society I have not been born into.

But why do smokers violate the law? According to Panayiotis, they *"just think of themselves and do not care about the others"*—an unwarranted generalization, judging from the statement below, uttered by a smoker:

I believe that non-smokers have the absolute right to reprimand those who smoke. It's understood. If someone reprimanded me, I'd feel ashamed, I'd feel bad and apologise. [. . .] Because the law is on their side. Not that I agree with

⁴ He probably refers to the library door that opens whenever people get in, thus letting air into the hall (N.o.A.).

the law, of course. I just wouldn't like being rebuked and that's why I'd avoid it. (Olympia)

Initially, Olympia seems to care for others. In a way, though, she confirms part of Panayiotis's theory because her refraining from smoking is not dictated from recognition of non-smokers' rights but from the desire to protect her own self-image. Like Tamvakas and Amos' youths (2010), non-smokers seem to be extremely tolerant. Non-smokers admitted that, though annoyed, they usually do not demand to be respected (see also Benincasa, 2017). According to several respondents, non-smokers are a minority and, as such, they are bound to be ignored by smokers and cafe-owners alike. Aware of this, they do not raise their voice. Lack of monitoring on the part of the authorities further weakens non-smokers' positions. One student complained about non-smokers: *"Some of them are extremely sensitive. [. . .] E, now, if you see me once and get excessively annoyed, that's a bit of an exaggeration. That is, is it the first time you've been close to someone who's smoking and you're annoyed by me?"* (Lavrios 2, smoker). This student seems to imply that non-smokers should have gotten used to the prevailing situation and given up on their rights.

About Law-Enforcers

Smoking behaviour in cafes is the result of the joint action (or *non-action*) of different stake-holders. Law-enforcers have the "duty" to enforce the law: *"First of all it's the authorities' obligation to impose the observation of the law. Second, as far as citizens are concerned, it's up to individual conscience whether to obey it or not"* (Konstantinos, non-smoker). All agree that, after laws have been voted in Parliament, they may often remain unimplemented: *"[U]ltimately, not even the state implements them, in practice. Do they really monitor implementation? [. . .] Not even the state wants to implement them"* (Alcestis). Like several respondents in Tamvakas and Amos (2010), Christie, too, hypothesises a kind of complicity on the part of the authorities, allegedly proved e.g., by the lack of systematic inspections in public venues. This unwillingness makes it easy to find loopholes for would-be violators to exploit:

...Maybe the state itself turns a blind eye on violations. That is, maybe the state leaves room for violations. [. . .] Because it's the system that's like this, maybe. Since we live in Greece. As long as I have understood what's going on, this is what I see: nothing applies, it's just hot air. In essence there's neither law, nor state, nor anything-- nor sanctions. As if everything were done for the sake of appearances.⁵ (Christie, non-smoker, Her emphasis)

Non-smoker Sotiris, the one who showed deep sympathy with smokers under the regime of smoke-free law, shows a similar attitude to the law-enforcers and the difficulties they may face in doing their job:

In some clubs, at night, a thick fog of smoke hangs in the air. But that's the most difficult place to impose such a... measure. [. . .] Even if a cop (Gr. *batsos*) entered the club, how would he cross the place from one corner to the other, which takes half an hour, just to tell someone "Don't smoke." Do you understand? Therefore, I believe that this law is meaningless. That is, you can't

⁵ For the sake of appearances, Gr. *Yia ta matia tou kosmou* (literally, "for the people's eyes").

impose on someone to do something, if they don't understand by themselves.
(Sotiris, His emphasis)

The term *batsos* (= policeman), highly derogatory, evokes authoritarian power and use of violence on innocent people. It represents one side of the more general suspicion, often hostility, with which respondents generally face the state and its institutions. Any law violation may be blamed on the state: *"It's our fault, I believe, if we don't comply with anything, but that's the way we have been taught, by the state, the laws, the political system"* (Christie).

About Cafe Owners and Staff

The implementation of Law 3868/2010 is placed on the person responsible for each closed public place: e.g., the principal in a school and the owner/staff in a cafe. Cafe owners/staff, instead, contribute to the present state of things. There is general agreement on the fact that cafe-owners usually turn a blind eye on violations. Smokers use that tolerance to justify themselves. Law violation is *"something that in one way or another way the shop, too, consents to. Therefore, I don't care whether the law is being implemented or not"* (Alcestis, her emphasis). According to Regina, *"On the one hand, lighting a cigarette in a smoke-free place is wrong because it's forbidden, but, once they allow it, why should you refrain from doing something you want to do?"* By saying so, this student delegates to the waiter responsibility for her actions. Asked how it feels when she is violating the smoke-free law, Regina replied: *"O, that's fine. Since they keep ashtrays on the tables, as usual. As usual."* Yet, ashtrays are not always there. Many cafes do not provide ashtrays because, if found by the authorities during an inspection, they might cause trouble. Owners display remarkable creativity in circumventing the law, for example by providing fancy substitutes for ashtray:

They don't provide ashtrays, but they'll bring you, for example, a plastic cup, with water inside, and a wet paper towel, for the ashes and the cigarette. That is, again, for the sake of appearances [. . .] They keep the form, *"We don't have ashtrays."* But we are in Greece. When I went out on Erasmus, such things didn't exist. (Orestes)

In a magazine article such substitutes are referred to as "camouflage ashtrays" (Gr. *tasakia parallagis*) (Frantzoglou, 2011): the military connotation is perfectly in line with the way the issue is publicly described: as a war, a guerrilla conducted by citizens-victims of an oppressive state. Metaphors are systematically drawn from this semantic area. Iris says: *"This is a way for cafe owners to avoid responsibility. That is, on the one hand the shop forbids it, but it allows it as well."* So, like smokers, cafe owners/ staff, as well, try to avoid responsibility for their action. Alcestis, describing other tricks used by owners to provide ashtrays without looking like doing so, defines their behaviour as *"unloading their own responsibility."*

Orestes concluded that the smoke-free law is one more law voted *"for the sake of appearances."* I have repeatedly had the same feeling, for example when observing people smoke in the local university library hall, which is defined as a smoke-free area. I asked the librarian whether smoking was allowed there: *"It is forbidden—within quotation marks,"* she said. The librarian meant: it is, "as-if" it were, forbidden but in reality choice is left to the library visitors' discretion and sense of responsibility: it is "forbidden." In a similar way, during written examinations students and invigilators alike may co-operate in keeping the appearances of a regular exam procedure: both may violate the (unwritten) regulations, though taking care of not going too far, lest the performance be ruined (Goffman, 1959). So, during an exam students and invigilators co-operate, in a way: both smokers who are breaking the law and non-

smokers may be said to co-operate. By avoiding conflict, non-smokers contribute to defining the situation as “normal.”

Zooming out on the Broader Picture

What happens in cafes is the result of the joint action (or *non-action*) of customers, law-enforcers and cafe-owners as a community of practice. If we zoom out on the broader picture of which this community of practice is part, we realize that leaders, from politicians to university rectors, systematically teach anomie (Siakandaris, 2011). On a recent national commemoration (October 28th, 2015) the President of the Republic Mr. P. Pavlopoulos on official visit in Thessaloniki featured in the press because he was filmed smoking—first in a cafe and then in the Officers’ mess. Titles ranged from sympathetic (e.g., in terms of “the President’s revolt”)⁶, to critical⁷, to caustic⁸. The fact that Mr. Pavlopoulos is a lawyer and professor of constitutional law proves that theoretical knowledge about laws is no guarantee of lawful behaviour. Similar is the case of surgeon and Alternate Minister of Health Mr. P. Polakis, responsible for the implementation of the smoke-free law, who has been filmed smoking publicly inside his Ministry (Bechrakis, 2016) and in Parliament⁹: “Not only has he not done anything about tobacco control: he defends this harmful dependence” (Bechrakis, 2016). In a national-scope magazine, Mallios (2008) argues that, far from being justified by the need to protect the citizens’ health, the smoke-free law represents one more form of state paternalism. After all, non-smokers who visit bars and restaurants do so of their own will: nobody forces them to do so. Therefore, there are no non-smokers’ rights to be protected. As to non-smokers who *work* in these venues, bars and restaurants are not the only unhealthy working places. Working there is a “conscious and autonomous choice” (Mallios, 2008, p. 19). These views acquire greater interest if we consider that the author is a lawyer and, thus, a representative of the law.

Limitations

The findings from this study cannot be generalized. However, to the extent to which the described attitudes are widespread across society, it is reasonable to expect that studies conducted in other Greek universities could give similar results.

Summary and Discussion

Summary

Students violate the smoke-free law in cafes but also in various indoor university settings. Non-smokers among them, even those who report great distress, usually do not react, which may be interpreted by smokers as a “permission” to smoke. Those who should implement the law (in cafes, libraries etc.) either tolerate or actively encourage smoking. For example, the fact that cafe staff provide (substitutes for) ashtrays is interpreted as informal authorization. Law-enforcers do not monitor smoking behaviour and sanctions are not applied. For the smoker, the risk is thus reduced to a minimum. It would seem that customers, law-

⁶ e.g., ‘the President’s ‘mini...rebellion’ [suspension points in the original, *N.o.A.*]

(<http://www.iefimerida.gr/news/233017/mini-antartiko-paylopoyloy-mpoytari-kapnisan-sti-leshi-axiomatikon>)

⁷ ‘Smoking a cigar in a smoke-free place!’ (<http://www.inewsgr.com/61/me-pouro-se-choro-pou-apagorevetai-to-kapnisma-pavlopoulos-boutaris-kai-o-chachas-dipla-tous-dinoun-to-paradeigma.htm>)

⁸ e.g., ‘Shameless’ (<http://www.protagon.gr/?i=protagon.el.article&id=43632>)

⁹ <http://www.thetoc.gr/politiki/article/o-ametanoiotos-polakis-me-to-tsigaro-sto-xeri-sti-bouli>

enforcers and cafe-owners/staff cooperate so as to dodge “their laws,” (i.e., the laws conceived by a hostile, alien elite). They simply exploit this state of things to their advantage.

Disobedience and Freedom

Alcestis’ words (“*I believe that the law didn’t get enforced and we didn’t let it pass*”) evoke the concept of civil disobedience. Actually, this concept has been used in the larger debate about the smoke-free law. Markos expressed a similar attitude: “*They do not have the right to expect that the citizens will comply with their laws,*” where the word “their” refers to rulers and legislators (see above). Similar approaches, all but rare in the printed or electronic press, have been adopted by several (educated) members, (i.e., writers, poets and intellectuals, whose words have been quoted and commented upon in previous sections). After the new law entered into force, ashtrays disappeared from cafes for a while, only to appear again shortly after. This was saluted as an act of “civil disobedience” (e.g., Galiatsatos, 2010), an improper label if we consider that those who violate the smoke-free law know that it is extremely improbable that their violations will be punished. People who engage in civil disobedience, instead, “are willing to accept the legal consequences of their actions, as this shows their fidelity to the rule of law” (Brownlee, 2013, p. 1). A fashionable concept especially since the start of crisis, “civil disobedience” has been cultivated by some political parties, usually on the basis of some vague idea of freedom (Georganas, 2014). One of the signs I saw at a demonstration read: “Disobedience is the foundation of freedom.” A case in point is the so-called movement *I won’t pay* (Gr. *Den Plirono*¹⁰), which invited citizens not to pay taxes, tolls, etc. The initiative was vigorously backed by leftist parties and organizations, one of which, Syriza, has been in power since 2015: several of its members, including its leader, have personally participated in the *I won’t pay* activities.

The new smoking regime, sometimes disparagingly referred to as smoke-prohibitionism (Gr. *kapnoapagorevsi*), is condemned as a repressive measure and several famous Greek writers, artists or intellectuals, appealing to the right to free choice, invite smokers and cafes to “mass disobedience” (e.g., in Diamandis, 2011). In a similar way, after the first attempts to ban smoking from public places in the USA in the 1960s “Big Brother was frequently invoked” (Brandt, 1998, p. 166). In Greece, agonistic attitudes have a long story, documented by anthropologists since Campbell (1964) and Friedl (1962) and surfacing in the most disparate sectors of social life, e.g., the extremely competitive admission examinations to higher education (Benincasa, 1997).

Since the 1970s, the ideology of the Left has dominated in Greek society. Therefore, politicians are bound to pay a high political cost not only for making “liberal” choices, but also for saying something that the “clergy of the Left” could baptise as “liberal” (Mandravelis, 2012a). Against the background of this “ideological hegemony,” the smoke-free law, identified with liberal beliefs and faced as a product of globalization, is automatically condemned: “In the Greece of the IMF, beside cuts to salaries and pensions, they also cut our smoking” (Louka, 2010). Or to say it with Markos’ words, “*in all this maelstrom, now they’ve discovered the issue of smoking.*” When the blame is not put specifically on liberalism, it is more generally placed on “power”: “Power wants to train us to unconditional obedience to its laws by issuing unreasonable and authoritarian ordinances” (Diamandis, 2010, p. 21).

¹⁰ http://epitropesdiadiastop.blogspot.gr/2013/10/blog-post_7138.html

Rule of Law and the “Law of the Strongest”

“I believe that the law didn’t get enforced and we didn’t let it pass.” Alcestis’ words contain a theory widely shared in society and voiced in newspapers and magazines. A cafe owner, for example, declared: “It has been proved that such measures cannot be applied in our country; our customers have invalidated (Gr. *akirosan*) the decision” (Siniori, 2005). As pointed out by Filippou, in Greece this law did not get the *“people’s support.”* It is suggested that government measures cannot be implemented without “social acquiescence.” In one way, the statement that “no law is implemented if citizens do not want to” (Diamandis, 2011, p. 25) is correct: in a representative democracy, laws need to rest on personal convictions and behaviours (Colombo, 2010).

In a representative democracy laws are made by the representatives of “the people” and in that sense they are not *imposed* on individuals. Several respondents, though, seem to suggest that the opposite is the case. It is *“the rulers’ [laws] and the legislators’ laws”* (Markos): they are conceived without taking into account *“what people need and how they want to live”* (Alcestis). According to this interpretation, “they” make the laws, “we” are subjected to them. Interviewed on the smoke-free law, a famous writer takes more or less these students’ position: “The more we yield to prohibitions, laws and regulations, the more we get far from citizenship: power transforms us into subjects” (Triandafillou, 2008). Actually, during the period of the ideological hegemony of the Left, law enforcement has been propagandised as “authoritarianism” (Yiannaras, 2005). People experience the law as “the product of a foreign will, of a power that was constituted far from them” (Christodouloupoulos, 2011, p. 22) and illegality is justified if directed against “the behaviour of the state.” After all, *“that’s the way we have been taught, by the state, the laws, the political system”* (Christie). The relativization of laws tends to become the rule in Greek society. Violation is presented as an act of justice, performed in the name of the relevant social category and expressed in a famous slogan available in as many variations as are the social categories claiming their “rights” from time to time, e.g., “Law is the right of every worker/ student/ farmer/ magistrate” (e.g., Mandravelis, 2012b, para. 4). This kind of attitude to law and the state have been discussed at length both in the early anthropology of Greece (e.g., Campbell, 1964) and in more recent studies (e.g., Dalakoglou, 2013). Herzfeld’s term “delightful disobedience” (2016, p. 3) might sound exaggerated, but I myself could not help expressing admiration for the way in which popular culture is able to make fun of official values and rules and ridicule the ideology that backs them (Benincasa, 2013).

Respondents’ statements are often in open contrast with the rule of law. However, “[i]n a state in which all participate, however indirectly, to the management of public affairs and in which there exist procedures for modifying the rules that are believed to be unfair, the existing rules must be observed and that is all” (Colombo, 2010, 4th cover 2012). From Alcestis’s account it would seem that, after approval in Parliament, the smoke-free law needed approval again by “the people” on a day-to-day basis. Her words made me think of a daily referendum. They also reminded me of direct democracy, in which “the people” express themselves directly rather than through representatives. However, direct democracy relies as well on a series of established rules and procedures. Respondents’ account, instead, suggest that the procedures through which smokers provide “feedback” to “rulers and legislators” are informal, left to actors’ spontaneous reactions-- and thus inevitably regulated by their reciprocal “strength.” This sounds like a reversion to the state of nature, in which social life is ruled by the law of the strongest. Often evoked in the context business competition, international or class relations, the “law of the strongest” may regulate interpersonal relationships as well, as described in the conclusion to a recent Greek survey:

Greece does not lack the necessary legal framework. Rather, what is missing is those informal institutions that, by instilling mutual respect and tolerance, may tame excessive, nearsighted selfishness. In many situations, Greeks feel, that they live in a hobbesian jungle: everyone faces their neighbor as a competitor [. . .]; everyone is just interested in their own narrow personal interest. In the end, all lose” (Chatzis, 2017, para. 77).

The term “interest” should be taken in a broad sense. For example, by sitting a cafe with a cup of coffee and lighting up a cigarette--no matter what—smokers are satisfying their own perceived needs. In this sense, they are serving their own personal interest.

Democracy and Rights

Democracy is an abused term in everyday speech in Greece. It is not infrequent to hear people justify violation of laws with appeals to “rights” and democracy. The popular saying “We have democracy, so I do what I want” clearly represents a “widespread violation of the meaning of democracy” (e.g., Podilates, 2010). It is, nonetheless, widely cited, sometimes jokingly, other times seriously. By refusing to comply with the smoke-free law, smokers claim their “right to choose”¹¹, which they are not willing to surrender to pulmonologists (Diamandis, 2011). In a way, the idea of individual right is thus pushed to the extreme. According to Lazaridis (2008), an excessive emphasis on rights is a main critical aspect of lower secondary Social and Political Education textbook:

As much as 95% of chapter [12] deals with rights. There is mentioned only a very general obligation to observe the laws [. . .] Voltaire’s famous apophthegm “my freedom stops where another’s begins” is nowhere to be found. Nowhere is it stressed that democracy is not only the enforcement of the will of the majority, but also the respect of the rights of the minority. (Lazaridis, 2008)

In the light of the findings, this suggests that the emphasis on rights is something deeply rooted in the culture. Many voices raise against “the contemporary Greek, who wants to have only rights with no obligation. [. . .], who smokes in closed venues, because “this is the way they like it,” who parks their car on the pavement” (Patsopoulos, 2013, para. 7). It is true that “democracy is not just voting every three or four years. Democracy is not passivity. It is resistance but always within the frame of law” (Mandravelis, 2011). Very often, especially among young people, anomie reveals good intentions but also “monstrous ignorance of basic democratic rules, e.g., that political struggle must always remain within framework of law” (Mandravelis, 2012b, para. 5). These voices, though, have not managed to get through to the majority. So far, they have remained voices in the desert.

Certain habits or social activities are “very closely linked to smoking, for example a cigarette in the morning, smoking after eating, or alcohol and cigarettes when getting out in the evening,” as pointed out by an academic engaged in smoking prevention in schools (Theodorakis, in Nooz, 2015). From an awareness of the “close link” between coffee and cigarette, to perceiving smoking in public venues as a right, it is a short step. Thus, Alcestis would put her cigarette off in a restaurant, if asked to, but she would not do so in a bar: “*Because a glass of wine just goes with a cigarette.*”

¹¹ The appeal to the individual right of choice sounds contradictory in this context because is part of the liberal paradigm that is forcefully condemned by the same students and often demonized in the public debate (see Diamantopoulos, 2012).

Responsibility

Asked why they violate the law, several respondents said that, after all, owners keep ashtrays on tables, which is taken to mean that they “allow smoking.” So “*why shouldn’t you do what you wish to do?*” For these youths to comply with the law, there should be someone who actively prevents them from violations—a view that calls into question their sense of responsibility¹². Owners, on their part, decline responsibility as well. A student narrated how, upon entering a cafe, she asked whether smoking was allowed. After answering “No, it’s forbidden,” the owner brought her a plastic cup with water—one of the usual ashtray substitutes. This “keeping appearances,” mentioned by respondents, evokes social scientist Kalyvas’s metaphor of the Greek government/s as a theatre troupe, the smoke-free law being an example of the “representations” that are part of their repertoire (2011). On the one hand we have a “third-world professional/citizen” and on the other a state that legislates simply *for show* and only formally complies with the clauses of the international community” (Kasdaglis, 2011, p. 34, My emphasis).

In the West the individual is considered completely responsible for their actions. Accordingly, Greek scholars stress the importance of personal responsibility for the well-being of the collectivity (e.g., Katakis, 2011, p. 42) but they find that in Greece, like in other socio-centric culture, the importance granted to the *context* of deplorable action downplays individual responsibility. Thus persons are no more real citizens but rather “immature subjects” (e.g., Marangoudakis, 2011, p. 39). When I raised the issue of students’ indoors smoking with a colleague, he readily championed the students’ cause (“What kind of models have they got, after all?”). Denial of personal responsibility has been discussed both as a hallmark of the left (e.g., Efthimiou, 2005) and as a historically shaped characteristic of Greek society as a whole (Ramfos, 2016). This attitude to responsibility seems to have very deep roots indeed. In his study of Western bureaucracy built with observational material from Greece, Herzfeld has shown how laws seem to “institutionalize the evasion of responsibility in the name of responsibility” (1992, p. 156).

Learning in a Community of Practice

According to participant comments, in Greek cafes the whole environment encourages violation of the smoke-free law. One lights a cigarette because “*everyone else*” is smoking¹³. By providing (substitutes for) ash-trays, owners offer customers the chance to learn that the smoking ban can be ignored. Smokers and owners alike may be viewed as “resisting” a law perceived as illegitimate interference on the part of the state. Since owners are usually somewhat older, younger individuals may be viewed as apprentices in the process of becoming competent members, though we could discuss the extent to which a such “competent members” also make good citizens. Law enforcers may be viewed as members of the community of practice, too. By failing to intervene, they substantially provide a framework for (younger) students to learn that, unlike what is posited in citizenship education textbooks, people who violate the rule usually get away with it. Being allowed to feel above rules, smokers may ignore, mock, or insult non-smokers who ask them to put out their cigarette. Students’ daily “training programme” starts early in the morning, on the bus that takes them to the university, since the driver may well be smoking. Over the years, such interactions have accumulated into a

¹² Faced with wild parking, the local authorities did not resort to more and tighter controls. Instead, they have screwed material obstacles to the ground in strategic points in towns. In this way, they have made parking there materially impossible, thus delegating the solution of the problem to the laws of Physics (Benincasa, 2015c).

¹³ Actually, students justify cheating at the examinations with the same argument (“I cheat because everyone else does” (Benincasa, 2013).

“structure” that is necessarily taken into account by young people, smokers and non-smokers alike. In this context, no matter how annoyed you are, even putting up with others’ smoke becomes a way to show socially competent.

In this community of practice, we can compare (a) young people to apprentices and (b) owners/ law enforcers/older customers to “experts.” Students who assertively violate the law, ignoring fellow-students’ protest or making fun of them altogether, in a way play a similar role. Like “experts” or supervisors, they provide novices with feedback about their performance. Thus, ignoring non-smokers’ requests is a way of pointing out that those who demand that the law be respected are not acting as competent members. For young people, smokers and non-smokers alike, participation becomes a way of “both absorbing and being absorbed in the ‘culture of practice’” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95). During such interactions, students learn to recognize specific “ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations - in short, practices” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 8). Newspaper articles, often written by academics, describe a widespread disregard for rules and regulations (e.g., Daskalakis, 2017; Kalyvas, 2012; Kryonidis, 2005), an anomie that is “passed on” to younger generations (Katsas, 2012). The Greek citizen is not concerned about what is legal and what is not: “Invoking the law does not cause automatic compliance. Rather, it causes surprise, mockery or search for shortcut methods” (Tsoukas, 2007, para. 4).

On one occasion, I complained to a man who was smoking in a public place. When I called his attention to the non-smoking sign just over his head and asked why he was smoking, he looked straight at me in an assertive way and replied: “‘Coz this is the way I like it” [Gr. *Yiati etsi goustaro*]. His tone, combined with his body size, persuaded me that it was wise to give up. I have learnt at personal expense that violators often sound assertive, even aggressive, in similar situations. It is manifest that many people take it for granted that they can violate the law. The same attitude is frequently expressed in the printed and electronic press, as well as in the social media: if you live in Greece you are surrounded, so to say, by this mentality, samples of which have been provided in previous sections. Though, according to statistics, non-smokers are the majority in the country and smokers’ number is decreasing, this is not reflected in this type of public discourse, which shows a marked preponderance of voices in favour of smokers’ absolute “rights.” In a context where law violations are so openly defended, the assertiveness displayed by some smoker-respondents is easier to understand. Non-smokers tend to view smokers’ violations as “normal” and to accept being treated like second-class citizens (Author smoke).

In the literature the concept of community of practice has been stretched to refer to “imagined communities of practice,” especially in research on foreign language learning (e.g., Kharchenko, 2014) and virtual online communities (Piasecka, Adams-Tukiendorf, & Wilk, 2014). Stretching the concept in a similar way, we can view the student-customers as members of the “imagined community” of Greece, which includes the President of the Republic, The Alternate Minister of Health, the press, the “movement” *I Won’t Pay* and the political parties that back it. In this community of practice, as apprentices, new members are daily “taught” about rights, duties and law abidance through “participation as a way of learning-- of both absorbing and being absorbed in-- the ‘culture of practice’” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95).

The data from the press in many ways echoes the findings, suggesting that these students’ attitudes towards the law, as well as their conceptions of rights and duties are far from an isolated case. The findings indicate that the students’ community of practice is part of a larger community with a strikingly similar civic culture.

What is the Status of School Knowledge?

One of the main tasks assigned to schools is shaping future citizens (Merry, 2018). This goal may be pursued through civics or through a variety of moral education programmes. However, whatever knowledge students may understand and successfully reproduce (e.g., for the purpose of examinations) is not automatically transferred to out-of-school life and practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In school, theory often dominates in relation to practice. In Greek civic education, in spite of the recent adoption of new teaching models, an emphasis on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge is still central in secondary education (Panagiotou, 2011). Pupils learn to *talk* or *write* about rights and duties. As participants in the real world, instead, as members of socio-cultural communities of practice, they learn the *practice* of rights and duties. They acquire such knowledge from each other, often by imitation, by watching peers or colleagues in interaction. This kind of learning, of course, is not subject to systematic testing and evaluation (Lave, 1988; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Yet, people's behaviour is (informally) evaluated and, if found to be wrong, socially sanctioned: people may be ignored, laughed at, insulted, etc. (Author smoke). Standing up for their rights is punished. A kind of parallel rule-system is at work, unofficial but nonetheless institutionalized, put in practice by a large number of people, put up with by others, openly defended by intellectuals, educated individuals and members of the elite, too often ignored by law enforcers.

On a first level, two kinds of learning are involved. We can call them "theory" (i.e., stuff good for talking) and "practice" (i.e., the stuff real interactions are made of). The "theoretical" knowledge is stocked in the mind, whereas "practical" knowledge is stocked in the body and in relationships among people. On a more abstract level, we can posit a kind of meta-knowledge, which may be derived from the comparison between the two. This is likely to include the idea that "what we learn in school is useless outside." To the extent to which students acquire such learning, schooling and school knowledge are likely to lose legitimation in their eyes. In a way, what is taught in schools about, among other things, rights and duties, is threatened by out-of-school "teaching"—a more powerful source of socialization (Lave, 1988).

If students were surrounded by more law-abiding people, they would be more likely to learn to respect laws. There is a vicious circle linking the law-enforcers' indifference, the cafe staff tolerance and student behaviour. For the vicious circle to be broken, law-enforcers should start taking their role seriously. There is evidence that legal regulation of some activity can change the meaning of that activity and thus people's attitude about that behaviour (Bilz & Nadler, 2014). Provided, of course, that legislation does not remain on paper. In our case, implementation of the smoke-free law might de-normalise smoking (i.e., push it out of the sphere of what is considered normal and into being an abnormal practice; Chapman & Freeman, 2008). In time, people may thus develop new habits around smoking and next generations may participate in communities of practice where people's behaviour, more in line with legislation, will promote a different learning.

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