

level and cannot identify a role in their integration, based upon the common experience of diversity, at a community level.

*Key words:* refugees, immigrants, Muslims, Rhodes, Greece, diversity, othering, trauma

## INTRODUCTION

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During 2015 and 2016 the Mass Media across the world conveyed images of human despair in the short distance between the shores of Asia Minor and the Aegean islands. The image of suffering has become so common in recent years, that turned into a rather trivial statement. Nevertheless, the case of refugees and immigrants continues to attract attention to the degree that its spatial and temporal condensation is combined with the size of the population in movement. While at the forefront of the migration crisis, as one of the few points of entrance to Europe, Rhodes island in Greece has not attracted much media attention compared to other islands in Southern and South-Eastern Europe. That development allowed the examination of integration policies for incoming refugees and immigrants, custom made for the local social conditions.

The *Understanding Diversity in Rhodes: Traditional and New Others* (UnDRho) research project, which received funding from the EEA Mechanism 2009–2014 (GR07/3635), focused on the social formation of Rhodes island and the dynamics of diversity at the local level; a diversity represented by the local Muslim community and the Muslim refugees and immigrants that arrive on the island. More specifically, the qualitative characteristics of the reception of Muslim newcomers from the Rhodian Muslims have been examined with the view to forming innovative integration policies. The research was designed to test two hypotheses concerning the integration of Muslim refugees and immigrants by using the cultural diversity of the Rhodian Muslims as an entry point to the island's society. The first one regards the use of religion, namely the common cultural feature of the two groups, as a connecting point between them and a stepping stone towards the integration of the refugees and immigrants.



The second hypothesis refers to the use of the experienced cultural diversity *per se* as a “convergence point” between the two social groups.

The present article will focus on the theoretical background, the research strategy and the results from the examination of the aforementioned second hypothesis. Before the analysis of the employed methodology, some conceptual clarifications need to be made. The “convergence point” used in the description of the hypothesis is a working concept developed for the needs of the research. It is approached as the moment of empathy that stems from the common experience of diversity and determines the psychological readiness to support the integration of the refugees and immigrants. In the framework of a deductive research strategy, the convergence point concept has been analysed in two researchable questions (Bryman 2004, 8) namely how the Rhodian Muslims make sense of their cultural diversity and how this is affecting their perception of the new diversity represented by refugees and immigrants. The theoretical background informing the process of deduction is rather limited since the particular field of research has not been studied under the light of the same concepts before. Kaurinkoski (2012) approached the Rhodian Muslims as a social group from a descriptive ethnographical point of view, while Georgallidou (2004) conducted a socio-linguistic research. Outside the particular field, there exists a bibliography that focuses on the relations between contemporary migration waves and already settled generations of migrants (see Madibbo 2007). Although culturally diverse social groups with historical presence constitute a different case from that described in the previous bibliography, some interesting analogies regarding the dynamics between inner and outer outgroups are indeed deduced in the chapter regarding the dynamics of trauma.

Those researchable questions, along with pertinent questions concerning the first hypothesis, have been taken into consideration in the methodology designed to accommodate the concepts of the research. The population of the research referred to the Rhodian Muslims over fifty-five years old. That design intended to focus on members of the community with personal memories



from the last period in which their religious identity could have possibly attracted actual diversified behaviour rather than just symbolic. Such behaviour, although rare, not widespread and possibly insignificant (two confirmed incidents of damaged property), was located, based on archival research of the local newspapers and confirmed by the empirical part of the research project, during 1974, when Turkey invaded Cyprus (Kokkinos et al. 2016b). To the extent that the research studied the readiness of the middle-aged and older Rhodian Muslims to support the integration of the Muslim refugees and immigrants, younger members of the community and Muslim immigrants, only formed quasi control groups for comparison purposes. On the other hand, refugees have started arriving on the island only two years ago, while due to the present migration policy they remain on Rhodes between few days and few months depending on their legal status. Therefore, their temporary presence prevents the formation of a thorough impression of the group dynamics from their side. With those caveats in mind, the researchers, in order to shed light on the migration side, interviewed the Syrians that live on the island for decades, as economic immigrants themselves, and serve as interpreters for the refugee camp. All sample segments were generated through a snowball technique that resulted to eighteen interviews and twenty-six cases of non-participant observation from January to May 2016.

In terms of method employed, triangulation was achieved through the conduct of long interviews, in combination with quantitative content analysis and non-participant observation. The main segment of the sample, namely the Rhodian Muslims over fifty-five years old were interviewed with a combination of Life Narrative (Bryman 2004, 322–3) and semi-structured method. The purpose of the preceding Life Narrative part was to allow the interviewees, through retrospection on their life, to understand, before rationalise, and finally express their own perception of their cultural diversity, namely the first researchable question of the second hypothesis. Based on that self-retrospection, the interview would proceed with the semi-structured part of the interview in defining how the way that Rhodian Muslims make sense of their diversity affects their



perception of the new diversity on the island as well as other concepts pertaining to the first hypothesis.

In that research framework, the present article will approach an aspect of the results concerning the second hypothesis. More specifically, it will elaborate on the way that the intergenerational differences, among Rhodian Muslims, in the perception of cultural diversity lead to different tentative constructs of social identities. In that process, the social trauma of the culturally diverse group appears to be a central consideration in the construction of the array of social identities with which it is appointed. The research revealed an incomplete, and intergenerationally diversified, process of social trauma based on the experienced distancing from the cultural capital of the Rhodian Muslim community; a “trauma on hold”. That offers a possible strand of explanation for the reserved empathy of the Rhodian Muslims to the Muslim immigrants and refugees and constitutes the “convergence point” hypothesis of the research unsupported. The next chapter will debrief the contours of diversity in Greece and Rhodes under historical and social perspective. It will be followed by the presentation of the empirical part of the UnDRho project regarding the intergenerational perception of cultural diversity, followed by a brief theoretical discussion of the concept of social trauma before that analysis is projected in the case of the Rhodian Muslim community. In that section, the case of “trauma on hold” will be analysed leading to the discussion of the integration of Muslim refugees and immigrants in Rhodes under the light of the dynamics of trauma with the local Muslim community.

#### DIVERSITY IN GREECE AND RHODES ISLAND UNDER HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Rhodes Island constitutes the longstanding home of a local Muslim community. Nevertheless, the dominant Greek citizen profile is characterised by Greek ethnic origin and Christian Orthodox religion. Therefore, from the official statistics point of view the existence of such a culturally diverse community in the homogenous Greek society appears as a peculiarity.



Nonetheless, a deeper insight of the social formation in Greece would reveal a number of small, although existing, groups that differ from the aforementioned dominant profile. Their diversity may be identified in religious level (Catholic Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews etc.) or in the level of language and race (e.g. Roma people). Amongst those diversities –in relation to the mainstream identity- and in accordance to a longstanding regime, it is only the Western Thrace Muslim community that is officially acknowledged under a religious minority status.

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A retrospection requires a focus on the set of 1923 Lausanne treaties between Greece and Turkey that concluded the preceding war between the two countries. Probably the most significant provision of those international agreements was the population exchange, along with the consequent relocation of the Greek Orthodox population from Turkey to Greece and the opposite for Muslims from Greece to Turkey (Lausanne Treaty 1923). The subsequent treaty acknowledged a Muslim religious minority in Greece and a Greek Orthodox minority in Turkey with pertinent protective rights that were exempted from exchange (Lausanne Treaty 1923). In that framework, this treaty regulated also a series of religious, social and economic issues of the aforementioned culturally diverse populations in concern to internal affairs in Greece and Turkey. Interestingly, the minority populations identified in the treaty are defined, amongst else, in reference to their particular areas of origin and more specifically in Western Thrace regarding the Muslim minority of Greece and on the other hand in Istanbul and on the Aegean islands of Imvros and Tenedos regarding the Greek Orthodox minority of Turkey. The significance of the Lausanne treaty is that it forms a legal and institutional “future” both for the population that was exchanged between the two countries, as well as the population that was exempted. The very essence of that legal-cum-institutional “future” is a new *de jure* identity, namely the status of minority (Avramopoulou and Karakatsani 2002).

Nevertheless, statistical data regarding the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the pertinent population of Western Thrace, as well as other culturally diverse communities in Greece, are not available. This shortfall is linked to



methodological issues as well as the reluctance of the central administration to benefit from scientific studies regarding the historical and contemporary multiculturalism in Greece and to develop corresponding policies for its protection. The reasons should be identified with the fear and caution with which diversity is regarded, both as “Trojan horse” and as menace against the national policies and the public order (Manolopoulou-Varvitsioti 2008, 37–8). As a matter of fact, it is claimed (Kahl 2009, 162) that the term minority – used only for the Greek Muslim population in Western Thrace – is indeed not well received by the Christian citizens. More specifically, he notes the various linguistic and cultural diversities found across Greece which are widely perceived as manifestations of an absence of ethnic Greek identity or even as a peculiar “anti-Greekness” and disobedience against the state.

Corresponding to that, the dominant historiographical narrative presents a reserved approach towards the embedded cultural diversity of the Greek society. In a retrospective study of the way that the Muslim communities are presented in Greek historiography, Katsikas demonstrates that, at least until 1989, the majority of Greek academics avoided any reference to the Muslim population that resided in Greece before 1923, namely before the Lausanne Treaty. On the other hand, the primary socio-historical focus on the Greek Muslims of Western Thrace structures a false image about the life of the culturally diverse communities in the complex environment of the Greek state (Katsikas 2012, 453).

Overall, it could be noted that the Greek national narrative has been formed on the basis of cultural, national, religious and linguistic homogeneity of the population (Christopoulos 2002). As a result, the policies implemented throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding the culturally diverse communities were balancing between treating them as a destabilising factor and as a foreign body (see Droumpouki 2016, 165).

The immediate effect of the previously described situation is the methodological problems appearing in the scientific analysis of the qualitative and quantitative characteristic of the culturally diverse communities. The indirectly influenced



socio-historical analysis from the dominant national narrative and the fragmented historiography is coupled by the fact that the Greek Statistics Authority discontinued the recording of religious data after 1951. Regardless of those caveats, rigorous scientific research (Christopoulos 2002; Kokkinos et al. 2008; Manolopoulou-Varvitsioti 2008; Benedikter 2006) has recorded indeed a number of small size culturally diverse communities in Greece.

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The previous analysis applies in the case of Rhodes Island as well. In 2022, the local Muslim community will be present on the island for at least seven centuries. In 1522 the siege and conquest of Rhodes by Suleiman the Magnificent (Suleiman al Kanuni 1495–1566) marked an important milestone for the presence of Muslims on Rhodes (Georgallidou et al. 2013; Tsitselikis 2011, 27; Kaurinkoski 2012 47–8). Nonetheless, Islam was present on the island long before that period. Due to the important role of the port of Rhodes along the merchandising routes in the Eastern Mediterranean, the presence of Muslims was recorded as early as the 9th century (Savorianakis 2000, 70). The Ottoman siege and conquest of Rhodes and the surrounding islands have been instrumental for the Ottoman operations against the Hospitaller Knights and the Venetians in the Aegean Sea between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century; not only as an extension of the empire's possessions but also as a declaration of a power, which was self-identified as Muslim, namely the Ottoman Empire, to convince for its relentless power by God's will (Efthimiou 1992, 23).

One of the first provisions of the Ottoman administration was the implementation of a settlement program in order to reinforce demographically the island after the deadly siege and the fleeing of the Hospitaller Knights along with a number of Rhodians to Malta. A different aspect of the same operation was the effort to transform the religious and ethnic balance of the population. Thus, around 2.000 janissaries, 3.000 soldiers and around 150 Jews were initially settled, followed by a new program with different groups from the coast of Asia Minor (Savorianakis 2000, 69). Throughout the Ottoman administration, Rhodes had been attracting special population groups, as





part of relevant settlement policies. The most recent, within the Ottoman administration period, was the settlement of six hundred Circassians in 1878 (Savorianakis 2000, 87) and a number of Muslims, of Greek ethnic background, from Crete between 1898 and 1899 who relocated during the turbulent period after the Russian occupation of the island of origin (Savorianakis 2000, 58; Tsitselikis 2011, 38; Andriotis, 2004; Williams 2003; Georgallidou et al. 2011).

Despite those settlements, the population balance on the island remained unchanged and characterised by Greek Christian demographic hegemony. Nonetheless, throughout the Ottoman administration of Rhodes (1522 – 1912) the political and economic ruling class was associated with the Muslim population of Turkish decent. Indicative of that development were the formed urban limits. The first settlers reserved the available housing space within the walled medieval city, namely the administrative and commercial centre of the island. Thus, the Christian population resettled in urban cores around the walls. The fortifications therefore, signified a peculiar geography of two separate worlds (Savorianakis 2000, 42). The protection of the *Insiders* designated semiologically the fear of the numerous *Others*.

Relevant to the separated use of space, a unique ethno-religious segmentation was instrumental to the administration of the Ottoman Empire. The religious communities (*millets*) were the subjects and at the same times the operators of a semi-autonomous administrative system under the purview of which the religious affairs along with several aspects of the social policy and the educational system were organised (Tsitselikis 2006; Waltzer 1999; Appiah 2007). After 1912 Rhodes came under Italian rule. The new administration, although initially acknowledged the ethno-religious communities merely as religious communities, gradually truncated their administrative rights, especially after the turn to the fascist regime and during the governance by Cesare Maria de Vecchi. The incorporation of the Dodecanese, the island complex that includes Rhodes, in Greece (1948) ceded automatically the Greek citizenship to the Italian “Aegean Islands” quasi-citizenship (Cittadinanza delle Isole dell’ Egeo). Nevertheless, special arrangements came into force concerning





the education and the operation of religious foundations of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish faith, which demonstrates an indirect acknowledgement of the cultural diversity embedded in the Rhodian multicultural society (Georgallidou et al. 2011).

For the Dodecanese island complex, the first and last time that religion constituted a concept to be measured in a census was in 1951. Therefore, the demography of Muslims or of any other religion in Rhodes island, as well as in the rest of Greece, can only be estimated. The available data from bibliographical sources are far from consistent. What could be ascertained, though, (Papadopoulos 2013; Kaurinkoski 2012; Lantza 2011; Tsitselikis 2006; Dimitropoulos 2004; Savorianakis 2000; Tsirpanlis 1998; Chiotakis 1997) is on the one hand the violent fluctuation, possibly due to the settlement efforts, and on the other hand the steady reduction of the size of the population since mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The last estimation from 1997 raises the number of the Rhodian Muslim population to 3.000 people (Chiotakis 1997).

The Muslim community of Rhodes is generally a bilingual group, although this is subject to age, spatial differentiations and ethnic origin. With the exception of Muslims of Greek origin that arrived in Rhodes at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from Crete who speak only Greek, older Muslims and residents of rural and suburban areas speak a local dialect of Turkish simultaneously with a variety of Greek. Younger generations use a newer version of this language; while, children prefer Greek, accompanied by passive knowledge of Turkish (Georgallidou et al. 2011). Marianthi Georgallidou (2004) connects the particular evolution of bilinguality with the abandoning of the self-consistency and the closeness of the system of social and relative relations. The microstructures of the Muslim social organisation are progressively interrelated and assimilated in the long structures of the wider social and cultural environment of the island (Georgallidou 2004).

Towards that development, a series of causes and consequences cannot ignore the evolution of the special curricula for Muslim students. For centuries under Ottoman administration the educational system was organised and delivered by virtue



of the *millet* system. In other words, the educational system(s) was under the purview of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish ethno-religious communities. It was only in 1894 that the central Ottoman government attempted to control the appointment of teachers at the community schools. The decentralised education system was retained by the Italian administration until 1937 that came under full governmental control, with the Italian curriculum being implemented (Tsitselikis 2006, 523; Lantza 2011, 74). The retrogression continued with the brief spell of British administration (1945–1947) returning to the communitarian educational system (Tsitselikis 2006, 523); while the integration of the Dodecanese into Greece introduced the centrally organised common curriculum throughout the country. Nevertheless, a parallel one was introduced for the Muslim schools with special religious courses, as well as courses both in Greek and Turkish. What is significant is that, although the special curriculum for the Greek Muslim minority in Thrace was prescribed by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, the parallel curriculum in Rhodes and Kos islands was the result of certain degree of cooperation between Greece and Turkey. For instance, in 1966 an informal bilateral agreement between the two ministers of foreign affairs provided for the use of school handbooks from Turkey (Tsitselikis 2006, 528), while Rhodian Muslims were studying in Turkey in order to return to Rhodes as school teachers. Political reactions and complaints have been recorded from both sides but the particular relations at the level of governance continued. As relations were fragile, the balance was overturned in 1972 when the Greek military coup reacted at the closure of the Greek schools in Turkey and therefore discontinued the parallel curriculum in Rhodes and Kos.

The previous retrospective attests an implicit *othering* process stemming from long embedded divisionary practices among the variety of cultural diversities present on the island of Rhodes. The following section will approach the qualitative characteristic of the Rhodian Muslim cultural diversity.



## DIVERSITY AND IDENTITY OF THE RHODIAN MUSLIMS

| 54 | The aforementioned implicit *othering* process is neither a new nor a unilateral process; what is changing is rather the positioning in the power relations reserved by the social groups. More specifically, the position of dominant and dominated social groups changes effectively between the Muslim and the Christian community during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indications of that interchange could be identified in the vicissitudes of the educational system, as well as the very establishment of the *sui generis* autonomous ethnic-religious communities' system, namely the *millets*. It lasted for centuries during the Ottoman period rendering it a well embedded feature of the local social formation. Although abandoned early during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some of its manifestations are still apparent such as the inscription in the memory of the space (Legg 2005). The walled medieval town of Rhodes has been reserved for the protection of the Muslim and Jewish communities while Christians were forced to leave the castle before dusk. Consequently, the Muslim properties today tend to be concentrated in the Medieval town or in fertile land around the island that used to belong to the ruling class. A different survival of the communitarian system, merely as a legal oddity, regards the contemporary administration of the property of religious foundations either Christian (Ελληνορθόδοξη Κοινότητα [Greek Orthodox Community]), Muslim (Βακούφ [Waqf]) or Jewish (Ισραηλιτική Κοινότητα [Jewish Community]).

On the other hand, what the relevant bibliography ascertains and our research confirms is that the Muslim community in Rhodes presents a cultural diversity that is well embedded in the social dynamics of the island in multiple ways (see Kaurinkoski 2012; Tsitselikis 2011; Georgallidou et al. 2013; Georgallidou 2004). They constitute a *sui generis* Other, that is functionally integrated in the contemporary society of the island but not assimilated, despite their centuries long presence. We identified three approaches according to which the Rhodian Muslims make sense of their cultural diversity. That classification corresponds to a generational breakdown of the respondents.



For the older Rhodian Muslims, cultural diversity appears to revolve around memory, as a social construct. In their case the Muslim social identity continuously interconnects with the commemoration of the historical origin of the community's presence on the island. What is more interesting, is the way that this commemoration is communicated. Older members of the community constantly use religious concepts and terms connected to history and through that they make sense of their present social identity. But behind the "religious lines" subtle connotations of the past and current social hierarchy could be identified.

Listen, my family is very old here. When Sultan Suleiman conquered Rhodes, 1522, since that time is my family here. But I have royal blood. Two Pasha... you know Pasha is great official. Two Pasha (from my family) are buried in the graveyard in Madraki. Ahmed Pasha and Mustafa Pasha.

Interview with F.K.

This excerpt from an interview with an old Muslim lady is indicative. In the spontaneous narration of her life, in the framework of the Life Narrative method, she chooses to identify herself through the commemoration of the social hierarchy of the Ottoman past which is further expressed with references to religious terms. Indeed, the graveyard in Madraki hosts Ottoman officials that have fallen in disfavour (Crabites 1933, 78). A different aspect, and quite common in the interviews with older members of the community, is the social identification through references to the family property. The following excerpt from the interview with another Muslim lady that lives next to a church is indicative:

My friend is very religious; she is going to the church. I told her, look Chryssa, tell him [the priest] to avoid offending because the Waqf donated land to make that church. I donated a piece of my land too. He [the priest] should be grateful and not offending. He [the priest] then stopped it. 52 days later during a festivity, he said in the sermon "we thank the people who donated the land". He said that for me. I told my friend to thank him.

Interview with G.A.



Those religious and property connotations are only indicative in a plethora. The way that the social identity of cultural diversity is implied through history, hierarchy (see for example the “required” acknowledgment to the donor) and religion among the older members of the Muslim community reflects the embedded “survivals” of the *millet* system, namely the social hierarchy formed on the basis of religious differentiation. Indeed, the age of the interviewees implies that they would have lived their formative years either during or just after the official abolition of the *millet* system.

The case for the middle-aged Rhodian Muslims, however, is different. Born after the abolition of the *millet* system but during the parallel curriculum, their cultural diversity informs their social identity by expressions referring to their cultural capital. The latter becomes the core of their differentiated identity. More specifically, the content of the cultural capital, at least for those interviewed, was the issue of the language and in no case the religion. Language incorporates such symbolic meaning for them that what has been repeatedly identified amongst interviewees was not their own connection to Turkish but the concern for the younger generations with the gradually diminished knowledge to the mother tongue. They implicitly seem to experience that situation as a worrying reduction from their cultural capital. Interestingly, that concern is always covered under the plausible benefit of multilingualism and its socio-economic value.

If we are talking for every man’s mother tongue, it is good to keep it alive. It is not bad irrespective of the country they live. It is not bad. It benefits both sides. Look, to know a language resembles to being another man. Whatever language this is.

Interview with M. K.

I think that children should have a connection with the mother tongue. To know one more language is definitely good from any point of view. If this [Turkish] is actually needed today... I don’t know how to evaluate, in a positive or negative way. [...] I believe that it would be good to be taught the language, to know the language. There are... for example Rhodes is a tourist island, there are many people who come from the opposite shores [Turkey] as tourists, there is this tourist development in the islands during



Summer, there are many people from tour operators that ask if there are young Rhodians that could handle the Turkish language very well to help them.

Interview with S.T.

Younger generations, on the other hand, lack both historical references, namely the *millet* system and the parallel curriculum. For them the recognition of their cultural differentiation revolves around the manifesting function of religion as component of their identity and cultural tradition but not language or religion as such. Indeed, young Rhodian Muslims live in a cultural context foreign to them since they don't speak and hardly understand Turkish, while from a religious point of view they belong to the "belonging but not believing" part of the population (Karamouzis 2015; Kokkinos et al. 2016a) along with the majority of the Rhodians. Their religious diversity constitutes a symbolic shell rather than an original existential choice. Exactly because they cannot empathise with that symbolic identity, the external manifestations of its religious content bring them in front of awkward moments. Despite that readily recognisable development, their cultural limbo situation makes the identification of the exact linkage between their cultural diversity and the content of the social identity rather difficult.

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After the introduction, just from the name, the other person asks "Sorry, what?". When I tell them about my religion, they look at me in the beginning in a reserved way. Until they get to know me and understand that I am not the stereotypical Muslim who is religious and always there and only believes this and that... until they understand who I really am and get to know me... I faced that and I always face that'

Interview with I.S.

It appears therefore, that the Rhodian Muslim cultural diversity is being internalised and understood in multiple ways by the members of the community. If that diversity indicates the triggering of an *othering* process, as already explained, the question arising regards the particular way that this process is internalised by the Rhodian Muslims.



## TRAUMA, SOCIAL IDENTITY AND THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF RHODES

The importance of understanding the insights of the *othering* process from the side of internalising part lies with the particular qualitative characteristics presented in the linkage between the perception of cultural diversity and the construction of social identities. In that process, the potential existence of social trauma born by a social group signifies, as will be shown in the following theoretical exploration, that it does not just passively receive a social identity but actively contributes in its determination.

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Trauma is separated from the experienced incident that stands as the cause of trauma. The experience is not straightforwardly narratable but latent under the form of various subconscious reversions to the past (Caruth 1996). Trauma therefore is independent from time. When emerged, it languishes social conformism and the need to comply by the cover up of anguish. Therefore, trauma constitutes a breach of the order of time and at the same time a rift of the social order (Davoine and Gaudillière 2004). An interesting insight is provided by the Freudian perception to the so called “social trauma”. People develop a distinctive quasi-protective relation with social institutions such as the political system or the national community, resembling to that between child and mother. They tend to project upon them the anxieties and existential suffering for which they request acknowledgment. In that respect, social trauma represents the rift of that relation. The most common cause for that rift is when the social institutions and especially the state don’t assume their protective role or when the social formation victimises or stigmatises social groups (de Tubert 2006).

From a sociological perspective, Alexander examines the conditions under which a fact or an imaginary construction could be included in semiotic structures receiving such socio-cultural significance to become a collective trauma (Alexander 2004, 9). In his epistemological approach, the crucial factor behind a collective trauma is the various meanings appointed *ex post facto* from a society or a social group when in need of forming, transforming or reorganizing their collective identity. More specifically, an





incident becomes a trauma when it constitutes the core of the community's historical narrative. Under a temporal perspective, an incident becomes a trauma when the painful inscription at the historical memory is used not only as mental and emotional prism in order to make sense of the past, but also as a direction for the course of the society or social group in the future (Alexander 2004, 10). Alexander holds that meanings, as products of a socio-cultural process, contribute to the creation of identity. At the same time, it is those *ex post facto* meanings that construct at a social level the feeling of shock or fear, rather than facts (Alexander 2004, 10). Therefore, social trauma is not only separated from the experience but also transferred between generations.

Most importantly, though, Alexander analyses the mechanisms that facilitate the reorganisation of the normative identity narrative of a social, political or racial group around the collective trauma. Among those mechanisms, the most important is the mobilisation of a group to rally around effective and extensive communication networks which gradually form the conditions under which an alternative identity narrative becomes hegemonic. Those conditions, in other words, the structural elements of a historical traumatic narrative include the identification of the cause of the collective pain, of the victimised group, of the reasons behind its persecution, of the consequences of that persecution, of the significance of the persecution and of the persecutor. All those processes are necessarily mediated by expedience and dedicated research efforts (Alexander 2004, 13–5). The hegemony of the new historical trauma, is materialised in the institutional fields of religiosity, aesthetics, justice, communication and policy making. In the first field of religiosity, trauma is understood as theodicy or divine injustice. In the field of aesthetics, trauma is identified in an imaginary state using multiple semiotic codes. In the third field trauma is the disputed stake in the justice administration system. Communication through traditional as well as social media constitutes the fourth field for trauma while the last one is the policy making, where trauma is recorded in the bureaucracy and hegemonic ideology and gradually becomes a banality (Alexander 2004, 13–21; Demertzis 2013, 26–9).



As already shown the multiple aspects of the Rhodian Muslim cultural diversity informs respective internalisation processes. The community into question is far from a coherent single entity and along with the transgenerational differences, social and cultural ones were also identified during the empirical part of the research. The most significant of them is the difference between the majority of the community and the descendants of the Cretan Muslims that arrived on the island at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and constitute a separate group not only historically but also linguistically. Based on the interviews conducted, implicit manifestations of the embedded *othering* process can be identified, mainly through practices that mainstream divisions. What differs among generations is the way that those practices are received and how different generations come in terms with them; in other words, the way that they make sense of their cultural diversity. Having in mind that structure, the question arising is if trauma could be identified among the Rhodian Muslims.

Despite the, self-understandable, denial expressed every time an interviewee was asked directly if he or she has ever experienced *otherness* on Rhodes, the way that they narrated their life history and the everyday social relations outline cases in which their cultural diversity triggers diversified behaviour towards them. Irrespective of the full economic integration of the Muslim community, the generally diversified behaviour or divisive practices vested with the Muslim identity could possibly point towards a traumatic perception of the social interactions. It remains a hypothesis, though, if that perception should be acknowledged as symptom of social trauma. Decisive factors, according to Alexander's approach, that would give meaning *ex post facto* to the primary traumatic incident do not exist. The internal divisions of the community as exemplified, amongst else, in the intergenerational differences demonstrate a community that is far from rallying around a common cause as long as they make sense of diversity in a different way and position their traumatic incident in relatively different fields.

On the other hand, the pervasive sense of cultural capital reduction, especially among the middle-aged members of the community could possibly direct towards a traumatic perception of



cultural diversity. The lack of pertinent courses in the official curriculum is narrated as a breach of the cultural continuity and to that degree as danger to the consciousness of the community's identity. The reason is that language in that case is presented as conveyor of the cultural memory to the descendants. That conception appoints to language the role of a constitutive element of the collective identity. Nevertheless, the potentially traumatic experience of the gradual disuse of the Turkish language as a mother tongue in public space and more specifically at the educational system, tends to be counterbalanced, in an imagery and politically correct level, by defending multilingualism, which is instrumental for economic reasons. Multilingualism, therefore, as appears in the previous interview excerpts, becomes the optional method for the Muslim community to indirectly pursue the endorsement of Turkish as a spoken language in the public space.

Both strands of memories/experiences are repelled and inactivated for different reasons in each generation. When reflecting on those potentially traumatic memories, the middle-aged group risks overturning their functional integration in the society and the participation in the prosperous economic life of the island. For the younger generation, a hypothesis for the "inactivation of those experiences" regards the awkward moments of the manifesting function of religion as demonstrated before. The symbolic belonging to a cultural capital with which they don't empathise would be renewed every time they would be reflecting on the memories of the awkward moments.

#### THE DYNAMICS OF TRAUMA: OLD OTHERS (RHODIAN MUSLIMS) AND NEW OTHERS (MIGRANTS)

The discussion about the hibernating trauma of the Muslim community of Rhodes goes beyond a mere phenomenology. Its expediency can be identified with the contemporary drama of the mixed migration flows and the consequent need for integration policies. The common denominator between the two cases, namely the population movement and the administration of cultural diversity are found in *otherness*.



Emmanuel Levinas (1974 and 1991) in his account of the industrialised barbarism of the Holocaust notes that the *Other* is a moral predicate against the *Self* which is based on our common nature as human beings; on our common existential status. Therefore, it is unethical to perceive the *Other* in a mechanistic way, or as a combination of biological and cultural characteristics that constitute the human void of content. In that way, the person is “dehydrated” from the diverse categories that at the bottom line constitute him or her a person; he or she becomes a “no-person”. Günther Anders, a Holocaust survivor himself, supports this view (in Cassin 2015, 101–2) by stressing that “human is humans; it exists only in plural... humans are not the plural of human; every human is a form of humans in singular”. Therefore, the concern about the *Other* is not just an ethical one but the, significant for the social relations (see Rosanvallon 2013), need of the human nature to resist to the conditions that create *otherness* and *Others* and more specifically to the obliteration of what constitutes someone a mere participant of externally imposed categorisations (see also the ethical considerations of migration in Sager 2016).

The issue of extraneous categorisations sheds light on a particular aspect of the *othering* experiences and more specifically that of immigrants and social minority groups. In other words, should there be any conceptual link between outgroups that arrive at a place and the diversified outgroups (Taras 2009; Madibbo 2007) that reside in the same place? Following Giorgio Agamben’s approach on refugees, extended for the case of immigrants, it could be argued that the population in movement, abandoned in their cruel or heinous fate, undergo a „state of exclusion“ and live a „bare life“ exposed to cynicism and indifference and sometimes to violence and dehumanization (Agamben 1998; Agamben 1999; Agamben 2005). In that framework, Kymlicka (2001, 275), regardless of his endorsement on the equal treatment of under-represented groups, identifies conceptual differences in the common administration of the inner and outer outgroups. Social minorities, in an attempt to reinforce their diversity from the assimilative tendency towards the majoritarian paradigm, tend to be more assertive in comparison



to refugees and immigrants. His argument seems to be over-focusing on historical and geographical presence of the different categories of social groups (Parekh 2000, 108–109) while disregarding the importance of a common framework, either legal or social.

On the other hand, the interconnection between the two groups has been acknowledged by different scholars (e.g. in Cesarani and Fulbrook 1996) while others have focused particularly on the identification of the relation between them. The potential problems from the unclear conceptual environment lead Toggenburg (2008) as well as Sasse and Thielemann (2005) to begin from clarifying the concepts involved. In their analyses, the two terms participate in a methodological interplay in wider institutional frameworks. Similarly, methodological is the approach by Christopoulos (2006) who holds that between the two concepts there exist common methodological perspectives due to the common denominator which is the *othering* process. The historical framework, according to Christopoulos, can and should delimitate the pertinent concepts. Tsimbiridou (2011, 301) applies an anthropological approach and stresses the need for “creative analytical tools” suitable to approach micro and macro analysis regarding both migration and the under-represented social minorities. Tsimbiridou stresses that the integration of the population in movement is faced with a gradual process of “minoratisation”. In other words, several levels of exclusions, both practical and symbolic, prevent the outgroups (inner and outer) from full participation in the social life (Tsimbiridou 2011, 300–2; Ventoura 2011). Therefore, the points of convergence between social minorities and migration are not only a moral predicate against the demonisation of the *Other*, but also an essential link of their needs with regard to successful integration.

The aforementioned issue of exclusions constitutes the conceptual bridge between the previous analysis and the hibernating trauma of the Rhodian Muslim community. As already mentioned, middle-aged Rhodian Muslims experience the discontinuation of the parallel curriculum as a reduction from their cultural capital, while the younger generations fail to empathise with the



externally imposed symbolic representations of their cultural diversity. The same reduction from the cultural capital, along with a number of different exclusions, will most likely be experienced by refugees and immigrants during their integration on the island. The empirical research in the framework of the UnDRho project, however, did not confirm the hypothesis that the experienced diversity could become a convergence point regarding the two social groups. The reason has been identified with the fact that cultural diversity of the Rhodian Muslims, as *otherness*, does not connect the past with the future. It has not become the constitutive element of their identity to the extent that it remains a “trauma on hold”. By taking into consideration the identity formative function of trauma, it appears that as long as the Rhodian Muslims are only passive bearers of an externally structured social identity they will not identify themselves with an active social role as a community. Indeed, despite the humanitarian approach to the immediate needs of refugees and immigrants on an individual level, Rhodian Muslims cannot see a potential role in the integration of the Muslim newcomers in a community level.

How do you see them?

The immigrants? Let me tell you that... It is a pity, they are human beings. It is a pity, but we should be concerned with our situation /.../ Now you tell me, if I was to help. How many of them should I help?

Interview with G. A.

Do you think, there is space here in Rhodes for them to integrate or to assimilate?

There is always space. The point is that... it will take them a lot of time and many years... to find the best, how can I say that... the suitable groups, the suitable... the suitable persons in order to integrate.

Where could they find them?

Difficult. Difficult. I mean, in the beginning, they may... until they integrate, they may experience racism, they will hear a lot. Until they assimilate to the society.

Here in Rhodes there is a Muslim community, could it be a different case?

It will not be different, because the Muslim community of Rhodes is dispersed. It is virtually inexistent... it is not united. In general, its members don't have the best relations among each other.

Interview with I. S.

The above excerpt is an interesting account of the relation between the Rhodian Muslim community and the Muslim immigrants that came from one of the younger interviewees. The reserved stance of the Muslims in a community level in front of the refugee crisis is confirmed by a Syrian interpreter who volunteers at the transit refugee camp of Rhodes.

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Look, we had cooperation with the Waqf /.../ they have offered help to immigrants that don't have the means to bury their people. Neither opportunity to travel back to their country. But I haven't seen any kind of collective that mentions that it belongs to the Muslim community. Surely, among the people that come and offer provisions etc. there might be some Muslims. You cannot ask anybody "show me what you are..." and nobody says, "I am Muslim and I came to offer". They only come as humans to offer.

Interview with J. N.

## CONCLUSION

Identity, diversity and trauma constitute complex concepts that interweave in a consistent whole. Their complexity is found in a multiplicity of fields. They are equally contingent to the personal as well as social levels making them subject to both micro and macro analysis. Their basic contingency, however, is to history and conjuncture to a degree that the latter form a *sine qua non* for their analysis. The particular way in which the personal engrafts the social and in which history and conjuncture dictates inductively the wider image interweave and form the content of the concepts. In that framework, elementary to understanding diversity is the way that individuals and social groups make sense of identity. Trauma, on the other hand, depends on the way that history and conjuncture affects diversity; while, if present,





trauma will be forming the narratives of identity and diversity for both past and future. Thus, trauma becomes a critical point of temporal convergence; a “memory bridge”. Exactly because of its transcendental nature that crosses vertically across time, trauma can also be “present”. As such, it can form indeed the point of convergence, or moment of empathy, between traumatised inner outgroups and outer outgroups; in other words, between marginalised *Others* and migrant *Others*.

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Trauma however is a dynamic social process that can initiate, evolve or halt as it is subject to historical conditions and the social conjuncture. Therefore, despite the existence of a traumatising incident, the temporal lag between the conscious emergence of trauma can render it a “trauma on hold”. This is the case of the Rhodian Muslim community. The empirical part of the UnDRho research project pointed to the reasons for which different generations of Muslims in Rhodes bargain the reduction of their cultural capital in view of their functional integration in the local society. That development provides a hypothesis for the reserved stance of the Rhodian Muslims as a community in front of the issues raised by the integration of the mixed migration flows, in contrast with the clear empathy at the individual level. As the process of the social trauma remains incomplete, the community is found in the receiving part of the structure of social identities, preventing it to identify an active role as a constitutive part of the Rhodian society.

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