

A RAPIDLY MATURING PUBLIC OPINION

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Public Opinion directly reflects the actual socio – cultural structure of the population of a country and a nation. Mapping the socio – cultural structure of people is a very sensitive and important process which should be based on a very stable and well established approach. This approach should on one hand cover a two dimensional sociological and statistical theoretical framework and on the other hand prove its stability through an extensive, exhaustive and diachronic database.

The Theoretical Framework

Profound change has characterized Western society since World War II. Identified first by David Riesman and elaborated by Abraham Maslow, the process of individuation has deeply transformed our societies. In the west, as a mass phenomenon, people have become individuals and we have yet to understand the entire significance of this transformation of 50 years from the “traditional society” to the “modern, post-modern and post materialist society”.

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In a traditional society, people identify themselves by the social group(s) to which they belong: sex, age, social class, profession, etc. Rites of passage mark the major transitions in life: adulthood, marriage, professional advancement, and the like. Belonging to a limited number of social groups with strong bonds and with limited opportunity to move from one group to another is the hallmark of the traditional society.

In a modern society, people identify themselves as individuals who can no longer be described by membership in social groups; these memberships are increasingly numerous and involve less commitment (multiple weak links). The transitions people experience over a lifetime are also multiple and to some degree under the control of the individual, for example:

- Education – school, university, professional training, adult education
- Social Mobility
- Physical mobility – moving to other towns, regions, countries
- Cultural mobility – being exposed to and adopting different foods, music, clothing, behaviour. Individuals are increasingly different from one another

We believe that it is this phenomenon which is behind the growing complexity of societies and a literature that increasingly refers to the shift from segmented societies to fragmented societies.

Thus today it is no longer sufficient to take into account socio-demo-

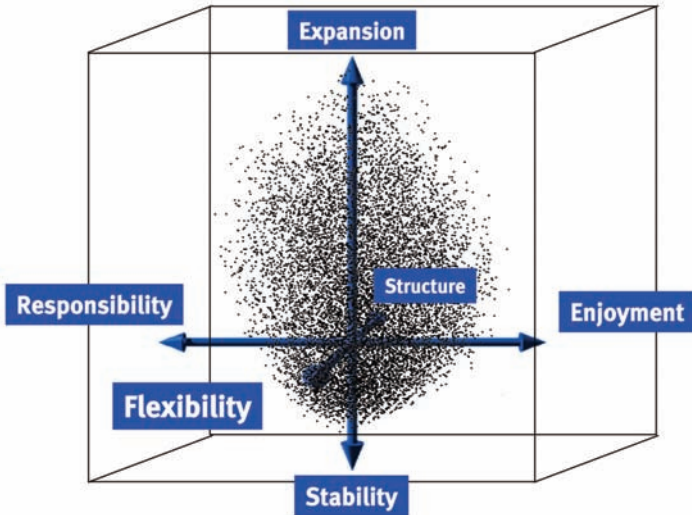
graphic information to understand consumers. RISC (Research Institute on Socio-cultural Change) has shown that for very different types of societies (e.g. public opinion, new technologies, luxury and cosmetics, food, etc.) a deep understanding of the values and motivations helps considerably in predicting how people are likely to behave. By highlighting the causes of people choices or behaviours, RISC provides hints on how things could evolve and how things could be changed.

Every year RISC carries out surveys in 30+ countries (including Greece) around the world (approximately 2,500 respondents, on average, in each country). RISC consists of a classic set of 120 socio-cultural questions/items included in an annual survey and allows the construction of 35 socio – cultural values/trends.

According to their scores on socio-cultural trends, individual respondents are plotted in a three dimensional space. The result is an egg-shaped “cloud of dots” in which individuals who are located close to each other are likely to share similar values, preferences and outlooks on the world, while those who are far apart have little in common.

The first axis (vertical) represents the dimension of change, ranging from stability to expansion and accounts for the greatest amount of variance among respondents. The second axis (horizontal) measures the dimension anchored by responsibility at one end and enjoyment at the other end; this axis accounts for the next greatest amount of variance.

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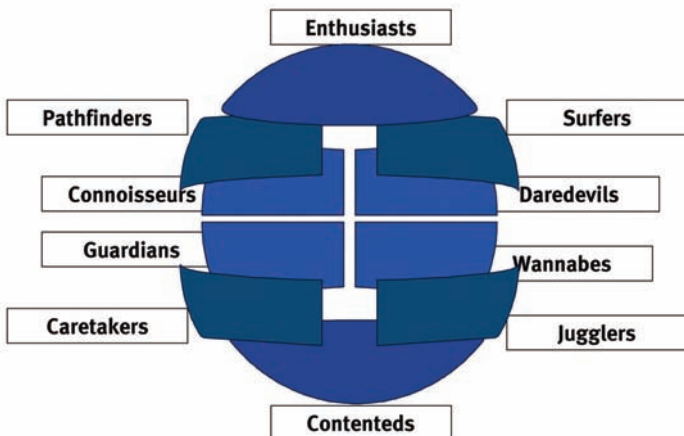


Source: RISC International - MRB Hellas

The third axis represents the way people adapt to change, with flexibility on one end (front) and structure at the other end (back).

A special clustering procedure divides the “cloud of dots” into ten

territories or cells. Each cell has a unique socio-cultural profile which reveals the particular needs and motivations which shape its consumer behaviour and which is easily visualised on the Western Scan graphics.



Source: RISC International - MRB Hellas

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Moreover, measurement of socio-cultural trends provides practical tools for perceiving, analysing and anticipating change. In the short term, there are changes in public opinion, fashion, mood and life styles. In the longer term, there are important changes that emerge and develop over a period of several decades.

motivations tend to change over time, and to vary greatly across different segments of the population. Attitudes, predispositions and inhibitions have a powerful impact on people behaviour. The 35 RISC values / trends construct the following socio – cultural map of each country separately.



Source: RISC International - MRB Hellas

People trends do not appear out of nowhere; they are firmly embedded in a specific historical context, which evolves over time. This context shapes the values and motivations that mold social roles and habits. Accordingly, values and

THE SOCIO – CULTURAL EVOLUTION OF GREECE SINCE 1999

The progress and maturation of public opinion is reflected when one is closely observing and analyzing the evolution of the socio -

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cultural values of Greek citizens.

However, before further advancing in the analysis of this progress to maturity, it is crucial to record the most important moments performed in Greek society between the years **1999 – 2006**.

More precisely, during the last seven years, various events have occurred related to the country's economy, the budget of Greek households, personal visions of varying scope and the country's governance.

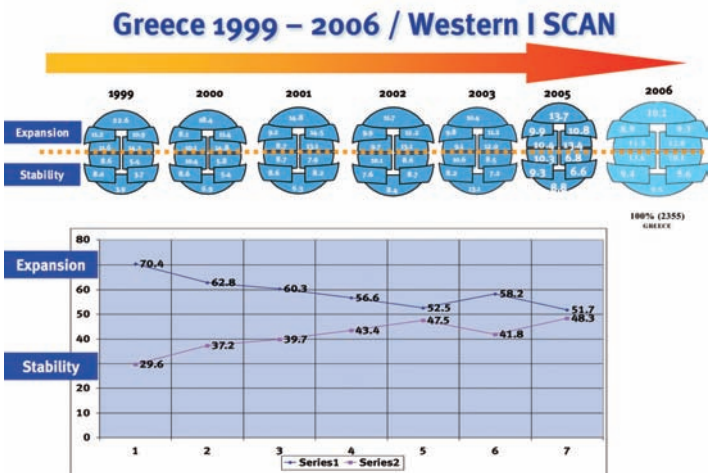
More precisely, critical turning points could be considered:

- **1999** – Greek Stock Market achieved top indexes with high returns for investors
- **2000** – Change of millennium
- **2000** – Vertical decrease of the Greek Stock Market
- **2000** – National Elections
- **2002** – Prefectoral and Municipal elections

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- **2001-2002** – Country entry to the EMU and the Euro adoption
- **2004** – National Elections and change in the governing of the country. After 20 years of the Socialist party of PASOK being in power, the centre-right party of New Democracy undertakes the governance of the country.
- **2004** – EU Parliamentary elections
- **2004** – For the first time in its history, the Greek national football team wins the European Football Cup (first international trophy in the history of Greek national football)
- **2004** – Successful conducting of the Olympic Games in Athens
- **2006** – Prefectoral and Municipal elections

The evolution of the country from



Source: RISC International - MRB Hellas

1999 until today, as this is recorded through the use of the RISC model, appears in the graph that follows.

It is important that we study these developments in the **vertical axis** of RISC “**Expansion – Stability**” as a key axis, with regard to its ability to portray the situation in the country.

The vertical axis describes the attitude of Greeks towards “**Change**”. More precisely, the high percentages reported in 1999 (70.4%), as well as the concentration in the upper part of the axis, showed that Greeks were open to change, ready to take risks, to buy new products, to hear new ideas and to test their personal limits.

This occurred at the moment (1999) that the Greek Stock Market was found at its higher performance, driving Greece to the maximum point of the RISC map and Greeks to their utmost personal (even dangerous and extreme) hyper-optimism.

That time, in order to reach the Greeks, communication and campaigns were symbolic. They focused mostly on soft elements, the image of the products, the ideas and the services of the products and less on the corresponding hard elements. Greeks needed to receive each message in more indirect ways, mainly via senses and aesthetics. They were seeking something more than an idea, a product or a service; they were seeking a *close relationship*.

Curiosity and impulse were the initial motives for their mobilization, while new ideas, in order to be ac-

cepted, had to originate from new institutions, new players and not from obsolete, big and cumbersome organizations.

The developments in the country from 1999 up to 2003 – influenced by the major incident of the vertical fall of the Greek Stock Market led to a corresponding linear fall of the Greeks in the axis “**Expansion – Stability**”, **to the direction towards stability**, reaching the proportion (52.5% - 47.5%), balancing for first time Risk and Stability.

This course towards balance was accompanied by a corresponding movement of Greeks in the **horizontal axis “Responsibility/ We – Enjoyment/ I” to the side of Enjoyment / I**.

This last movement (to enjoyment) meant for Greeks the increase of “*Myself/I*”, of the verb “*Have*” and of “*short term vision*”, while at the same time it meant the reduction of “*We*”, of the verb “*I am*” and of “*Long term vision*”, as removed from *responsibility*.

Moving down towards “**Stability**” with a parallel movement to “**I**” also means an effort of maintaining the status and their quality of life, which was already achieved. The Greeks had something to lose and they were prepared to invest effort, even with some aggressiveness, in order to safeguard their personal prosperity.

This last attitude should moreover be associated with disappointment (sense of overpriced goods/products/services), deriving from the integration of the Euro in everyday life and reality.

2004, however, was the year, which reserved for Greece a lot of events, which affected Greeks temporarily to restore part of their lost optimism and alter their attitude and accept a more open-minded stance towards the evolution of the country.

The change in the country's governance, the confirmation of a powerful Government through the results of the European elections, the capturing of the European Football Cup by the National Football team and the successful organization of the Olympic Games in Athens, for the majority of Greek Citizens, raise hopes for better days and strengthens their self-confidence that Greece *"can"*.

Furthermore, this last point is confirmed by the data shown in the vertical axis of RISC, as in the upper part of the axis **"Expansion"** was accumulated in 58.2% of the population.

However, during the years 2004-2005 and 2006, Greece had to arrange and rationalize its way of operating as a country, mainly in the sector of the National Economy. Moreover, important reforms in critical institutions of the country were regarded as essential to create *the framework and the infrastructure for sustainable and citizen-driven development*.

Meanwhile, public opinion unanimously required that these reforms would not create new generations of excluded people, thus leading the present government to use the concept *"Reforms to the Institutions/ the Environment – Soft Adaptation for the Citizen"*.

The results of the aforementioned were the return of Greek society to the almost absolute balance in the vertical axis of RISC **"Expansion – Stability"** with 51.7% - 48.3% respectively.

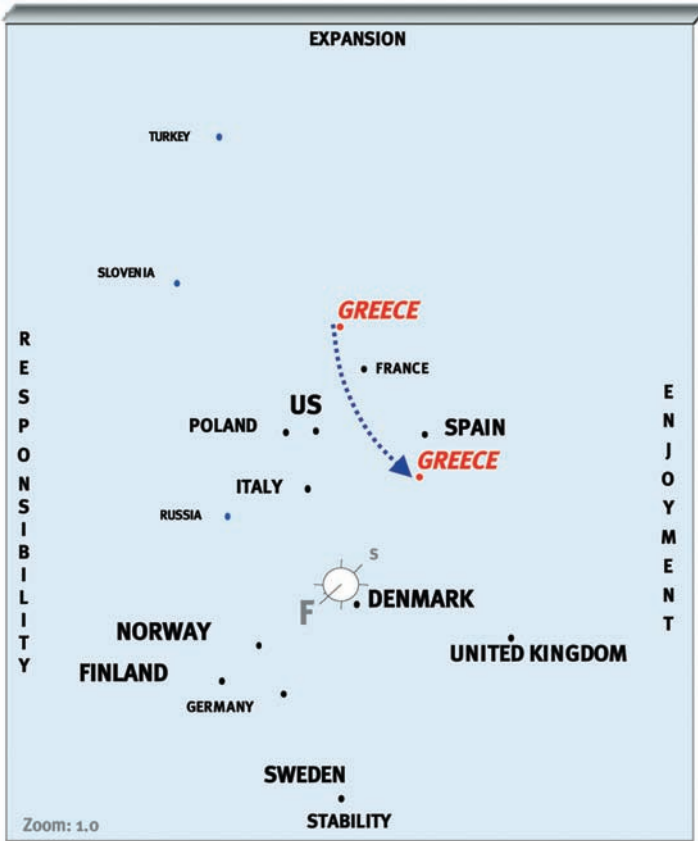
The important thing, however, was that this movement of the Greek Society was accompanied by a corresponding shift of the centre of weight from **"Enjoyment/ I"** (46.9%) to **"Responsibility / We"** (53.1%) in the horizontal axis of RISC.

This last observation has important implications for developments in Greece nowadays as Greek Citizens realized that their own personal individual efforts to differentiate and to maintain their standards of living were weak, ineffective and did not maximize their benefits neither in the macro-environment nor in the micro-quality of **"my every day life"**.

This movement of Greek Society to **"Responsibility/ We"** indicated the need for alliances as it became visible that, only if forces are united could reforms be accelerated and soft adaptation be ensured.

The maturity of Greek Society is also visible in the following map, as Greece is nowadays moving towards the area where there are located countries more organized and advanced (Germany, Scandinavian countries, the UK etc), despite maintaining elements from the Greek mentality.

It is important to study the reasons why Greek society has this particular stance for every day life nowadays. The most advisable way is to map diachronically the values



Source: RISC International - MRB Hellas

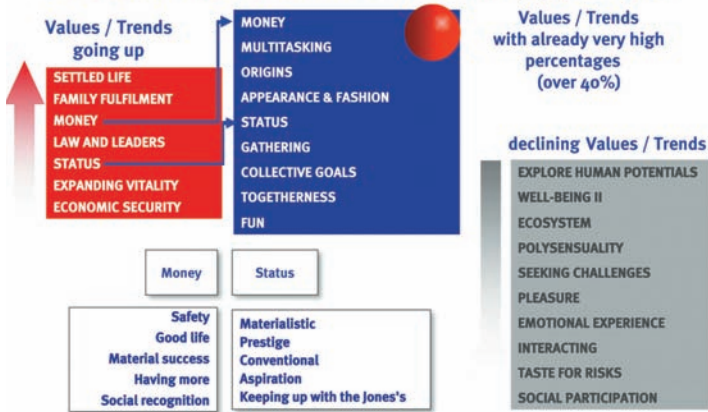
/trends of Greeks that reveal the structure, the quality and the stability of this stance/attitude.

More precisely, the following diagram presents the values / trends of Greeks, those showing high percentages, those for which their importance increases from 1999 until nowadays but also those which are declining over the years.

According to our opinion, the values / trends, which “set the tone” are those increasing their dynamics as the years passed.

Settled Life means that the Greek citizen seeks an arranged life without surprises and risks, which ensures stability and ensures the standards of living/the status achieved. The significant increase of **Family**

Greek Values / Trends Evolution 1999 - 2006



Source: RISC International - MRB Hellas

Fulfillment implies the need for “deriving energy” from a solid core while at the same time underlines the responsibility to the future generations.

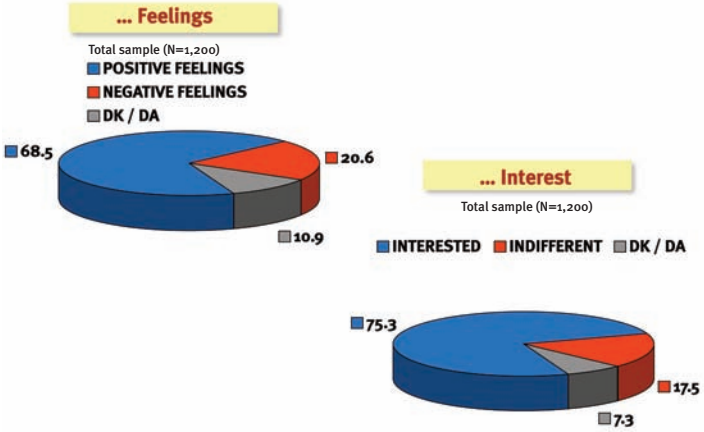
The **Money** and **Status** values/trends, with repeatedly high position and increasing importance, and the value **Economic Security**, which solidifies its position, demonstrated the need for moving ahead, the need for growth under the condition that any reform will carefully ensure the requested stability in the country and more precisely in the economic level.

Finally, we believe that the most important value, incorporating the “tone” for the way in which Greek citizens today approach life, is the **Law and Leaders** value.

It is the value / trend which constitutes the “DNA” of the way of thinking of Greeks. Powerful Leadership is the cornerstone and a fundamental

condition in order to ensure that all those values mentioned before will be guaranteed. And this powerful leadership, as demonstrated overwhelmingly by recent surveys, could be found in the face of the present Prime Minister Mr. K. Karamanlis. Before concluding, it should be stressed that societies which in addition to the aforementioned values, also score high levels in values / trends such as **Multitasking** (*I am compelled to simultaneously do a lot of things*), **Origins** (*I respect whomever has the necessary credentials as well as the authority to express opinion*), **Collective Goals** (*Need for alliances*) and **Together-ness** (*Powerful social web*) have guaranteed a remarkably stable base for **sustainable citizen - driven development within a very competitive international environment**. It should not be forgotten that Greeks have surpassed the “*fear syndrome*” of the past regarding the word *Competitiveness*, which

Competitiveness



Source: SEV (Federation of Greek Industries) - MRB Hellas

is presently considered to be an essential component for a modern and developing society.

The diachronic study of Greece’s social-cultural values from 1999 until nowadays leads to excep-



tionally accurate conclusions regarding the maturity of Greece’s public opinion. The country is moving in a direction that constitutes the crossing of terms “**Stability/Settled life**” and “**Responsibility/We**”. However, a lot still need to be achieved in the following years.

For this course, Greeks need to possess values such as **need for economic safety and strong leadership, responsibility for the next generations, multitasking but also need for knowledge, alliances and further strengthening of the social web**. Those values, combined with a considerable decrease of the **fear syndrome to competitiveness**, are considered as the most stable basis that establishes Greece a place of growth and opportunities in every sector.