

## **The level of neo-liberal persuasiveness**

Emmanouil Mavrozacharakis and Stylianos Ioannis Tzagkarakis

(University of Crete)

During the last three decades the central positions of neo-liberalism remain dominant and comprise the main directions for policy-making in the majority of advanced countries. The central pillars of neo-liberalism are the market and the individual, while the basic neo-liberal objective is “the retreat of the public boundaries”, on the basis that unregulated capitalism in the market is more effective towards growth and general prosperity. In other words, the economy, according to neo-liberal thinkers, operates more efficiently without governmental interventions. While unregulated market capitalism is effective and leads to economic growth and expanded prosperity, the public intervention undermines individual initiative and discourages entrepreneurship. Thus, governmental intervention, even if it possesses rational and ethically tolerable intentions, in any case has an inhibiting effect on economic activity. Specifically, for neo-liberals the promotion of the private refers to a procedure that is a good practice while the promotion of the public could create several disparities. Such ideas are linked to a form of extreme individualism, as expressed in Margaret Thatcher’s famous statement that “there is no society, only individuals and their families”. The intervening state is considered a mechanism that cultivates a culture of dependence and thus undermines freedom, which is understood as a freedom of choice. Self-help, individual responsibility and entrepreneurship, on the other hand, are supported by neo-liberals. In general, these ideas are thought to be promoted through the process of globalization, which is often characterized as “neo-liberal globalization” (Heywood, 2000: 83). Central neo-liberal policies involve privatization, reduction of public spending, deregulation, tax cuts (mainly in businesses and direct taxes) and shrinking of the welfare state policies. In this context and for more than three decades neoliberalism was the dominant economic ideology. While, as an ideology, emerged unharmed from the global economic crisis of 2008-9, neo-liberalism is now exposed - more than ever - to several critiques which claim that it has failed to fulfill its initial and fundamental promises-objective. This study aims to analyze the basic parameters of neo-liberalism in order to investigate the level of persuasiveness of the neo-liberal ideology.