Effective dispute regimes for large infrastructure projects in Greece

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Synopsis

Construction dispute resolution in Greece stands at a watershed. The underlying partnering spirit of BOT-PPP schemes in the delivery of large infrastructure projects has not prevented disputes from occurring. Analysis will report upon the institutional and legal environment of two dispute regimes: domestic litigation and international arbitration. This comparison will reveal their strengths and weaknesses and help resolve the perennial practice question: which is the most effective. The aim is to distil the essence of arbitration in a new transient commercial and investment field and disseminate some developing perspectives for the industry and national growth. It is hoped that the implementation of the ensuing propositions will direct private and public bodies involved in the construction process to fathom their competitive advantages of the arbitral regime.

Keywords: Arbitration, BOT, Construction, Disputes, Litigation, PPPs.

Introduction

The recent economic policy of extroversion has paved the way for a flourishing construction practice. The performance and operation of large infrastructure projects has prompted alliances between foreign and domestic parties, through the channels of BOT-PPP schemes. Amidst this internationalised environment, conflict will unavoidably arise. The current dealing of disputes through the channels of domestic litigation is parochial and heavily detrimental to the parties interests. While international arbitration is a dispute regime with competitive advantages over Courts, domestic law-makers and construction industry policy-makers have paid very little attention to the legal environment in which this operates. Unfortunately, the academic interest is also weak.

With a conspicuous lack of intellectual challenge, present analysis draws upon the legal and institutional framework of litigation and arbitration in a comparative way. A discussion of the level-playing field of these dispute regimes will result in suggestions about the useful development perspectives in law and construction practice. Also, construction researchers, practitioners and lawyers involved or ready to venture this field will be alert to informed choices regarding dispute resolution.

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[1] d.athanasakis@qmul.ac.uk. I am heavily indebted to His Honour Judge Humphrey Lloyd QC for supervising my Thesis and debating my research ideas. Furthermore, I wish to devote this paper to my compatriot Epirotes, in celebration of their unrelenting inspiration to construction excellence in Greece and the greater South-eastern Mediterranean basin.

1 Practice of large infrastructure projects

1.1 Institutional background

There are four domestic mainstream construction industries: engineering, building, energy and regeneration. These currently involve large infrastructure projects for the construction of highways, plants, oil-pipes and hazardous waste treatment facilities.[1] Their institutional background is linked with the concept of development. Between the 1950s and the 1990s, development was characterised by excessive protectionism. Considerable time and money was spent by the State to retain the monopoly and intra-regulatory structures of the mainstream construction industries.

The State viewed construction industry as an individualist political tool and constrained the access of foreign contractors and investors to large infrastructure projects. The result of this opaque business environment was that the importation of foreign funds was conditional upon the scrutiny of the Greek Government. Also, agreements between the Greek State and international contractors were subjected to the Greek law of dispute resolution and the scope of claims was delimited for disputes arising out of administrative acts. In this institutional environment, the Greek construction industry was fraught with incoherence of investment policies, protracted procurement and tendering techniques and lack of flexibility in dispute resolution.

The concept of development has entirely changed over the 1990s. The new economic policy of extroversion in the direction of enhanced productivity now allows international project companies to venture dynamically in the Greek construction market. One of the obvious reasons for this liberalisation was that the public deficit, caused by extensive borrowing from domestic and international financial institutions, had reached sky-rocketed levels. Nowadays, the participation of domestic and foreign banks in infrastructure projects means that the State will decrease borrowing and relocate other sources of funding, e.g. funds stemming from the European Fund, for other projects. It is in the interests of the State to create a diversified portfolio of assets that will maximise the levels of return and minimise project financing risks; as long as it does not sacrifice the quality of performance.

Parallel to this change, Law 1892/1990 has superseded past laws, restricting the import of funds. The Bank of Greece has liberalised the allocation of funds to borrowers to launch projects within or outside the borders. It has also opened up the administration of funds coming from social security organisations towards infrastructure projects.[2] Domestic credit institutions were now allowed to issue letters of guarantee for projects to be carried out in Greece or abroad, both in domestic or foreign currency. Amidst this favourable banking environment, new opportunities for growth were presented.

The fast Greek banking sector involvement in infrastructure projects has enticed foreign contractors to team up and engage Greek banks in the construction game, in exchange for the banks' share of the operating profits. Moreover, the mobility of new funds is unparalleled. While a strong Euro currency prevents banks from raising interest rates on loans, the opportunity for Greek banks is their engagement in cross-Balkan investments. The strong Euro currency creates stability in pricing and payment methods, as well as an early incentivisation for completion. The

participation of domestic commercial banks in injecting loans for the execution of public works is desirable.

There is an obvious benefit for foreign contractors in their teaming up with Greek banks. The latter will use their background network with the Public Sector and domestic contractors in order to speed up the project phases. Also, contractors are expected to apply wider market knowledge to achieve innovation of product. The gain is also huge for the State: public enterprises are in search of international parties to cover the nation's needs for infrastructure e.g. the Public Power Corporation S.A.

Ultimately, the coming in of the private sector into the funding and administration of a concession has brought relief to domestic contractors. Following the restructure of the GDP towards surge of expenses and the call for refinancing practices for public infrastructure, the Greek State has been slow in paying contractors. The participation of banks and financiers into the BOT-PPP vehicle will increase the contractors' prospect for timely payment. This will also work to the benefit of the State which will minimise the financial risks, and the political cost.

1.2 Contractual features of BOT-PPP schemes

The BOT-PPP scheme throws in the life-cycle of the concession project multiple parties: state agencies, institutional developers, private specialised contractors and banks. The pre-requisite contractual structures are interworking in a chronological and hierarchical order. In international construction practice, after a successful bid of a private consortium, public and private sector participants will form a project company, or else a special purpose vehicle (SPV). This will be established through a project performance contract.

The project company is a strong business, financial and legal instrument. Its success pre-supposes adequate cashflow throughout the construction phase of the concession project. Partners will make their funding contributions by way of equity or loan participation. In the latter case, they may enter into third, secondary agreements with investment and banking institutions. Also, in the normal course of contract negotiation, the loan agreement between the SPV and the third party lenders will contain provisions for subsidiary loan agreements. These agreements will further provide for a range of monitoring procedures for banks. Next, it is expected of the Managing Director of the SPV to provide a detailed breakdown of works to be carried out with cost and time estimates in exchange for the bank's comments.
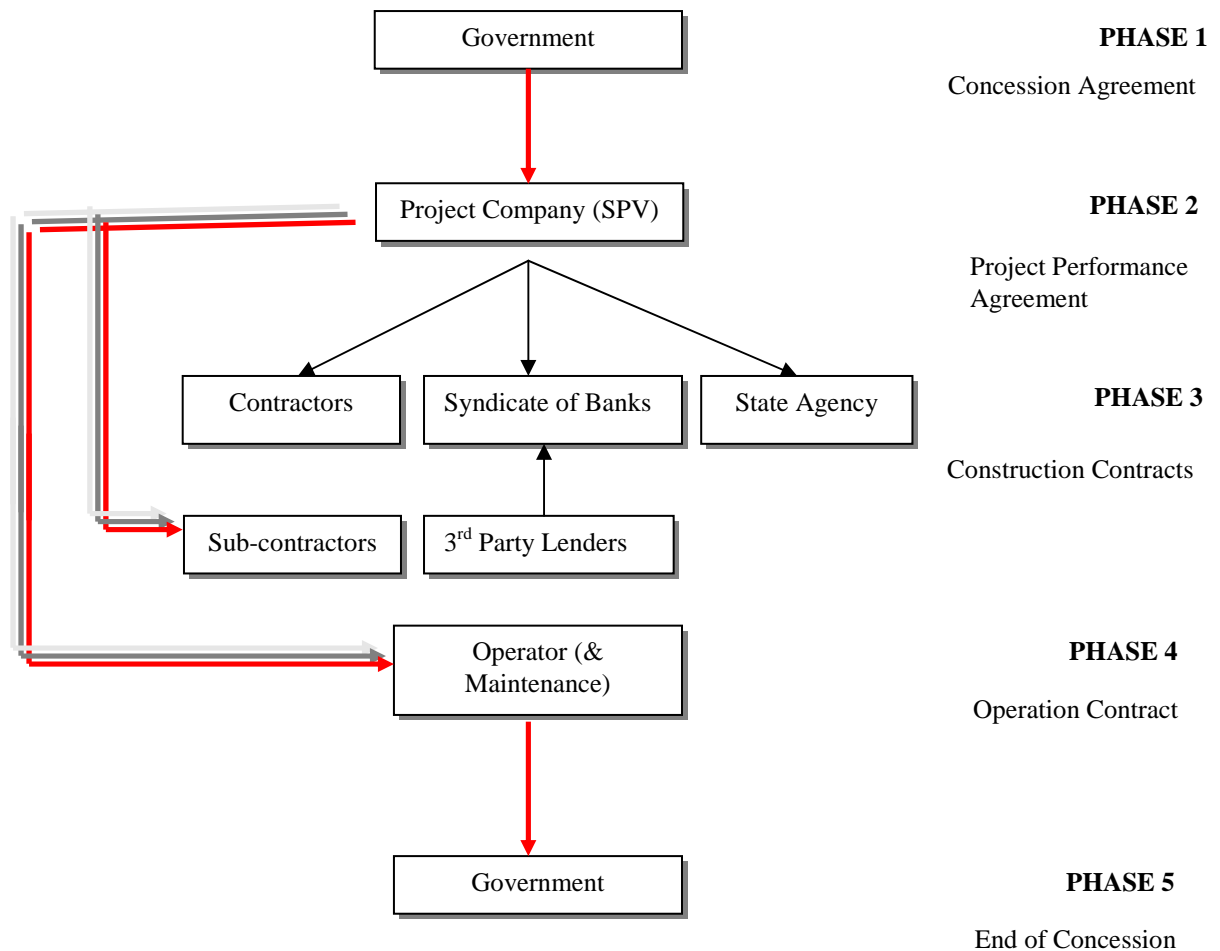
The legal nature of the SPV deserves some scrutiny. In general contract law this is a partnership. For most developed legal systems, this is an unincorporated, more relaxed, joint venture. In Greece, the SPV is expected to take the legal calibre of a société anonyme, in accordance with Law 2190/1920. After the set up of the SPV, its Managing Director signs a concession agreement with the Government, which, depending upon the terms of the latter agreement, may take over operations, after the execution of the works. Its life normally expires with the end of the concession period. He also enters into distinct substantive construction [sub-]contracts with individual contractors or engineering companies and further maintenance and operation contracts. All these contracts bind the SPV partners.

The separate contracts are positioned in a downstream binding order: the concession contract, the project performance contract, the substantive construction [sub-]contracts and operation and maintenance contracts. The expiration of the latter contract signals the end of the concession period. The concession project is then passed on to the State with the accompanying operation risks. Compliance with this order will ensure that the BOT-adjacent contracts will operate symmetrically for a longer time-period. Still, the most important feature of the BOT-PPP scheme is that it has relieved the State from taking substantial construction execution risks. The Employer of the project is not the State-Grantor, but the SPV partners, who contract the project on a turnkey basis and abstain from the early design and work execution stages. But, the State has a shared control, through its participation in the SPV.

The novelty of infrastructure policies in Greece is the creation of a Ministerial Committee on PPPs, led by the Minister of Economy and Economics and seconded by the Minister of Urban Planning and Public Works, and the Minister of Development. This is taking decisions upon the underlying purpose of the State participating in the financing mechanisms for a SPV. In its work, it is assisted by a Ministerial Special Secretariat. The work of the latter is to collate information about future application of the PPP scheme and speculate on alliances with the private sector. Law 3389/2005 gives the Ministerial Committee on PPPs the power to determine the procedure of fee collection, at the operating stages.[3]

Last, the modern business dimension in BOT-PPPs is that partnering creates a spirit of relational contracting. Parties should resolve conflict through the channels of project management and not arbitration or litigation. The essence of relational contracting is that there should be no loss of control and no shifting, or "dramatic transfer" of risks onto the Employer. There is "an obligation to serve-everyone's mentality". The importance of risk sharing and the concomitant adherence of corporate structures to this pattern indicate that the parties create "their law/ their arrangements". Therefore, the SPV embraces an exceptional relational contract model, with its "own law" and a reciprocal base level of commitments and flexibility.

However, there is an esteemed lacuna to this model: the law is still unsettled as to whether there are enforceable and direct rights as among partners or from partners to stepping down contractors. The contractual structures of the BOT-PPP scheme are based on a lack of a binding structural and risk-divisional framework, as happens with substantive contracts. This integrated approach supports that the parties' responsibilities will remain integral, no matter who bears the risk. Therefore, there is a binding risk assumption and undertaking. However, in the real world, where disputes arise, partners will wish to push risks in all different directions, but share the risk. Unresolved conflict among partners will taint the work environment and protract the adversarial nature of the industry.

Government | **PHASE 1**

Concession Agreement

Project Company (SPV) | **PHASE 2**

Project Performance Agreement

Contractors | Syndicate of Banks | State Agency | **PHASE 3**

Construction Contracts

Sub-contractors | 3rd Party Lenders

Operator (& Maintenance) | **PHASE 4**

Operation Contract

Government | **PHASE 5**

End of Concession

Figure 1: Schematic diagram displaying the sequence of the concession phases & the contractual structures

2 Dispute regimes

2.1 Legal framework

The effectiveness of the dispute regimes heavily depends upon the support of operating legal system. In Greece, the legal landscape is obscure. There is a clear lack of an autonomous branch of substantive construction law. Construction dispute resolution has been stretched between public and private law. Greece has not yet enacted a Construction Act which applies to public and private works. The law relating to public works is largely fragmented. Unlike the leading trends in developed legal systems for autonomy of this branch of law, the perception in Greece is that this is part of Civil law.

The relevant applicable provisions are couched in the Greek Civil Code, Book I (General Principles), Articles 173, 200, 288 and 388. These provisions consolidate the essence of the Civil Code in the interpretation of the parties' true intentions in accordance with the overall spirit of the contract and the principles of good faith. Book II (Law of Obligations), Articles 681 to 702 refer to 'Contracts for Work' and approach these from the specific relational viewpoint of debtor and creditor of the service/obligation. Articles 343 and 383 regarding overdue obligations apply by analogy. Furthermore, while the Civil Code applies, Legislative Decrees (L.D.) or

Presidential Decrees upon construction projects are issued from time to time. Still, this fragmentation cannot be said to promote good business practice.

While the legal background is hampered by the lack of concrete substantive construction law, construction dispute resolution for public works has been traditionally practiced by the Administrative Courts. Disputes arising out of public works contracts will fall within the jurisdiction of the Council of State (Department of Administrative Disputes). The Court of Auditors will act as a second-degree appeal body. Up until the 90s, the dominant perception was that public works contained a basic element: the participation of the state to realise the national interest. This is also encapsulated by Law 2229/1994.[4] For years, this has finely served the Government's political agenda. In many cases, this incumbent practice has lead to compromises. The notorious delays in decision-making has lead parties to settle their cases with the State out-of-court. Furthermore, the appointment of President and the Vice-President of these Courts is made by the Government.[5] Thus, Government would have some control over the outcome of the dispute.

Nowadays, the Public Works Act, Law 2229/1994 is the basic body of law governing public works. This Act has succeeded the Public Works Act, Law 1418/1984 and the Presidential Decree 609/1985. While the applicability of the Civil Code is not ousted, where issues of interpretation arise, the latter will be the fall-back legal instrument. The dispute resolution procedures were rather novel: disputes arising under government contracts will be resolved by the Court of Appeals, escaping the process of first instance litigation.[6]

Nowadays, it is somehow unrealistic to consider that public works exclusively fall within the national interest. The engagement of foreign financiers and contractors has meant that the dispute barometer has moved from the Administrative Courts to arbitration. There is a range of laws which refer to arbitration. Emphatically, some investment laws, at this time, not only are they supportive of arbitration, but would also impose this as the only means of dispute resolution between the State and the foreign investors.[7] Law 2052/1990 on Concession Agreements refers to arbitration as the preferred method of dispute resolution.

This law has introduced two important changes. First, while arbitration had not been made compulsory, there was a clear message to the Courts that in the event that arbitration was chosen, they ought not to intervene in the selected dispute resolution. Second, the arbitration agreement need not be endorsed by the Minister of Economy and Economics and the Minister of Urban Planning and Public Works and be subjected to the approval of any other Minister that has a say in the project. Prior to this law, this consent was given for projects where the State or a public entity entered into relevant contracts. But the new law has scrapped these requirements, and arbitration is now being made a mandatory dispute regime.[8]

The recent BOT-PPPs for large infrastructure projects have adopted multi-tiered dispute resolution procedures.[9] This is also in line with the standard judicial policy of implying a good faith effort by all parties entangled in the dispute.[10] The particularity of these procedures is that prior to referral of the dispute to arbitration the place of proceedings and applicable law will be Greece, while where the dispute

reaches the stages of arbitration, this will be dealt with in London, under the LCIA Rules.[11]

The enactment of Law 3389/2005 on the 'Co-operation of the Public and Private Sector' is expected to bring some changes in future construction dispute resolution in Greece. Disputes arising under the project-performance agreement will be dealt with by arbitration.[12] Its scope of application extends beyond large infrastructure projects and the mainstream industries operating in Greece. If arbitration is the parties' means of dispute resolution, and Greek law applies, then there is a distinction to be made. The domestic arbitration provisions in Greece are part of the Code of Civil Procedure, Articles 867-903. If parties are international, then the UNCITRAL Model Law of 1987 on international arbitrations will apply.

2.2 Genesis of disputes & associated risks

The contractual relationships of BOT-PPP schemes suggest that project parties will get involved in the performance of the project, from various roles and responsibilities. Undoubtedly, this situation will create a changing and dynamic environment. Further to this, uncertainty of contract terms and the bearing of risk will create disputes. No matter the degree of sophistication of the contractual structures, there are four identifiable levels of dispute which SPV partners will be faced with: upstream, intra-partes, downstream and third-party disputes.

Upstream disputes may occur at any project phase and will affect the way SPV partners will resolve their issues with the Grantor. To give an example, unilateral actions of the Government by way of changes to the legislative framework i.e. the issuance of ministerial decisions which result in project delays and variations. This change will impact upon the consistency of the BOT network of contracts: it will cause the project company to restructure the downstream substantive contracts, as well as its loan agreements with third-party financiers.

Intra-partes disputes relate to the project performance agreement. Partners may disagree over each partner's financial contributions to the financing of the SPV, or, one partner may go insolvent, and the financial burden falls in the arms of the remaining partners. Downstream disputes occur from defaults of contractors, e.g. where sectional completion is not certified for reasons of contractors using materials different from the ones specified in their contracts. Risks in the BOT-PPP scheme may occur by actions of third parties to the scheme. Financiers often resort to overburdened unilateral change of interest rates affecting the process of repayment loans. This financial reform brings along a specific risk: Refinancing the project will amount to pursuance of further deals which may be negotiated on much more burdened terms than the previous agreements. Clearly, time overruns will amount to lower levels of profitability, as returns will be at less percentages and start at a later stage.

Whatever the level of arising disputes, these will have a domino effect upon the progress of the parties' contracts and lead to some interfacing level of liability. But, there is a common decisional thread: the determination of causation and liability. For the Grantor of the concession, this means that the flow of funds may be slow and the projected cash flow ineffective. The quality and intensity of risk is also multifarious, ranging from construction, operation, commercial and to political

risks. Disputes will be very difficult to separate and multiple parties will be engaged. Still, the financial loss for the participating party is the common issue which must be once and overly resolved. When these are brought in the litigation or arbitration regime, the lack of clear administration of risk strategy and resources may be revealed. This signifies the fragility of the BOT-PPP scheme, as a relational web of risks and contracts: the Grantor's and Employer's trade off of risks to contractors in exchange of a conclusive price that they bear no loss of potential project breakdown.

The BOT-PPP scheme has exonerated the State from a variety of risks. However, the structure of the SPV financial vehicle suggests that there are long-term financial risks which will surface, once disputes arise. The State may risk losing money returns where the project does not reach its target profits, and lose considerable amounts of its equity, which may underperform over the years. It is expected that where project breakdown occurs, it will be extremely difficult for the Government to relocate that proportion to other contractors or concessionaires.

3 Level-playing field, synergies & arbitration

The quality of interfacing disputes, the number of parties involved and severity of financial risk will determine the level-playing field and affect the parties' decision on the suitability of the two dispute regimes. BOT-PPP disputes are not ordinary administrative disputes, nor are they traditional public works disputes between the State and domestic contractors. Internationalisation of Greek infrastructure projects means that dispute regimes will be heavily influenced. Commercial relationships can be soured and parties may find their "normal" contractual rights to be unexpectedly altered.

The level-playing field will heavily influence the affected parties' mindset to proceed to arbitration. This decision will be contingent on the amount of disputes and the parties' control over the dispute regime. Furthermore, the parties' success of claims in a dispute regime will depend on their common or divergent interests. The effectiveness of construction dispute resolution may connote the need to sideline with other project parties. Synergies are always imminent in arbitration.

The Greek State, as Grantor or SPV partner, is a strong player on the dispute resolution terrain and can exert an indirect control over the regime. The most obvious case is where the State uses national lenders to fund projects. In Greece, the State or the Bank of Greece are shareholders in domestic banks that partially fund investment projects. Therefore, the aggregate amount of control over the project and the dispute regime increases. A more direct method of increasing control is where the State buys more shares in the SPV in order to change the synthesis of the directors' board; with a view to enhancing national interest in the SPV's decision or vice-versa. In the case where multiple parties participate in an arbitration, the State will wish to take financiers on its side. Domestic banks may be inclined to sideline the State which is a very good customer. The State can be the chicken with the golden egg for Banks, as it borrows each year around € 35 billion.

Clearly, the BOT-PPP structure has brought a change for the Greek state, upgrading it to a key business player impacting upon the effectiveness of invoking sovereign and protectionist theories. The participation of the State in the arbitral

dispute regime presupposes a decision of political and strategic character and is viewed under the given political climate. There is an obvious hidden risk that this may cause some administrative crisis. On the other hand, the strategic interests of a Government may overlap with the ones of its partners.

In the normal course, the SPV partners have the strongest say and control over the selection of dispute regime. Private partners of the SPV are much more litigious than Governments and may see that arbitration is a unique means to offload risk and gain more economic benefit, than their original projections. Generally, Governments are hungry for risk avoidance and try to pass down the risk to the 'downstream' parties. Once disputes arise the question goes back to risk allocation. There are three critical factors, which will impact upon the SPV's decision in pursuing disputes by way of arbitration: whether multiplicity of parallel arbitral and court proceedings, as a tactful game is overly beneficial; if they run a considerable risk of being exposed; and more importantly how these can be aligned to their cash flow anticipations.

But in general, the SPV partners would wish to fight their disputes with all affected parties in a sole regime. In reverse, if partners choose to fight their case solely on the SPV basis, this would mean that the winning partner would have to initiate separate arbitrations or litigations against downstream contractors, as there is no straightforward law regarding the enforceability of intra-SPV awards upon the downstream contracting parties. Alternatively, the parties could include pertinent clauses in the downstream contracts, that any award stemming from higher up the joinder scale should be binding on downstream contractors.

Domestic contractors may view Governments as allies, expecting the latter to lobby on their behalf. Contractors will be also tempted to join forces with the Grantor/ Government in order to delimit partners of the SPV to waive their rights under the concession agreement and then require equivalent benefits to be passed to it under the construction contract. This may also give contractors some political benefit in that the Grantor may engage them in future projects. The participation of the State as a shareholder with a strong percentage may create some incentive for the State to engage domestic contractors; often in exchange for their political support. This denotes a clear political agenda that each government will seek to advance through the BOT-PPP schemes.

There is also a view that contractors will be particularly desirous of arbitration, as this will increase their chances of getting paid. For disputes that fall strictly within the purview of substantive contracts e.g. defects or materials, and are not intra-SPV issues, partners of the SPV may wish not to engage in arbitration, and leave these issues to be resolved on a separate litigation level. However, their pursuing of such arguments cannot be entirely asserted in law or contract, but will also entail a large degree of fact. Contractors can benefit from arbitration, in that they can set forth all their claims, defenses and fight their entitlements for payment. Arbitration offers them a ground to overthrow the parties' contentions that they have accepted risks by conduct. This clearly outlines the remedial nature of this dispute regime.

Lastly, the level playing field will be influenced by third parties. An example is where the project is breaking down, and the project company must produce extra

equity in order for the concession to survive. The risk is great. SPV partners may bring in foreign contractors, who may offer lower prices especially at the operating stages, but gain increasing control over the project. Also, imagine where before the termination of the concession, a partner company merges with another one or is being taken over by another one. Buyouts and mergers will also give access to international contractors in the Greek market. However, it may increase the amount of control of the project in the hands of a Greek contractor or State Agency. And these will have a say upon the selection of the dispute regime.

In this continuum, parties with strong financial uptakes will seek to carry issues forward and maintain control over the regulatory and causal links of the ensuing disputes. Parties are always determined to put forward their objections with vigour. The amount of control each individual party has over a part of the works is for the most part not adequately determined, and clear lines of responsibility and liability do not exist. Affected parties parties will form all sorts of synergies, as arbitration hearings subvert some degree of alliancing. Therefore, the arbitrator must capture the larger BOT contractual picture and manage across the complexities of BOT commercial and management structures, by looking into the parties' competitive demands. In the assertion of liability, parties are expected to resort to strategic moves, and the arbitration request may be considered as one.

4 Arbitration or the Courts?

The strongest parameter for a selection between arbitration and litigation is this: which one deals with high-value and complex disputes in a timely, cost-effective and fair manner? Certainly, this is also a question of the legal system where these dispute regimes take place, and the practice of the peculiar industry. There are five main reasons why international arbitration may gain the parties preference, compared to domestic litigation.

First, arbitration under the BOT-PPP scheme will involve multiple parties and multiple interrelated, or not, claims. The issues encountered within the overall scheme of BOT-PPP arbitrations are multifarious: legal, technical, and socio-political. Too many parties may have a blurred understanding of the legal and factual issues involved. A priori arbitration will become a more reactive and dynamic dispute regime. However, it can be a unique reference where the parties' interests converge. Arbitration is a concrete dispute regime, where these interests are not viewed in isolation, but in the framework of analysis for liability determination. The majority of claims under large infrastructure projects rely upon their factual and not legal basis. Compared to litigation, arbitration can be a far better fact-finding procedure.[13]

Second, in the same line of argument, the parties' freedom to select their arbitrator, and not a state-imposed judge, implies a certain agreement: the parties have vested the dealing of their disputes with experts in technical and legal issues. Arbitrators are expected to make a more rounded appreciation of the dispute situation and may direct parties more easily to reach early agreement on how disputes should be best resolved. Parties in BOT-PPP arbitrations can select a single arbitrator, who can timely proceed with proceedings. The bringing of their disputes before the Multiparty Court of First Instance (Polymeles Protodikeio, *Πολυμελές*

Πρωτοδικείο), will prompt the set up of a three-member tribunal, who may heavily disagree on the underlying issues.

Third, arbitration allows the parties to organise the proceedings as they see fit. Procedural issues e.g. submission of claims, taking of evidence, examination of witnesses etc will be more swiftly determined. Where parties and Counsel are co-operative, arbitration will be a more flexible procedure. The arbitrator, as opposed to Courts can take on more initiative in the event of procedural deadlocks. Greek judges very rarely take on the role of an 'activist' judge in the direction of autonomously administering the proceedings. Judges do not take on initiatives to overcome procedural and substantive law impossibilities, while they could make a mark to the evolution of the law.[14] Therefore, construction dispute resolution through litigation remains stagnant.

Fourth, the confidential nature of arbitral proceedings will offer an added incentive for project parties to favour arbitration. Long-term commitments and relationships with favoured and important clients may be exposed in [public] court proceedings. Furthermore, non-transparent mechanism of project financing sources, as well as project financing techniques, could be revealed. This will further cause profound implications for various investment lenders. Banks, are partners with the most confidentiality reservations: their lending activities in the area of investment could go public, not to mention that the internal negotiations with lenders from different parts of the world and the State could be disclosed. Also, where disputes occur at the operation stage, sensitive information relating to the SPV's interim profits or margin and turnover expectations may go public.

Lastly, Arbitration offers the extra advantage of arbitrating in a neutral language e.g. English and the dealing of the case by technically and legally progressed practitioners. In the antipode, arbitration offers another incentive for the State: relieving the GDP from providing for additional provisions e.g. the Courts' requiring more time and expenses over challenging procedures.[15] All these costs and time could be saved, if parties resorted to an experienced arbitrator. For a more sophisticated project which consists of international players with a diversity of contracting skills, it takes great effort to achieve communication. Such uncertainties may impact upon the outcome cost.

On the negative side, the most obvious weakness of arbitration is its consensual basis. The Public Sector in Greece has for years retained the perception of holding the upper hand in arbitral dispute resolution. The Greek State, from its position as a Grantor or through its participation in the SPV may play by state immunity rules and refuse to participate in any form of arbitration.[16] There is a peradvertent advantage of litigation over arbitration: the judge has power in joining third parties to an existing litigation. These powers are provided in the Code of Civil Procedure, Articles 74-78 and 86-90.

Furthermore, arbitration may not be the most economically viable solution for BOT-PPP disputes. The costs of litigation in Greece are relatively small, compared to the levied arbitral expenses. But, lack of efficient court proceedings means that parties will incur additional costs: they may need to engage financial executives, technical experts, legal advisers. However, for foreign contractors, there is no

incentive to resort to Greek Courts for the resolution of their disputes, as the time and costs may be far greater than the arbitrating costs e.g. costs of translating documentations into Greek, employing translators for examination of witnesses etc.

5 Developing perspectives

Construction dispute resolution in Greece needs a qualitative upgrade. The following propositions could be considered in a future agenda for effective construction dispute resolution.

First, State enterprises must become more active business players: they must enjoy the freedom of selecting the dispute regime that best suits their interests. In practice, this means that this choice should be left upon the Board of Directors. Any subsequent ministerial control, even for reasons of controlling formality, should be ousted.

Furthermore, a continuous flow of construction law researchers and practitioners is necessary for sustaining responsive dispute regimes. The set up of a Construction Industry Council, by the private sector, is necessary for lawyers and engineers to acquire the desirable cross-skilling in construction dispute resolution. This should be an institutional body, with a mission to improve construction practice and excellence, by feedbacking into the current construction process, as well as offering a consultative reference on domestic construction practices for Greek and international clients. The creation of such a body would swipe away administrative costs incurred in the set up of ad hoc Agencies, at the inception of infrastructure projects. Presently, these are commonly formed by the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, the Ministry for Development and the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Moreover, the State could consider establishing a permanent Construction Development Agency. Thereafter, the Construction Industry Council and the State Construction Development Agency should jointly work towards a range of goals: the production of government standard forms of contract conditions for the national mainstream industries. Standard forms of contract will reflect good business practice. This could easily lead to the creation of a substantive law by way of statute of construction dispute resolution.

Third, a pertinent solution would be the establishment of a permanent specialist Court division of the type of Technology and Construction Court of England and Wales. This could be part of a Court of First Instance, located outside the country's leading and congested Courts of Athens, Thessaloniki and Pireaus.

Fourth, the perspective of institutional arbitration must be courageously addressed. It is a great hurdle to invest in a country, where arbitral institutions have minimal activity. For, if project parties wish to consult a professional dispute body, they must seek assistance from abroad. Even to present day, the establishment of specialised tribunals of arbitration is subject to the joint agreement of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Ministry which supervises the Institution.[17] While, Greece has adopted one of the most liberal international arbitration laws, the UNCITRAL Model Law of 1987, this remains untested, by pure lack of practice by specialised international arbitration institutions. These could also apply their own

rules on International Arbitration and improve their facilities. There is an intermediate working target to promote arbitration, ad hoc or institutional. In its negotiation of BOT-PPP schemes, the Government should press on with arbitration before the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with a view to enhance the latter's industry appeal domestically and internationally.

6 Closing remarks

There are three pointers which flow directly from the previous discussion. The current structure of the judicial mechanism combined with lack of modernisation of Greek construction law may divert project parties to seek more viable dispute regimes abroad. Construction policy-makers should press ahead for dispute resolution through the channels of arbitration. This is a dispute regime that can set forth unique opportunities for project parties to address their issues in a finite and creative manner.

Arbitration may become the scapegoat for politically and economically vexed issues. The level-playing field is formed by a series of competing demands cropping up in arbitral hearings. Therefore, fairness and justice come second to the parties' expectations. With these considerations in mind, an arbitrator or judge are faced with composite decisions, which must reflect credit back on the project and the users of the infrastructure facility: the public. Effectiveness connotes that an arbitrator will be more flexible in the structure of proceedings. While he must elicit solutions in law, his value lies in re-organisation powers, in case the arbitration regime breaks down.

Third, the success of arbitration is premised on a desirable convergence of the applicable substantive law, the letters of the parties' contracts, and the arbitrator's organisational skills. But, the importance of communication and agreement of parties in the set up of a dispute regime cannot be underestimated. The most essential ingredient in this is the parties' co-operation and avoidance of tactics, which will lead to the breakdown of the regime. Still, the effectiveness of dispute regimes may on occasions be minimal, as litigation and arbitration may not make a marked difference to the outcome of the dispute. Every dispute regime may suffer from imperfections and questions left unanswered. And also, parties are not clear on the selection of the appropriate dispute regime, because the nature of their disputes is not straightforward, once they decide to litigate or arbitrate.

7 Conclusions

The construction industry is slow in accepting changes in the dispute resolution arena. The success of dispute regimes will depend upon their acceptance by the practice barometer. The current prediction is that Greek construction practice is a long way from facilitating arbitration. If this environment does not improve, then the domestic construction sector will fail to take its place in the European market as a competitive force. Certainly, strong dispute regimes are a key market indicator, capable of substantially conferring national growth. Young Greek researchers must harness the merits and demerits of the current development policies in order to produce better guidance for domestic and international clients, interested in the domestic market.

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Abbreviations

BOT	Build-Operate-Transfer
GCCP	Greek Code of Civil Procedure
ICLR	International Construction Law Review
L.D.	Legislative Decree
P.D.	Presidential Decree
PPP	Public Private Partnership
Rev Hell Dr Int'l	Revue Hellenique de Droit International
SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle
UNCITRAL	United Nations Convention on International Trade Law

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[1] Indicatively, large infrastructure projects currently underway are: the Thessaloniki Metro and Underwater Artery, the Italo-Greco-Turkish oil-pipe project, the Kifisos urban regeneration project etc

[2] See L.D. 2687/1953 and Director's Act 2345/3.3.1995 respectively.

[3] See Article 19.

[4] See Article 1.

[5] See Greek Constitution 1975/1986, Article 90(5).

[6] See Article 13.

[7] See L.D. 2687/1953, Article 12.

[8] See Law 2052/1990, Article 9(4n) & 6. These provide as follows: "For the settlement of disputes deriving from the construction agreement or due to it, an agreement of international or internal arbitration may be stipulated, as long as it is provided in the invitation to tender".

[9] See e.g. Law 2338/1995 (Government Gazette FEK A' 202/14.09.1995), "The Athens International Airport/ Eleftherios Venizelos", Article 44, headed "Settlement of Disputes".

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[11] See multi-tiered procedure provided for the concession of the Athens International Airport in Law 2338/1995, Article 44

[12] See Article 31(1).

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[17] See GCCP, Article 902.

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*Patient Involvement, Empowerment and Information –
Diagnostic study
(part of MPhil /PhD study)*

Paper for

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Structures, Context and Challenges*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and theoretical concepts, models and approaches

Patient and public involvement, empowerment and information have been frequently used terms in health services across Europe in recent years. There has been increasing pressure, from patient, consumer and community groups, and more recently professionals and policy makers within the health service, to ensure that the opinions of those who fund and use the services are taken into account and acted upon when making decisions regarding the planning, delivery and monitoring of the services. There is a growing consensus that patients can and should be active partners in their health and healthcare.

This thesis will investigate patient involvement, empowerment and information in UK and Greek public hospitals. Several terms are used to describe lay people in relation to health services: 'public', 'patients', 'users', 'citizens', 'consumers', 'customers', 'clients', 'health seekers'. Lay people may have several roles (patients-users-citizens) which are indeed sometimes difficult to distinguish [1] [2]. This thesis, however, will focus on *'patients'*, defined as those who currently use or have recently used, i.e. in the last 30 days, the National Health Services in the chosen countries, and in particular *inpatient services*. Although the word 'patient' or 'asthenis'- which also means 'weak' in Greek - may have negative connotations, its meaning changes all the time, i.e. active/passive patient, expert patient, empowered patient, etc, and it was considered the most appropriate term for the study.

Patient and public involvement in health care decision-making processes represents a broad topic that has already been discussed by many authors. *'Patient involvement'* refers to the active participation of patients and their carers, as partners in their own care and treatment; and it can be at various levels: planning, service delivery, quality monitoring and development of health services.[3] The English-language literature covers issues ranging from patient involvement in decision-making processes about treatment at micro level, through user involvement in service planning and evaluation at meso-level, to public involvement in priority-setting at macro level. The degree of influence that lay involvement may have in health care decision-making processes at any given level may also vary. Lay people may either be given the chance to express their views, voice their concerns or prioritise without however influencing the decisions finally made (consultation) or they may fully determine decisions made (dominance). A third option involves shared decision-making processes between lay people and others be they, for instance health care professionals, managers or government[4]. Other concepts used are 'participation', 'engagement', 'partnership, having 'voice', 'patient-centred', 'patient-focus', 'patient-led' services; all concepts may express different level and type of patient involvement in health and health care.

'Patient empowerment' refers to the mechanisms enabling patients to gain control and make choices in their health and health interventions.[5] Empowered patients today are different from patients in the past who one could argue that have had a more passive and unequal role in their encounters with paternalistic health care professionals. More choice, more information, more personalised care may be some of the elements that lead to real empowerment of patients to improve their health. Nowadays services are expected to move from services that do things to and for its patients to patient-led services, where they work with patients to support them with their health needs[6]. Patients are moving towards obtaining control, rather than being given control or choice. Some authors view 'empowerment' as the highest level of involvement in health services.[7]

Several studies have also shown that provision of and/or access to appropriate *information* may help to involve and empower many patients in their treatment and care[8][9]. Better information and more choice - more quality information about services in area, diagnosis and options for treatment, so that they are supported to make informed choices - have been identified by patients as one of the five key dimensions of greatest importance to patient experience[10]. Information facilitates communication and shared-decision making[11]. Access to impartial, high quality information is fundamental to understanding and making choices and informed decisions about health and health care[12][13]. Information also plays a key role in meeting emotional needs for personal confidence and control and in coping with the multiple impacts of ill health on the complex social word in which people live their daily lives[14][15]. In combination with other factors, it may also improve confidence, control and the overall patient experience[16]; and provide other positive outcomes, such as knowledge increase, patient satisfaction, changes in health related behaviour, clinical and health outcomes, participation in work and social activities and health care utilisation[17]. The impact of providing and accessing information and knowledge, aspects of information, i.e. quality, equity of access, responsiveness to individual needs, support in using it, range and scope of information, being general or personalised, and other ways of involving and empowering patients will be researched in this context.

Strategies for patient involvement, empowerment and information may include: information provision, education, consultation, knowledge sharing, active participation, choice, engagement, managing and monitoring expectations and satisfaction with care and treatment. The two models below showing levels of consumer participation and user involvement may facilitate understanding of these issues (Figures 1 & 2).[18][19] A third model, based on a NHS document provides some information on what a public involvement continuum may include (Figure 3).[20]

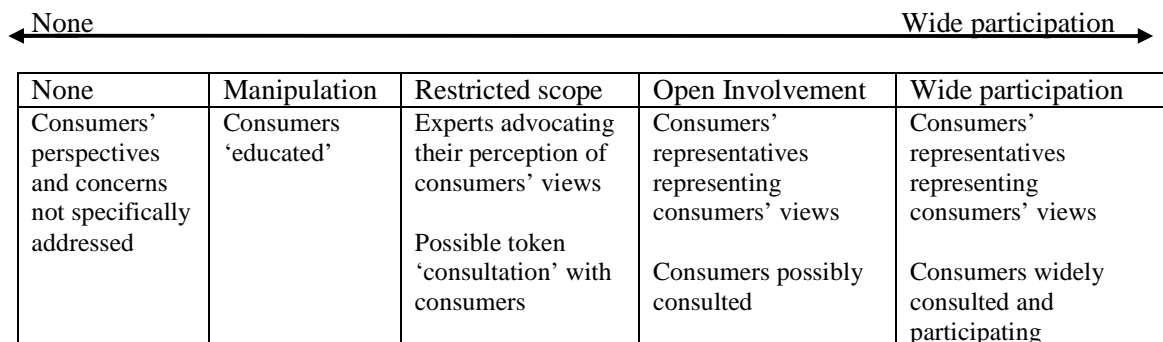*Figure 1: Levels of consumer participation (Source: Bastian, 1996)*

None ⟵ ⟶ Wide participation

None	Manipulation	Restricted scope	Open Involvement	Wide participation
Consumers' perspectives and concerns not specifically addressed	Consumers 'educated'	Experts advocating their perception of consumers' views Possible token 'consultation' with consumers	Consumers' representatives representing consumers' views Consumers possibly consulted	Consumers' representatives representing consumers' views Consumers widely consulted and participating

Figure 2: Levels of user involvement in healthcare (Source: Poulton, 1999)

Lower level ⟵ ⟶ Higher level

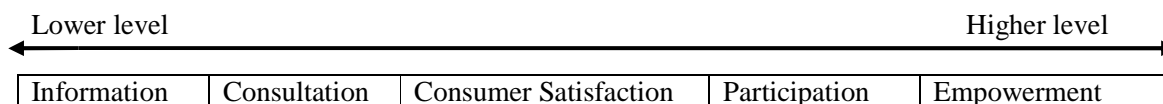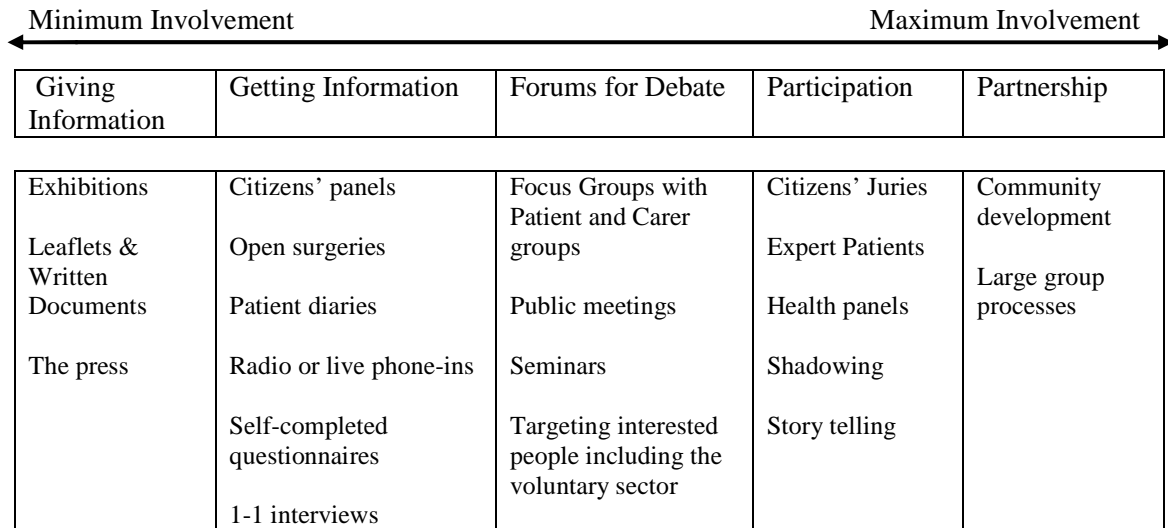| Information	Consultation	Consumer Satisfaction	Participation	Empowerment

Figure 3: Public Involvement Continuum (based on a diagram produced by Bedfordshire Health Authority and taken from 'Strengthening Accountability – Involving patient and the public')

Minimum Involvement   Maximum Involvement

Giving Information	Getting Information	Forums for Debate	Participation	Partnership
Exhibitions Leaflets & Written Documents The press	Citizens' panels Open surgeries Patient diaries Radio or live phone-ins Self-completed questionnaires 1-1 interviews	Focus Groups with Patient and Carer groups Public meetings Seminars Targeting interested people including the voluntary sector	Citizens' Juries Expert Patients Health panels Shadowing Story telling	Community development Large group processes

1.2 UK: Historical overview of patient involvement, empowerment and information

In the UK, the non-profit sector has been playing an important role in user and patient involvement, information and empowerment since the mid 1980s. One could claim that consumers started to voice concerns in the late 1950s with the launch of Consumers Association[21]. The first generic patient organisation, the Patients Association, was established in the 1960s[22], followed by other generic or umbrella patient organisations such as the College of Health and the Patients Forum in the 1980s; they have voiced patients and carers concerns on treatment, care, and delivery of services since then[23]. A number of specific disease or group organisations, i.e. Mind, Age Concern, Sign, Stroke Association, Breast Cancer Care - to mention only a few - have been also advocating, voicing patient concerns, and influencing national policy directions. In many areas, voluntary bodies became the centres of national expertise, and it was eventually recognised among others, that users might be able to command more information than professionals, i.e. with the notion of the 'expert patient'.[24]

The NHS policy documents began emphasising the need for patient input to the planning, development and delivery of services at all levels within the NHS in the 1990s [25 26 27]; the NHS Executive emphasised the need for user involvement in the monitoring, evaluation and audit of services and their outcome at every level in the NHS, initiating national and local initiatives involving consumers/ users / patients[28 29].

The NHS Plan [30] and 'Shifting the Balance of Power' [31] in the early 2000s, however, are the first policy reform documents that placed patients at the centre of the system and set out a vision of a NHS in which patients have more of a say about how healthcare is provided in their communities [32]. Since the publication of the NHS Plan there have been some significant developments that aimed to empower patients and the public to get involved in having a say in the way the health service works and which enable people to have a greater role in their own health:

- Section 11 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001, which places a duty on the NHS to consult and involve patients and the public in the planning and development of health services and in making decisions affecting the way those services operate
- Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) – provision of accessible support, advice and information to patient and carers in NHS settings
- Patient and Public Involvement Forums (PPI Forums) – independent bodies made up of volunteers and set up to monitor the quality of the NHS from the patient perspective
- Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) – provision of independent support to patients wishing to complain about the NHS
- Complaints investigations by the NHS, with the Healthcare Commission managing the independent review stage of the complaints procedure
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) – local authority councilors have the powers to review and scrutinise the planning, provision and operation of the health service and to make recommendations for improvement
- A number of initiatives on Choice - patients exercising choice- , the most recent being the 'Choose and Book' service which enables patients who require elective care to see information about their choices and book their first appointment in the GP surgery or later through a booking service[33]
- The Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH)[34], which is going to be abolished by August 2006
- A National Resource Centre for Patient and Public Involvement is currently being established (expected June 2006), aiming to promote the value of PPI and create a one stop shop for information and advice on PPI [35].

The NHS claims that it is increasingly putting patients at the centre of everything it does. This is partly because since 1st January 2003 all NHS bodies have had a legal duty to involve and consult the public[36]. It is also because there is an increasing body of evidence for involving people in health care and the benefits of this[37] [38]. The UK Department of Health sites that:

> *'patient and public involvement is not just about structures – it is a cultural change. It is about empowering patients and the public to have a say and about people in the NHS working differently and listening to and acting upon the views of patients and the public. Patient and public involvement improves patients' experiences of the NHS.'* [39]

1.3 Greece: Historical overview of patient involvement, empowerment and information

Unlike UK, non-profit organisations that represent patients or aim to improve health services in Greece have been developed only recently - most in the early 1990s - , and their activities are limited[40]. Although there are national specific disease organisations, i.e. Hellenic Cancer Society, Elpida (Association of Friends of Children with Cancer), Diabetes Association with local branches, and few specific to children organisations[41], an umbrella or generic organisation representing all patients or users of services has yet to be established.

In Greece, the health care system is characterised by a public-private mix for both funding and delivery. Three main types of coverage are available to the population: the National Health Care System (NHS), health insurance funds (insurance based on occupation), and private health insurance. The health care is mainly provided through a wide network of public hospitals offering

services to both inpatients and outpatients; public primary health care services are insufficiently developed.

The Greek NHS was introduced in 1983, and changes since then have been sluggish[42]. Taking into consideration the successive attempts for health care reforms of the 1990s as well as the 2001, no legislation has addressed patient involvement in an explicit way in Greece [43 44 45]. The reform attempted by the Conservatives in 1992 [46] introduced patients' rights based on the European Charter of Patients' Rights. Further reform discussions in 1994, initiated by a Foreign Experts Committee [47], laid emphasis on the improvement of hospital management and the establishment of quality measuring and monitoring mechanisms, and could be argued that it implicitly allowed room for user involvement. The legislation that led to the 1997 health care reform also emphasised patients' rights and effective hospital management which would use user views as an input in decision-making processes through the establishment of statutory bodies for patients' rights protection at national and hospital level[48].

The latest health care reform initiated in 2001, focuses on Greek citizens and their interests. Successful implementation of this reform could mean that the Greek population would cease to be among the most dissatisfied populations with the provision of health care in Europe[49]; it was hoped that it would enable Greece to catch up with health care reforms in other European countries[50]. With the change of government in 2004, a new health care reform is expected with respect of the individual and freedom of choice as its main characteristics. Quality of services, equity of access, waiting time reduction and patient satisfaction will be placed centrally and health services planning will be based on citizens' needs[51].

However, the health care system is bound to reflect the particularities of the Greek society and economy, namely, clientelism, a weak formal – and a thriving informal – economy, the lack of a strong administrative class and strong organised interests. Cultural particularities, such as the widespread practice of informal payments in the Greek NHS and the idiosyncratic role of the family – which to some extent act as a substitute for the welfare state – , may be in particular helpful in gaining a better understanding of the situation in Greek hospitals. [52]

2. Research question, aims and objectives

2.1 Research question

The fundamental key *question* is to what extent, how and why patients are involved, empowered, and are provided with and/or access appropriate information, in their care and treatment in public hospitals in Greece and UK.

2.2 Aims and objectives

The main aims are:
1) To develop a better understanding of patient involvement in public hospital treatment and care; and the forms it may take in these two countries,
2) To explore patient involvement, empowerment and information in the participating public hospitals in Greece and United Kingdom, as perceived from the stakeholders' perspectives.

The main objectives are:
1) To identify forms of patient involvement, empowerment and information
2) To explore views and perceptions of key NHS and non-NHS stakeholders on patient involvement, empowerment and information
3) To identify differences and similarities between cases and also between countries
4) To explore how these may be shaped by cultural, policy and organisational issues
5) To make recommendations on patient involvement, empowerment and information in the two countries.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Design

This is a mixed-methodology[53], multi-centre prospective empirical study, using descriptive multi-case embedded (more than one unit of analysis on the same case) study design. The embedded design is appropriate to organise different types of knowledge such as different stakeholder perspectives. This design will cover both the phenomenon and its context and will facilitate its understanding in a complex environment. The number of 'cases' and quantitative elements (as described below) will engender patterns and linkages of theoretical importance[54]. For case studies, theory development at the design phase is essential, and five components of a research design are important[55]:

1) *The study's questions, aims and objectives* - as have been defined above.
2) *The main propositions.* These are: patient needs for involvement, empowerment and information are similar in the hospitals and the two countries; patients want and benefit from their appropriate involvement, engagement and information on their treatment and care, irrespectively of their country of recidence; policy developments, organisational cultures and interactions within the organisations/hospitals together with the attitudes of key NHS stakeholders and staff influence patient involvement, empowerment and information.
3) *The units of analysis.* These are: the public hospitals, key stakeholders and staff, patients and their complex interactions.
4) *Linking data to propositions.* Data will be linked to the propositions with 'pattern matching', whereby several pieces of information from the same case may be related to some theoretical proposition.
5) *Criteria for interpeting the study's findings.* There are not currently any criteria for interpreting this type of findings, these will be informed by the data.

The collection of data will be directed towards the development of an analytical framework that will facilitate interpretation of findings. Subsequently this case study will show to what extent, how and why patients are involved, empowered, and are provided with and/or access appropriate information, in their hospital care and treatment.

3.2 Methodology, process and progress

The plan of investigation encompasses multiple methods of data collection and investigation to allow triangulation of results and data synthesis.

A) Literature review:
A substantive and wide-ranging policy and literature review using a structured approach. This includes search of electronic databases and library searches; identification of Department of Health and NHS policy documents and studies in UK and relevant documents in Greece. Grey literature is included where possible. It also includes archival information collection including contemporary records and existing statistics.

B) Selection of cases:
Six general hospitals were selected in the two countries. Replication logic, not sampling logic is used for multi-case studies. The (literal or theoretical) replication was based on size and type of

hospital, location and population served (rural/urban), departments and facilities offered in each hospital, and number of inpatient beds.

C) Methods:
The diagnostic [56] *study* explores the setting and will inform the selection of cases and development of tools for the second phase of the study (see below). It consists of:

1) A network analysis of voluntary and other organisations that involve patients or represent their interests, and consultations with key representatives of selected organisations in both countries (up to 8 consultations).
2) The literature review continues throughout this phase.
3) Diagnostic analysis and case screening of the selected hospitals. It explores organisational structures, cultures, policies and guidelines as related to the national policies. It includes consultations / interviews with key NHS staff, i.e. Directors and PALS staff and collection of archival and other information. The key members of staff were sent an invitation letter together with an information sheet and an informed consent form to return if they wish to participate. An interview topic guide and digital recorder were used for the interviews.

One to two hospitals that correspond best to case study replication criteria will be selected in each country for the second and third phase.

3.3 Approvals and Ethical issues

Ethics clearance / approval, governance and management approval:
MultiREC, site specific Ethics and Research & Governance Approval was granted in the U.K.
Approval, Scientific Committee or Managerial was granted from the 3 hospitals in Greece.

Voluntary Participation and Autonomy
All staff participated voluntarily and had the right to withdraw at any stage of the project. This was explicitly explained in writing and verbally.

Anonymity and Confidentiality
The data collected is hold in strictest confidence and results / writing up the results will not identify participants in any way. Storage of data is in a locked cabinet and password protected computer accessed only from the researcher. These were explained to participants.

Informed Consent
Information sheets and informed consent forms were given to all potential participants. The information sheet and consent form included detailed, simple jargon-free information on all aspects of the study. The foreseeable risks and benefits of the study were outlined. The right of the participants to refuse or withdraw at any time was highlighted.

No Harm to Participants and Beneficence
The study does not pose any risk to participants, as it only involves interviews. If at any time during the interview participants demonstrate any form of distress, the Chief Investigator ceases the interview.

Data Protection Act (1998)
All work is conducted within the legal obligations imposed by the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.4 Analysis

The data analysis consists of analysing and recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of the study. It includes a case study database - a formal assemply of evidence -, and a chain of evidence - explicit links between the questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn. It also includes:

- Synthesising evidence - analysis of policy documents and consultations.
- The interviews are recorded, transcribed and analysed in the language conducted, and then translated into English. Qualitative data derived from the interviews will be analysed using thematic framework analysis.

4. Timescale of the project

The project commenced on February 2006 and its timescale can be seen below:

Task
Time period

Task	Time period
Literature review (continuous)	February 2006 – now
Sampling and selection of cases	February 2006 – June 2006
Ethics clearance / approval	June 2006 – February 2007
Phase I: Diagnostic Phase	
Network analysis of voluntary organisations	June 2006 – December 2006
Diagnostic analysis of selected hospitals and case screening	December 2006 – June 2007
Synthesising evidence - analysis of literature	May 2006 – August 2007
Transcribing, Translating & Qualitative analysis of consultations/interviews	January 2007 – August 2007
Writing up	July 2007 – September 2007

5. Preliminary Findings

Preliminary findings based on analysis of policy and strategic documents, network analysis and 40 consultations / interviews with non-NHS and NHS stakeholders in both U.K. and Greece are presented.

> ➤ ***Patient involvement policy developments***

> ➤ ***The current mechanisms of 'giving voice', engaging and empowering patients in hospitals***

> ➤ ***Development & effectiveness of PPI mechanisms***

> ➤ ***Views and perceptions of key stakeholders***

Table 1. Patient involvement policy developments

U.K.	GREECE
The non-profit sector has been playing an important role in these issues since the mid 1980s.	The non-profit sector has been developed only recently (early 1990s) & does not play a significant role as yet.
Mainly public health system	Public-private mix health care system for both funding and delivery.
The NHS began emphasising the need for patient input to the planning, development and delivery of services at all levels within the NHS in the 1990s.	No legislation has addressed patient involvement in an explicit way in Greece (1992, 1997 and 2001 reforms).
The NHS Plan & 'Shifting the Balance of Power' in the early 2000s are the first policy reform documents that placed patients at the centre.	The 1992 reform introduced patients' rights, based on the European Charter of Patients' Rights.
Since then there were a number of significant changes, developments and reforms that aimed to empower patients and the public.	Legislation re 1997 reform emphasised patients' rights & hospital management; establishment of statutory bodies for patients' rights protection at national and hospital level.

Table 2 . The current mechanisms of 'giving voice', engaging and empowering patients in hospitals

U.K.	*Greece*
PPI Leads / Heads of PPI (under the management of Directors/ Ass Directors of Nursing)	Non - Existent
PALS (Managers and Officers)	*Office of Communication with Citizen* (Managers and Officers) (under the Chief Executive)
A number of committees involve PPI Forums members or other patient representatives	Three-member Committee for Protection of Patient Rights (not involving a patient)
PPI Forums (currently undergoing reforms)	Patient/ Patient Group representation non-existence
Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS)	Non-Existent (complaints to the office of Communication with Citizen /or Chief Ex directly)
Overview and Scrutiny Committees	Non – Existent
Non - Existent	*Independent Centre for Protection of Patient Rights*, Ministry of Health and Social Care
Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman	*Greek Ombudsman in Health and Social Care*
Although donations occur, they are not very common.	Gratitude payment is very common; if given after treatment has now been legalised.

Table 3. Development & effectiveness of PPI mechanisms

U.K.	Greece
PPI Leads / Heads / PALS Although they have been in place for at least 5 years, views concerning their effectiveness have been expressed. Current Policy Reforms underway.	**Communication with Citizen Lead / Office of Communication with Citizen** Although NHS circular for their establishment on April 2006, their development and effectiveness varies**.**
PPI Forums Concerns on their effectiveness have been expressed. Currently under major reform.	**Patient/ Patient Group representation** Many concerns about 'patients' voices being heard' were expressed by voluntary organisations.
Non-existent	**Independent Centre for Protection of Patient Rights, Ministry of Health & Social Care** It is known only from few, i.e. chief exs; hospital staff are not aware of its existence.
Patient Questionnaires Hospital patient surveys are filled every year in the UK Other questionnaires are distributed and filled in widely.	**Patient Questionnaires** One only national patient survey in 2001. Hospital questionnaires associated with the Communication with Citizen Office are less /more accessible and filled in sporadically.

Box 1. Views and perceptions of key stakeholders

U.K.	Greece
Government policy makers 'Their heart is in the right place, but...'	**Government policy makers** 'There are more important things than patient rights in the health system'
Hospital Staff 'Systems create anxiety, staff are hard-pressed.'	**Hospital staff** 'There is a big problem with numbers of staff, there is not enough staff...'
Communication needs 'People can be terribly forgiving if staff have good manners'	**Communication needs** 'Respect, a smile, this is what patients need'
Characteristics / Culture of patients **Awareness/Lack of awareness** 'Some patients are not aware of PALS and other bodies' **Collectivism:** 'There is a group culture, patients want a better NHS' 'There should be more ways to hear the collective voice of patients'	**Characteristics / Culture of patients** **Awareness/Lack of awareness** 'Patients do not know their rights, they haven't seen them anywhere' 'There is not sufficient information about systems and structures towards the citizen' **Individualism / Other characteristics** 'We are strange, we do not help and do not follow rules.' 'Those users who do not have the luxury of time, but have the luxury of money will go privately'
General Involvement 'Some people do not want to be involved, they just want to get what they need' 'Patients have less voice nowadays...'	**General Involvement** 'Most patients want to have their care and treatment immediately, they do not care about other things'

6. Discussion / Further Research

The preliminary findings of this study perhaps raise more questions than answers. A major research study covering eight European countries recently - including UK, but not Greece - found remarkable similarities of views of patients about their health care, including issues on involvement[57]. A new analysis of data from patient surveys published recently from the Picker Institute revealed significant weaknesses in patient engagement in the UK in comparison to other six developed countries [58]. Health and health services related questions may be relevant, in both UK and Greece - as in other European countries; and there are a number of key questions which remain unanswered. Although Greek NHS is well behind in dealing with these issues strategically and in policy level, how does actual patient involvement differ in these two countries? How effective/efficient are the different policy systems for the patients? In UK, do policy developments lead patients in becoming more autonomous and in charge of decisions about their treatment and care? What does choice really mean to them? Do Greek patients have different choices that reflect the particularities of the Greek society? What do patients perceive to be the most pressing problems and what are their reactions to specific approaches to tacking them? How do the various stakeholders - chief executives, managers, health professionals - view patients involvement? Are patients aware of patient involvement policies; how are they involved in their everyday care and treatment?

This study forms the diagnostic, first phase of a mixed-methodology, multi-centre prospective empirical study, using descriptive multi-case embedded study design. It includes two further phases, namely:

> **Phase II – Case Study**
>   - One to two hospitals will be selected in each country
>   - Patient involvement, empowerment and information as perceived by patients patients as units of analysis) will be explored in depth.

> **Phase III – Workshops**
>   The findings of Phase I & II will be presented and discussed in workshops with stakeholders, staff and patients.

These further phases will attempt to shed light in these issues and answer some of the above mentioned questions.

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Community work and local development:
The case of the Municipality of Aigeiros, Thrace

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1. Introduction

"Development" is not a value-free term. It has a unique meaning for different perspectives based on different ideologies. It is related to issues of production, growth, redistribution, poverty, as well as social and cultural parameters (Papatheodorou, 1998, Koutsoumaris, 1993). Nevertheless, it is well known that within the neoclassical paradigm, most approaches focus on the economic dimension of development. Moreover, according to international organizations (e.g. World Bank and International Monetary Fund) and mainstream economists, economic growth is a precondition for the welfare of society in general. It is a fact that economic liberalization and globalization during recent years improved economic growth prospects in a number of developed and developing countries (W.B. World Development Indicators, 2005). However, at the same time, the gap between the rich and poor has generally widened, while issues of social exclusion, unemployment, discrimination, immigration and poverty have been witnessed an enormous increase globally (U.N. The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2005, ILO, Global Employment Trends, 2006, Chossudovsky, 1998, Midgley, 1999)

Since the postwar period this dominant view of development, as economic growth, is in a difficult dialogue with social development and efforts that attend to harmonize

economic goals in relation to social welfare and confront the consequences of economic development in society. Within the different perspectives, programs and types of intervention that have been developed historically in developing and developed world, quite often the concept of community has been recognized as a field of great importance in order to fulfill the targeted goals. Additionally, community work have been used, in order for example to mobilize communities for modernizing so called Third World's societies or to confront poverty in USA and UK. In Western Europe, in UK for example, during 1960s and particular 1970s community work has witnessed a "golden era" (Popple, 2000). However, due to Marxist and later on New – Right critics to community work, for its unsuccessful approach to the emerging social problems at a community level, interest in community work witnessed a significant reduction (Conroy, 1990). Nonetheless, community work's techniques and methods have been used in order to offer a more "value for money" approach to care within the community during the New – Right period in UK and elsewhere.

In recent years, there has been a remarkable growth in interest in the concepts of community and community work. The reason for this seems to be twofold: Firstly, it is related to the dominant dialogue concerning welfare state crisis. New – Right's critics to central state oriented and bureaucratic welfare state and the fallowing criticism to unsuccessful liberal policies, lead to a "Third Way", which leaves behind the dichotomy state – market and focuses in civil society (Giddens, 1998). Within this paradigm, today there is a growing effort within E.U. and many individual countries across Europe to shift the balance of planning and implementing social policy from state sector to partnerships in local level between local authorities, private sector, NGOs and community (Bridgen, 2004, Shaw and Martin, 2000, Geoghegan and Powell, 2006, Blakeley, 2005, Conroy, 1996, Crickley, 1996, Hautekeur, 2005, Frazer, 2005, Vercseg, 2005, O'Connor, 2005, Ferrera, 2003, 2003α, Ferrera, Matsaganis and Sacchi, 2002, De la Porte and Pochet, 2004, De la Porte, et al, 2001, Atkinson and Davoudi, 2000, Kvist, 2004).

Secondly, since 1980s, there is a growing interest in an academic and political level, for local development, partly because of the collapse of "grand theories" for development at the same period. Although there is a number of different strategies for local development (Vazquez Barquero, 1991), the most popular one seems to be

"endogenous development" approach partly because of E.U. support which co – finance a number of programs since 1980s (e.g. LEADER, LEADER II, LEADER + and INTERREG). Endogenous development is a "bottom up" model for development at a local level, heavily related firstly to local resources and abilities (e.g. business networks, labor manpower, etc), secondly to the existence of a certain institutional context that favors economic development and finally to the existence of a prosperous culture heritage (Papadopoulos, 2004). As Weaver (1992:186) puts it, it relates to a certain model for "development at specific areas" which grounds in the existence of necessary resources and the "willing action of community". It should be stressed, that this particular views about local development were reinforced by the previous mentioned modern theories concerning civil society, which supposed to "upgrade local communities from local social structures to social subjects which can act relatively autonomously for their one benefit" (Papadopoulos, 1999:18).

However, this dialogue barely reaches the reality in Greece. In Greece efforts to reform the system of social protection, which has significant differences from the principles and characteristics of welfare states that have been developed with different forms across Europe, formed a quite different context, which merely echos the previously mentioned views and developments (Petmesidou, 2003). One the other hand, due to reasons related mainly to the long lasting degraded role of local administration and weak civil society, the issue of local development until recently wasn't part of the political agenda (Zaimakis, 2002). Nevertheless, during the last fifteen years a number of reforms in Greek administrative and social protection system, mainly related to pressures and funds by E.U., forms a different context for Greek society. These reforms concern decentralization, coordination and quality of social protection system, the development of community care services across the country, along with reforms in the institutional context of local administration which attempt to change the central – local relations and to transfer a number of responsibilities to local municipalities and societies, as well as a number of programs co - financed by E.U. for fighting social exclusion and promoting endogenous development in rural areas.

However, a number of problems are related to the previously mentioned reforms and programs. Those are related to the time consuming and – in some cases – mutual

reversed reforms, the forms that the central or local administration have chosen to implement certain programs and actions concerning social exclusion and local development, the inadequate institutional context, the weak civil society, the long lasting and heavy statism, and the absence of a strategic procedure of planning in central and - more importantly - in local level that could subsume the current reforms, actions and development programs. Additionally, the extremely limited experience in community interventions, in administration and in professional level too is of great importance. Community work and community development programs have barely been developed in Greece. Only a small number of programs have been developed since Second World War, in most cases based on academic efforts by Social Work Departments of Universities and Polytechnics across the country. As already implied, only in few cases community development projects were state initiative, in which cases it was more interest to control local communities rather than aiming at community development itself. However, overall they are problematic in terms of theory and methodology.

Nevertheless, these current reforms and new responsibilities for local societies along with the limited literature and empirical experience in promoting organized and systematic development efforts at a local level provide a ground for an academic and political dialogue concerning the ability of local societies to participate in planning and implementing social and local development policies. Additionally, the above parameters constitute a challenge for community work in an academic and professional level too, as a particular scientific type of intervention at a local level and its ability to assist local communities in Greece to confront the current and multilevel problems that they are facing today.

2. Aim of the thesis

The aim of the thesis is to contribute to an academic dialogue on local development in Greece through the perspective of community work. At this point a crucial distinction should be made concerning the researcher's perspective to local development within this study. However interesting the approach and different strategies of local development may be, it remains an approach closely related to economic development, while it seems to relate exclusively to areas that have certain

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preconditions and social dynamics, in order to set business networks and social economy (Shortall and Shucksmith, 2001). Nevertheless, within this study, development is not conceived as a phenomenon exclusively related to economic growth. Furthermore, the selected area to be studied is an area with extremely limited resources, social dynamic and preconditions that the model of endogenous development is required. Therefore, the researcher approaches local development with a community development perspective. By the term "community development" we refer to a procedure which aims within a macro perspective to identify local needs, inequalities and issues of discrimination that exist within the local community, to define the causes of the problems and identify possible solutions. Community development strives to confront needs and desires of local community through actions that organize and empower community, promote collective action and participation and connect communities with the wider socioeconomic environment and resources (Craig, 1998).

The reason for that is threefold: Firstly, it is a fact that the dialogue for local development in Greece as well as in a wider context relates to the dominant view for development as a phenomenon exclusively related to infrastructure, investments and economic growth. However, this view fails to recognize crucial aspects of development related to issues of employment, unemployment, intercultural relations, health and care. Therefore, we need a more inter – scientific, holistic view of development as a phenomenon that affects the total human existence (Papaioannou, 1995). Secondly, local level due to its close relation to the wider environment (national – global) can not be conceived as relatively autonomous (Papadopoulos, 1999). Therefore, it is necessary to examine local conditions within a wider context. On the other hand, a number of contradictions, different interests and various needs as well as different groups and communities that exist within local society, imply that it is necessary to examine local society based on this variety rather, than simply by geographical terms (Mayo and Craig, 1995). The significant political, social, economical and cultural particularities and needs that exist generally within the area of Thrace and specifically in the Municipality of Aigeiros is a third reason.

Particularities such as the existence of Muslim Minority[1], which determines development policies and their outcomes in this area (Akadimia Athinon, 1995, Anagnostou, 2001), require a more sophisticated examination of the issue[2].

Therefore, in this study, it is examined whether the selected local community may consist a "social subject". Thrace Greece, during 1990s had the lowest development rate in E.U (Malkidis, 1998). Taking this into consideration, it is examined whether there are available resources and whether one can meet the required social dynamic in order for local community to act "relatively autonomously on their one benefit". Furthermore, the study attempted to examine the possible actions required (concerning definition of local needs, planning and implementing policy, support social structure and intercultural relations and exploitation of internal resources in order to meet local needs), to empower the local community to set goals concerning local development and to activate resources in order to achieve them. Although there is any intention to underestimate economic figures and parameters, it is attempted to identify crucial parameters, such as the educational level, issues and needs concerning education, health, care, employment and unemployment and their different dimensions in different communities and groups within the local community (e.g. Muslims, Christians, Gypsies), which determine and co define the level and prospects of local development.

Within this framework, techniques and methods of community work are used and evaluated, in order to estimate how they may contribute to identify and confront the problems faced by the community. This is especially so in a period, where the developmental policies, despite the rhetoric are organized at a central level (national and E.U.) and aim at macro economic goals while they neglect local particularities and needs. The study aims to contribute to the local development in Municipality of

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[1] Muslim minority is the only official recognized minority in Greece. The status of this minority is specified by articles 37-45 of the Lausanne Treaty, which was signed in 1922 and which designed the national borders of the Balkan States. The minority population members are officially recognized as based on religious differences. Since 1991, three ethnic groups have been officially recognized within the Muslim minority: those of Turkish origin (*Τουρκογενείς*), Pomaks [*Πομάκοι* (who speak a Bulgarian – Slavic dialect)], and Gypsies – Roma (*Αθίγγανοι*) (Kandylaki, 2004: 30-31).

[2] A number of similar studies in N. Ireland, which in a sense is equally "sensitive" with Thrace due to the existence of two separate communities (Catholics and Protestants), have concluded to same results (McDonough, 1996, Shortall και Shucksmith, 2001, Osborne, Williamson και Beatle, 2004).

Aigeiros through a community development perspective. Furthermore, this may be a useful practice for other areas in a country with limited experience in similar programs.

3. The overview of the thesis

The thesis consists of two parts: the theoretical part includes chapters 1, 2 and 3. The aim is to present the discourse concerning development with emphasis on community development. Chapter 1 explores different views about development aiming to define the term and the relationship between economic growth and social welfare. A number of policies and development programs located at a community level since postwar period are also examined. A critical evaluation of their targets, methods and their results is also among the aims of this chapter. The discussion focuses on current period where the dominant development paradigm within international organisations, E.U. and a number of countries puts emphasis on decentralized and targeted type of intervention based on community participation, civil society, local partnerships and self - help rather than macro policies aiming at social welfare. A number of issues, opportunities and problems within partnerships, civil society and specific policies are examined too. Although community and community participation are at the centre of development discourse, the empirical evidence indicate that the majority of programs seem to be an outreach intervention, which attempt to transfer to local communities responsibilities and cost for the problems, that have been created by wider economic and political interests (Salgado, 2000, Dean, 2003). It is further argued that initiating projects, structured on a central government/ or super National (e.g. E.U.) level are more directed, towards the satisfaction of macroeconomic goals rather than to local particularities and needs.

The second chapter explores different theoretical views, targets and practices within community work since Second World War at an international level. The emphasis is on the discussion about the role and the alternatives that community work could offer within the current development paradigm. A number of issues concerning community development, empowerment, collective action and methods of define and confronting local needs and particularities are examined too. The chapter concludes by arguing that although community work per se can not offer a valuable solution to issues such

unemployment and poverty, a dual (macro and micro) perspective in local level is required in order to identify causes and possible solutions to local problems. Furthermore, it is argued that the participation of different groups, interests and local organizations to the decision process could offer a more valuable and democratic perspective to local development. A number of preconditions that should be fulfilled in order to achieve this are also examined. The main argument is that particular strategies, aims and methods of needs assessment and interventions of community work, may contribute to the confrontation of multiple contemporary social problems in a globalized environment.

Chapter 3 presents the history and prospects of community development projects and community work as it has been developed in Greece since the postwar period. Different parameters and policies in a social, political, economical, administration, professional and academic level are reviewed and crucial issues that restricted the development of community development and community work in this country are also pinpointed. These issues, as already indicated, relate to the peculiarities of the Greek social protection model, the weak civil society, the central/ local administration relations and the minor academic interest – though relatively higher than the state interest - in community development and community work. The emphasis is on the current interest in local development. A number of issues in terms of local administration and professional practices are also examined. Finally the focus is to discuss the ways through which community work can assist local communities to face more effectively new challenges.

The empirical part of the thesis includes chapter 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. It mainly consists of the presentation of a case study "The Municipality of Aigeiros", in Thrace Greece. This case study can be considered as a 'paradigm' of using techniques and methods of community work, to study in "real conditions' and in depth, planning, empowering and encouraging community participation in a multicultural region, as well as finding pathways to support local development by making the most of small projects, co-financed by the European Union to tackle social exclusion [e.g. Project aiming to the integration of Muslims into education, Greek National Action Plan towards social integration]. Aigeiros is a small multicultural municipality, consisting of eight villages, two of which are inhabited by Muslim minority, three are mixed consisting

of majority and minority population and another three are inhabited by majority population. Additionally, during the last 15 years the area is inhibited by a small number of Greek repatriates (*Παλιννοστούντες*) from countries of the former Soviet Union.

The case study is used to illustrate the theoretical argument, regarding the ability of community work, to offer a more socially and locally oriented perspective, concerning local development and explore it in practice. For this purpose, a needs assessment research took place initially. Furthermore, a community work intervention took place. The aim was to design a community development project with the participation of the local authorities, the local community and the dept of Social Administration of the University of Thrace. Initially a research using quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis, concerning employment, health, community care and education took place. The researcher used a sample of 125 families that live in the villages of the municipality, and have children between the ages 4 and 18. The interviews were structured and consisted of some closed and a number of open ended questions, which have been qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The focus was to explore the employment status of the municipality's citizens related to gender, age and cultural origin. Additionally, the level of employment satisfaction, unemployment rate, the collective and/or individual problems are also explored. Secondly, the research examines people's satisfaction from the local educational structures and services (in general and in minority schools) and the evolving problems associated with them, as well as the interviewees suggestions for potential solutions that can be implemented. Concerning the interviewees' health and community care needs, the research examines their level of satisfaction from the local social and health services. The experiences and opinions expressed by Muslims living in minority villages in the Municipality are examined in particular.

4. Research Findings

The area of Aigeiros is characterized by low rates of development, extreme economical problems, mainly related to the declining agricultural production, the absence of alternative areas of employment, the rise of internal and external

immigration and the consequent decline productive population, which maintains the low level of financial activity in the area. Considering the type, wage and social status of employment, the vast majority of the researched population belongs to low socio-economical class, while there are no upper class citizens. 59% percent of the sample are employed in the primary sector (mainly agriculture), 25,2% percent in the secondary sector and 15,6% percent in the tertiary sector. Furthermore, 63,9% of the sample are self employed (60,5% of the majority and 75% of the minority), while only 7,2% percent of the self- employed run a business where wageworkers are employed (9,3% of the majority and 5,6% of the minority). This stresses the existence of much private or family - run business in the area and the low level of their economic activity. 23% percent of the researched population (62,5% percent of them are from the minority and 37,5% from the majority) has a second job, in order to respond to the increasing cost of life and the low income receiving from their main occupation.

The recent developments in the agricultural production in the context of E.U. and especially those concerning the regime of subsidization of certain products (e.g. cotton, which is one of the main products produced in the area), consist one of the major problems for the majority of the local community in terms of income and prospects of development in the area. The only initiative, that the local authorities have taken so far, is the participation of the municipality in the program «Local Initiatives for Employment», which is a program co - financed by European Social Funding. The program financially supports local actions related to employment, self employment, getting work experience and new forms of employment. It is estimated that the program will support 120 individuals from the area of Aigeiros end especially people from the Muslim minority, Romas, repatriates, unemployed and under – employed in the primary sector and tourism. In what level this initiative would deal with the problems of employment in the area remains to be seen.

Despite the expectancies of the policy designers for the growth of employment opportunities in the area of manufacture and services, which could cover part of the agricultural income and job losses of the local population, those expectations are not currently fulfilled due to the transfer of a number of industries to the neighboring Balkan countries, where the wages are lower and the cost of production cheaper. The

interviewees' low educational level along with their lack of specialization, which is especially evident for the members of the Muslim minority, are two additional reasons for the lack of opportunities. The fact that a growing number of – mostly – young individuals and families relocate to the city of Komotini reflects and reproduces as well this dreary reality, which undermines the prospects of development in the area.

The low educational level, the lack of appropriate transport and road infrastructure, the limited number of schools and the low level of educational services in the area, combined with the absence of cultural or other similar activities in the community are crucial issues revealed by the research. A number of interviewees suggest that in order to overcome this problematic situation, fundamental changes are needed in terms of school programs (with emphasis in the Greek language in the case of minority schools). They have also underlined the need to improve schools' infrastructure and transport links. Concerning health and care the very few and inadequate services, are indicated as some of the main problems in the area. Access to the only public health center of the area due to the lack of appropriate transport and road infrastructure is very hard. This therefore determines the available options of the citizens. Furthermore, the limited number of doctors and nurses and the lack of programs of primary health, due to the centralized form of the health centre are additional problems, which lead the most of the interviewees' to private doctors or to the general hospital in Komotini.

It should be pinpointed, that while these problems affect the lives and future of the community as a whole, this is more evident for Muslim citizens. Besides the lack of job opportunities generally in the area, Muslims are further restricted. On an institutional level, the members of the minority have limited access to white collar waged jobs and restricted access to services concerning employment, health, care and education. These are due to a mix of close related parameters, such as their extremely limited knowledge and consequently restricted use of the Greek language, the inadequacy of the local services to respond to their multiple needs and problems, the generally limited number of services and the absence of basic infrastructure in the area and issues of efficiency and access to services. For example, the use of the only public health center (*Κέντρο Υγείας*), is in a sense non-accessible for the inhabitants of the village of Meleti (a Muslim minority village). This is due to the lack of direct

transport link and to the bad condition of the road infrastructure, although the distance is only a few kilometers. Additionally, while there is a Muslim doctor in the centre, the one who visits the village (two times per month) does not speak any turkish. This is due to bureaucratic reasons. Furthermore the limited available community care services in the area can not provide their services to the members of minority due to the lack of staff with knowledge of the Turkish language. Also, the very few institutional care services for the elderly in the wider area of Thrace are supervised and financially supported by the Orthodox Church and do not accept Muslims. Inter-cultural relations and communication between the different cultural communities that live in the municipality of Aigeiros are also important. According to a number of interviewees from the majority population, "foreigners" (and by foreigners they refer especially to members of minority and repatriates as well) are those, who are responsible for the lack of job opportunities in the area. Similarly, according to their views, 'foreigners' are responsible for the low educational level in the schools in the area.

At a personal level, the vast majority of parents from the Muslim minority have only graduated from primary schools (69,8% for men and 72,7% for women) and never continued to the gymnasium, although it is obligatory by law. This situation seems to be reproduced among the youths. According to the research data the educational level of young students is low and resembles to their parents' educational level. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge of the Greek language, especially for women, is another obstacle for them in being able to help their children in their studies. Additionally, parameters such as the limited access to institutional and community care services for elderly and handicapped members of the family, the absence of facilities for children, and their contribution to the house income by doing a lot of agricultural and cattle breading activities, leads to a situation where women carry a lot of time consuming responsibilities and they are unable to fulfilled their wishes and needs to socializing and continuous education.

On a community level, unlike the areas where the majority leaves, the villages inhabited by the Muslim minority have no valuable natural resources or prospects for activities of social economy and endogenous development programs (e.g. LEADER etc). The village of Meleti, particularly its south part, is such a typical example. The

village is divided literally and socially in two areas: the north part (άνω μαχαλάς) where the population consist from Turkish origin citizens (τουρκογενείς) and the south part (κάτω μαχαλάς) where the population consists of Romas. The latter are doubly discriminated against both by the majority and the Muslim minority, and they therefore do not wish to identify themselves as Romas or Gypsies, but rather as Muslim minority. Their socioeconomic status is lower than those living in the north part of the village, most of the houses have no basic structures in terms of electricity, water supply, drainage, while the streets in the neighborhoods are full with night soil, ruts and waste. This area witnesses a long lasting, systematic exclusion and neglect by the local authorities.

5. Community work intervention

Based on the analysis of the research findings, the second face of the case study, development project under the supervision of the Dept of Social Administration of the University of Thrace with the participation of the local authorities, local community. The aim of the community intervention was to assist the local Municipality in the process of planning and implementing policy. The purpose was the establishment of a social services department on a Municipality level. The aim was threefold: Firstly, given the limited local resources a crucial target was to search for and to exploit external resources and programs that could effectively meet the local needs. A second aim was to promote a more participative procedure in its actions that in the long run could establish participation and cooperation in the process of planning and implementing social and development policies at a local level between local authorities, community and local organizations. However, due to the weak civil society and the lack of previous experience in collective action, a significant aim was to organize a number of activities, in order to promote empowerment in local community. These were promoted in the context of an intervention project that was organized and implemented by the Municipal social service. Due to the lack of funds, the social service initially operates in a pilot form by students-trainee social workers under the supervision of academic staff and the assistance of two social workers University graduates. It has however been clarified to the local authorities that the viability of the project will depend on its financing from Municipality.

A number of activities were promoted. Networks with a number of EU co – financed Projects were promoted as for example a project run by the University of Thrace-Dept of Soc. Administration whose aim was to 'Encourage entrepreneurship and introduce modules on social entrepreneurialism and social marketing' (Ministry of Education - ΕΠΕΑΕΚ ΙΙ). The intervention was considered as a virtually organized social enterprise, which gave the students the opportunity to get an important experience in terms of planning and implementing community work in multicultural areas. It also financed for a short period, one of the social workers employed in the Project. Another project was the one which co-financed Students' 'Practice Placement in Higher Education', which covered part of the travel cost for the students participating. Finally, concerning issues of education which are crucial in the area, part of the community development project for the period between March 2006 and July 2007, was financially supported by the Project aiming to 'Inclusion to Education of Muslim Pupils' [see www. Museduc.gr, Greek National Action Plan], which has covered part of the cost for the two Social Workers employed in the project.

A number of activities were organized and implemented to confront local problems, to empower the local communities and to promote cooperation, participation and intercultural communication between October 2005 and December 2006.

5.1. Consulting and supporting group for local farmers.

The idea of organizing a group aiming to consult and support local farmers was based on the fact that the economy of the area is heavily dependent on agricultural production and income. Given the interest of the local Municipality for the program "Local Initiatives for Employment" and the doubts expressed by the interviewees regarding its effectiveness, as already mentioned, we proposed part of the program to support instead a consulting and supporting group for local farmers. The aim of this group was to give the opportunity to farmers to discuss with experts their anxieties regarding their cultivations. Furthermore, a second aim was to offer them information about the market needs and the trends in E.U. agricultural policy, in order for local farmers to make crucial decisions regarding the future of their production. Additionally, it aimed to provide local farmers with a systematic support in a

procedure to promote alternative methods of growth or different kind of products etc. Members of the group apart from local farmers could be members of the local authorities and the farmers' union. Officials from the Prefecture of Rodopi and relative institutions focusing on agricultural issues were also invited to participate in this initiative. Although the proposal has been accepted by the local authorities its implementation has been postponed due to delays in funding.

5.2. Setting a Non for profit organisation to promote cultural events

Based on the research findings concerning the limited cultural activity in the area, the lack of intercultural relations and limited job opportunities, the foundation of a non for profit organisation was suggested. The aim was to support multicultural activities in cooperation with other local services, schools and culture clubs within the community, to exploit physical environment and resources and to create job opportunities. For instance the proposed organisation with the collaboration of the local culture clubs could promote activities for researching, studying and exposing elements of the local culture and heritage such as photos, traditional agricultural tools, old house equipment, traditional fabrics and cloths. Additionally, the community development program with the participation of young students, parents and teachers, could support activities for the promotion of conjectural and vivid arts, literature, music, theatre, cinema etc.

5.3. Activities to promote intercultural communication and joint action

In an area where education, community care, health and other services are not easily accessible by the minority, while the relationships and experiences between the two communities do not favor intercultural communication, it is extremely difficult to set a multiculturalism perspective, which may have exactly the opposite result than it is expected. Within this framework, community development program in Aigeiros tried to intervene in a more discreet and less risky way. On the 21 and 22 of January 2005, a two – day animation festival for children and youths took place in two different locations in the municipality. The aim was to promote positive interaction between children and youths coming from different villages in the Municipality, intercultural collaboration and communication through activities such as drama and interactive

games. The event was organized by the pilot social services and the Municipality of Aigeiros with the cooperation of the local schools (general and minority) and the two Centers for Family Care (KEFO) operating in the Municipality.

5.4. An intervention at the village of Meleti

As mentioned earlier the village of Meleti constitutes a particular case within the wider area of Aigeiros. Extremely limited access to fundamental services, absence of intercultural communication and low educational level of both parents and young students are recurring issues in the village. Therefore, in the context of community development project a number of activities took place, mainly focusing on children, youths and women in the community. The aim was to empower local community to promote collectivity, to support informal and formal education and intercultural communication. Certain activities were also addressing women. The first one was an attempt to organize a group of continuing education in teaching Greek to adult Muslim women, in co-operation with the Centre for Adult Education based in Komotini and the second one was to organize a group for counseling and support. For children and youths a number of activities were promoted to support them to education. These were involving supportive lessons in co-operation with KESPEM [Centre of Support for the Project to include Muslims to Education, see www.museduc.gr, www.napsincl.gr] in Komotini. We also organized groups of children in the Centre of Creative Activities for children (KDAP) based in Meleti twice a week, using music, drama and animation. The aim of the groups was to empower the children participating, and encourage them to acquire self confidence in their learning abilities. The goal was to restrict drop outs from compulsory education.

6. Conclusions

It is a fact that the confrontation of local problems in a certain area requires more effective policies in a wider context and funds. On the other hand a major task for local authorities is to form a planning process, capable to identify local needs and particularities, in order to assert and make the most of funds and programs which should be adjusted to the local conditions and needs. In the case of the Municipality of Aigeiros, as in most cases in Greece, planning process appears to be the other way

around. Social or development policy at the local level is more based on the programs co- financed by E.U. which are available during a certain period rather than a systematic effort to assess local needs. The aim of the thesis was to offer an alternative view to local authorities of Aigeiros on how to plan and implement policies using techniques and methods of community work.

The pilot social service initiative was of great importance. Its operation attempted to form an example to the local authorities. It started with a needs assessment research which was based on people's experiences and views about their needs and potential solutions that could take place. These views were used in the process of planning a community development project. It was attempted to make use of the few available resources in the area and in a wider context and make the most of them, in order to implement a specific plan aiming to deal with the local needs and problems and promote local development, besides the severe restrictions already existing. Furthermore, it was an effort to create networks between local authorities and organizations and the local community in order to plan and implement a number of activities that took place. However, this wasn't an easy task. The absence of civil society and of any similar experience in the past was an obstacle that we had to overcome. On the other hand the close co-operation with the Mayor himself was an advantage. Another obstacle that we had to deal with was the limited intercultural relations between the communities living in the area [the Muslim minority and the Christian majority]. This made it very difficult to achieve such a goal. As mentioned earlier, these issues are of great importance and cannot be possibly overcome in such a limited period of time. We could however safely claim that we made an effort towards this direction and we have tried to grow seeds that may eventually change things in the future. We are fully aware however that this should be a very long process which needs extremely careful steps.

Through our experience we concluded that it may seem unrealistic at this point and in such a limited period – required for the completion of a PhD - to expect that a socially excluded, culturally different and poor community as the Muslim village of Meleti to develop participative skills and critical consciousness in order to form local partnerships, when at the same time power imbalance and intercultural relations, socio-economic development, illiteracy and lack of professional skills, poor structures

and transport exclusion still remain issues that need to be dealt. The program developed, however focused on activities in order to empower local community, to promote intercultural relations and to increase collaboration. Although the promotion of a permanent planning process based on local needs and inspirations, aiming to a systematic support and empowerment of the local community still remains an open question for the Municipality, due to lack of resources, this initiative aiming to identify and confront the local needs and problems has cultivated the ground for participation and collaboration and has been an effort towards the long process of local development in the area.

This seems to be a crucial element for the local community especially within the current context. The present year (2007) is considered as a starting point for the E.U. policy for social cohesion. The aim is the protection and support of social cohesion and the confrontation of factors that threat the social net. The main areas that the E.U. intervention is expected to focus on is firstly the confrontation of child poverty and the transfer of poverty among generations. Policies are expected to support parents' employment along with actions, in order to secure adequate access of children and youths to education. The promotion of active inclusion is also crucial. This involves the support of motivation to inclusion in employment and aims at increasing the percentage of employed among the economically active population. The role of social services is crucial to guarantee a safety net income for people who are threatened by social exclusion. Ensuring health and long last care for all European citizens is a third important goal. Finally, ensuring the viability of pension schemes with the support of necessary reforms is essential. The promotion of social cohesion is a huge project financed by 347.4 billion euros for the period 2007 – 2013 and it is the higher in the history of the E.U. The aims that are described above will determine national policies, research efforts, planning and evaluation of interventions in the near future.

Given these developments, the main question posed to the local community of Aigeiros, and to other multicultural underdeveloped communities in Thrace and elsewhere, is whether the existing policy planning process could offer a base for claiming more resources and whether these will be invested in a way that it could essentially confront the local needs and problems. Although the present situation may not be highly optimistic, it could be argued that the initiative developed in the area

based on a community work perspective and the methods used illustrate in a more distinctive way the social aspects of development. It is hoped that in the long run this may contribute to a more effective process. Needless to say, that this prospect relates heavily to the willingness on behalf of the Municipality of Aigeiros to adopt this perspective and support these methods and on the availability of resources.

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Mobile motherhood
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Abstract
This paper focuses on mothers who are refugees/asylum seekers in Greece and presents some early findings from a literature review that is the first part of a larger PhD study, comparing the experiences and needs of 'mobile mothers' in Greece and the UK. The paper initially outlines the unique geographic location of Greece that frequently results in Greece being either a transit country for mobile and migrant populations or a destination for those seeking refugee status. The paper also charts the changing definitions, legislation and attitudes towards those who are 'on the move'. The particular position of mothers who are 'mobile' is discussed, arguing that whilst there is substantial international literature on motherhood, the needs of mothers who are refugees/asylum seekers is scant. For the purposes of this paper the terms 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers' will be used interchangeably, although as the PhD progresses, distinctive differences may appear.

Greece has a long history of 'receiving' populations 'on the move'. Unlike other European countries, Greece does not have a recent history of colonization but attracts immigrants and asylum seekers because of its geographical position - it represents a 'gateway' to Western European countries for those entering Europe from North Africa and Asia Minor. Historically, asylum seekers in Ancient Greece were seen as requiring hospitality and protection of aliens (Spathana, 2003); the most illustrative historical example of receiving refugees in the 20th century, before the specifically acquired ideological connotations of the 1951 Geneva Convention for the term 'refugee', was the huge wave of Greek refugees from Asia Minor in 1922.

The issue of *gender* in the asylum process has been given little attention, as argued by researchers and representatives of non-governmental organizations, for example by the UNHCR, the Refugee Council and others. Crawley (1997;2001), Treacher et al.(2003), Lieberman (2002), have underlined the particular needs of refugee/asylum seeking women regarding experiences, such as gender-specific/ related harm, the restrictive towards women grounds of establishing refugee status and the stereotypes attached to this moving population. Women's 'stories' are even more underreported

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when their asylum claims are made jointly with their spouses', giving little attention to them as politically active individuals and characteristics which place them in danger of persecution.

Motherhood as an issue with underlying problems for women refugees/asylum seekers is taken even less into consideration. According to Kennedy and Murphy-Lawless (2003) the maternity care needs of this population in Ireland are given little attention and in the year 2000 this focus was unique for the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Firstly I will consider asylum seeking and gender; secondly mobility and asylum seeking; thirdly motherhood and asylum seeking; and finally I will make suggestions for further research.

1. Asylum seeking and gender
In order to sketch the characteristics of female asylum seeking, asylum seeking for both sexes will initially be explored.

Seeking asylum for reasons of persecution and war is a highly political subject with social connotations and is by no means a modern phenomenon; victims of war and unjust treatment have been seeking safety universally and in all periods of time. Spathana (2003) places asylum seeking in a historical frame; connected to 'ethics and power, relating often to 'sacred' obligations… [In] Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, Byzantine Empire, Middle Ages, the institution of asylum seeking came into the 19th century, where it acquired a specific ideological/philosophical base, to arrive, with various alterations, in the 20th century and be connected to the term 'refugee', as this term was formed and mainly constituted internationally after World War II' (p.xxi). The atrocities and large numbers of destitute persons in Europe brought international concerns in the forefront and two conventions took place which defined the term 'refugee' and the protection needed. Thus, according to the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Convention, a 'refugee' is a person who:

> '…owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion,
> nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside

[her] country of origin and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [herself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [her] formal habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it' (Crawley 2001:4)

From this legal definition we can deduce that an asylum seeker must prove that, in order to gain protection from the residing country, he/she is persecuted in their own home country, or is fearful of, on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. On entering the country where asylum will be sought, the timing of the application is of high significance, as any delays will work against the applicant. This pressure to convince the authorities of the genuine danger faced by the individual will be commented upon, as the effects on the emotional state and on the claim for a female applicant may be negative. What is worth mentioning though at this point is the difficulty to distinguish between asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, a difficulty faced by Greek employees and volunteers at non-governmental organizations and elsewhere; Lambert (1995) illustrates this clearly:

'South-North migrations trends since the Second World War had been welcomed as an opportunity to use cheap labour. However, in the early 1970's, Europe plunged into economic recession. As a result, European states adopted restricted immigrant policies to stop labour coming in. Policies towards refugees had remained quite liberal, however, and migrants started to use asylum procedures instead of restrictive migrant ones in order to enter Western Europe. It is only in the mid-1980's that, as the whole asylum legal system was put under such considerable pressure, European states realised the scale of the problem they were to deal with. Jonas Widgren sees four aspects to this problem. 'The constant growth of the annual number of formal asylum applicants in Europe... the growing phenomenon of irregular movements of asylum seekers...the emergence of large-scale flows of non bona-fide asylum seekers...the rapidly raising state costs for the processing of an ever growing number of cases' (p.5-6)

Alongside political and social aspects we can add economic reasons for allowing asylum seekers and other aliens to enter a European, in this case, country. One of the

primary purposes of the creation of the European Union (EU) is economic growth and regulation. To achieve this, European Union policies are put in place, programmes such as 'Equal', 'Raxen' and 'Frontex,' to normalize the labour market and society, with the significant numbers of aliens entering the EU, and simultaneously to forbid the entering and habitation of individuals and groups in a certain country under certain circumstances. These regulations will impact on the arrival of asylum seekers and more specifically of female asylum seekers and their dependants.

Returning to the Conventional grounds on which an asylum seeker must provide evidence to gain political asylum, legal practitioners and refugee non-governmental organizations' representatives have argued that they are not gender-sensitive. According to Treacher *et al.* (2003) this is because 'of the tendency to construct the 'refugee' as male, and because of an analysis of persecution that only recognizes public sphere politics' (p.1). Female asylum seekers may not benefit from accessing the asylum process due to a lack of understanding of their political role which has led to fleeing their country and to gender-specific and related harm and experiences which may go unreported.

Crawley (2001) defines *gender*, *gender-related persecution* and *gender-specific persecution* which are salient when examining female persecution; 'gender – refers to the social construction of power relations between women and men, and the implications of these relations for women's (and men's) identity, status and roles. It is not the same as 'sex' which is biologically defined' (p.7); 'gender-related persecution – refers to the experiences of women who are persecuted *because* they are women, i.e. because of their identity and status as women'(*ibid)*, an example of which the refusal to wear a veil could constitute reason for persecution; 'gender-specific persecution – refers to forms of serious harm which are specific to women' (*ibid)*, of which female genital mutilation is an example. Crawley elaborates further on these concepts; 'gender-related persecution' would constitute the reasons for which a woman is seeking protection outside her own country, whilst 'gender-specific persecution' is related to forms of harm, e.g. torture, whose victims can be from both genders. The importance of understanding these concepts lays on the interpretation of experiences which will allow protection by the State.

The Geneva Convention grounds focus on political action that the applicant for asylum has taken and for which faces serious harm. In connection to the above concepts relating to gender and harm, women asylum seekers may play a significant, albeit in the private sphere, political role in comparison to their male members of their family. They may be persecuted for not conforming to restrictive societal norms, for playing a supportive role to males' political action, for being members of activists' families and for their reproductive role in their community (Crawley 2001). These 'roles' give reason for torture and inhumane treatment which force women to seek asylum.

Another concept relating to women's political role is prevailing stereotypes. General misconceptions regarding cultural situations can lead to false interpretations of political activity. The Western ideological divide between private and public (Ribbens 1994) and the stereotypes of 'Arab women … often presented as passive pawns' (Crawley 2001:9) create misunderstandings regarding their influence in matters which affect them. Additionally, Treacher *et al.* (2003) comment upon the stereotype of the 'deserving refugee', who must fit into frame of 'the impoverished refugee'; 'The 'deserving refugee' should also not wear make-up, should be poorly dressed, and should demonstrate extreme distress' (p.3). Decision-makers and asylum officers' misleading images of female asylum seekers can endanger their opportunity of being granted asylum.

Connected to the appearance of the asylum claimants are their portrait of their current situation and the reasons behind fleeing their country during the interviewing process. Their claims impact on the decision to grant asylum and are contingent on women's stories, documents and, importantly, on their emotional state. As mentioned earlier, timing is of essence, as claimants are expected to present their reasons for persecution almost immediately after they enter the country of perceived political protection. This may prove to be a challenge, especially for women who are victims of torture and rape (Crawley 1997), as it is traumatic and also perceived by women as a situation which has stigmatised them in their community and has caused them humiliation and shame (Crawley 1997, Chester 1992, Lieberman 2002). The demeanour of the applicant is also taken into consideration during interviewing;

> *'By demeanour what is meant is how a person handles himself or herself physically; for example, maintaining eye contact, shifts in posture and hesitations in speech, and trauma may have a significant impact on the ability to present testimony in a manner deemed 'credible' (Crawley 1997:36-37)*

As mentioned above, if a claimant is feeling uncomfortable explaining the reasons for persecution, their demeanour may have a negative impact; in Western societies the avoidance of eye contact, for example, is perceived as an indication that the person is either hiding something or is lying, which in this case could be a sign of distress based on traumatic experiences.

The officers' position towards claimants can facilitate or hinder their claim for asylum, as they feel more at ease and respected or threatened by an authoritarian figure. Their sensitive stance should be complemented by culturally sensitive communication and training (Crawley 1997). Regarding the questions asked by officers, in the UK these are 'typically orientated at male asylum seekers' (*ibid*: 24), and if claimants are asked to fill in a self-completion questionnaire (SCQ), the male claimant would again typically complete this, leaving women's experiences out of the procedure, in the case that joint claims are made (*ibid*).

Documentation and evidence of persecution are requested by asylum officers. In the process of fleeing from one's country in order to be safe and because of the lengthy often journeys, obtaining documents may be difficult for those seeking asylum. As evidence of persecution, apart from claims, supporting evidence and medical evidence will be sought. According to the UNHCR *Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women* (1991) officers should 'consider a number of issues when gathering information: the position of women before the law; the political rights of women; the social and economic rights of women (including the right to marry the person of her choice, the right not to marry and the right to determine her own sexuality, the right to an education, a career, and a job…, the status of a widow or divorcee and freedom of dress); the incidence and form of reported violence against women; the consequences that may befall women on their return' (Crawley 1997:40). These guidelines need to be taken into consideration as supporting evidence which would give an overall picture of the situation and a woman's status in her country. Medical evidence is

collected, for example, by non-governmental organizations such as the professionals of the Medical Foundation for the care of victims of torture, who would need to assess not only physical but also emotional and sociopsychological symptoms.

To illustrate the sensitivity required when interviewing women, an example of interviewing two claimants, a husband and wife;

> *'In 1989 Mihai and Maria fled the brutal regime of Romanian strongman Nicolae Ceausescu, floating on inner tubes across the Danube River, before applying for refugee status at UNHCR's Belgrade office. "I can't find any grounds for recognition," a troubled male colleague told me "but I think you should talk to the wife. I have the feeling she has something to say, but she won't say it to me. She won't even look at me". Over a cup of coffee, out of earshot of her husband, Maria told a chilling story of humiliation and sexual abuse at the hands of Romania's secret police, the Securitate, who were convinced her husband was involved in an underground opposition group, and were determined to get Maria to admit it. Soon after Maria's interview, the couple were resettled to the United States. We have stayed in touch over the years, and I have often thought about how close we came to denying their application and handing them over to the Yugoslav police, who would, in turn, have returned them to the Securitate'* (Kumin 2001:12).

The above example acts as an indication of how important it is for interviewers to be sensitive, as did the male officer, for women to be interviewed by female officers and for women to be interviewed on their own, without the presence of their husband or children.

Finally, interpreters play a key role in the interviewing process. Again, gender, language and the community from which they are a part of influence this process. The interviewer would need to direct question to the claimant but the presence of the interpreter can not only practically assist but may hinder their claimants' flow of facts and information, for example if the interpreter is a member of the same community, the asylum seeker may be more hesitant in disclosing.

The above account of asylum seeking and process is also relevant for the situation in Greece. What may hinder the possibilities of asylum being granted are practical

difficulties; after an informal discussion with an employee of the Greek Refugee Council in Athens, the obstacles of interviewing asylum seekers due to lack of interpreters at the police stations, of adequate training on interviewing vulnerable persons, and even the negative influence of the media – as opposed to the supportive evidence needed to make vital decisions as discussed earlier – will have a great impact on asylum seekers in Greece. This claim and the general situation in Greece will be further explored when conducting research amongst asylum seeking and refugee mothers who are or wishing to become part of the contemporary Greek society.

2. Mobility and asylum seeking

Inevitably we recognize asylum seekers as a very mobile population. Their mobility begins with fleeing their country, travel through other countries and regions and even their movement in the country of perceived political asylum. The transformation of modern society due to globalization – 'the flows of people and ideas' (Short 2001: 126) - has affected the concept of culture and the mobility of asylum seekers affects the notion around culture even more and significantly challenges the traditional concept of 'Europe'.

Whilst the European Union is trying to formulate a European identity, multiculturalism gives reasons for racism and xenophobia to surface (Castells 1998) and thus questions arise concerning the reception of asylum seekers, moreover of women asylum seekers and their dependents. Racism and xenophobia – at times through the mass media - cultivate ideas of 'influx' of refugees. According though to statistical information provided by the Refugee Council produced leaflet 'Tell it like it is – The truth about asylum' (2006), 'Two thirds of the world's refugees are living in developing countries, often in refugee camps. Africa and Asia between them host over 70% of the world's refugees. Europe looks after just 22%'. This indicates that the fears of uncontrollable numbers of asylum seekers entering the European Union cannot be sustained.

The term 'Fortress Europe' is frequently used when discussing refugee matters. The interest in this paper lies on the fact that as a concept and a reality it influences the mobility of persons, of asylum seekers, and forbids their entrance. Castells (1998)

uses this term to comment upon the European economic identity, whilst others see it in more practical terms, such as High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers who has commented 'In any case, no wall will be high enough to prevent people from coming…' (cited in *Refugees, 2 (123):31*). UNITED for Intercultural Action (2007) have 'Since 1993 … monitored the deadly results of a building of a 'Fortress Europe'. More than 6700 deaths of refugees and migrants have been documented up to now. These deaths can be put down to border militarisation, asylum laws, detention policies, deportations and carrier sanctions' (p.1) Their pragmatic views, although harsh, indicate a need to prevent persons from entering the European Union, as does Statewatch (2007) with its report on arrests and deaths of persons trying to access Europe through Spain from the African continent and on operations such as 'Frontex', 'the EU agency for the management of operative cooperation at its external borders' (p.2). These policies aim at regulating the mobility of aliens, and will impact on the mobility of asylum seekers. Whilst in the UK dispersal policies aim to do exactly this, in Greece measures to discourage mobility are, for example, reception centres situated outside of urban areas where public transport is non existent, as in the case of the 'Ellinas' reception centre outside Aspropirgos.

Moreover, feminists, such as Treacher *et al.* (2003) see 'Fortress Europe' as a concept that it 'is far more telling for the European sense of self' (p.1), whilst Alund (1999), discussing the 'immigrant matter' in Sweden, connects culture and the concept of 'Fortress Europe';

> *'The increasingly common political and popular argument focuses on whether various groups of refugees and immigrants are 'suited' or 'unsuited', more or less 'adaptable' or 'foreign'. Culture becomes the basis on which to differentiate and select among people; a basis for erecting 'Fortress Europe' and the 'Mediterranean Wall' (pp. 147-8)*

In this sense, 'Fortress Europe' relates to culture and the acceptance of aliens as part of the contemporary European States. Under this spectrum asylum seeking and refugee mothers and their children may face difficulties in the attempt to be socially included, after entering a Member State and the difficulties this entails.

As mentioned previously, the European Union is interested in sustaining economic growth and focuses on the labour market. By implementing policies and strategies it aspires to regulate movement of persons between Member States and between its 'territory' and the other continents, especially from Third World countries. Greece's geographical position, for example, serves as a 'bridge' connecting Europe to Asia and Africa in contemporary terms and as it has done multiple times historically. An example of particular interest is the 1992 Dublin Convention and its decisions;

> *'Objective – to determine the Member State responsible for examining an application for asylum, a matter that is not settled by the Geneva Convention on the status of refugees. The application of this Convention will ensure that every asylum-seeker's application will be examined by a Member State, unless a 'safe' non-Member country can be considered as responsible. This will avoid situations of refugees being shuttled from one Member State to another, with none accepting responsibility, as well as multiple serial or simultaneous applications' (DEVOPOLAWAR).*

The interest in this Convention lies not only in the restriction of mobility of asylum seekers but also in the situation apparent in Greece, where the percentage of applicants granted asylum is considerably low – for the year 2004 out of 4,469 applications, 11 persons were given refugee status, whilst 22 were given asylum on humanitarian reasons (UNHCR 2004) – and where, because of its geographical position, there is an indication that frequently asylum seekers are repatriated, even if they are resident in another Member State county, on account of article 8 of the Dublin Convention; 'the first Member State in which the application for asylum is lodged is responsible for examining it' (DEVOPOLAWAR: 2). During the research process this indication will be explored, as well as women's hopes and plans regarding repatriation and settlement.

3. Motherhood and asylum seeking

After discussing female asylum seeking and mobility, we now focus on transit motherhood and its characteristics in combination with seeking asylum, for which scant attention has been given in the international literature.

Asylum seeking mothers are burdened by the responsibilities of caring for a child/children, as they face uncertainty about their future and have experienced traumatic events, such as the loss of family members and of their homeland and place in community, war, torture, adverse situations whilst travelling, and others.

McLeish (2002) reports on research carried out in 2001 by Maternity Alliance in the UK which revealed deprivation and even destitution of asylum seeking pregnant women and mothers. These women's experiences showed that they were given unsuitable accommodation, insufficient food and other practical means for their babies, insufficient information and faced sexual harassment, were fearful of other males with which they shared accommodation, hostility from health professionals and felt extreme loneliness.

Kennedy and Murphy-Lawless (2003) undertook research amongst refugee and asylum seeking mothers in Ireland, whose findings were similar to the research carried out by Maternity Alliance concerning inappropriate housing, overcrowding, fear of strange men, loneliness, and hostility. They also reported difficulties in travelling and arranging childcare, poor health and lack of language support. Racism was experienced by asylum seeking women in hospitals for example and by refugee women and their dependents in their new community. These difficulties and experiences hinder social inclusion and will be explored in both Greece and the UK.

According to the informative leaflet provided by the Hellenic Red Cross, 'Welcome to our country – Asylum seekers in Greece – Useful information' asylum seekers in Greece have the right to seek employment and to have free education, for adults and children. The indication is that available assistance is mostly provided by non-governmental organizations; for example, the Social Work Foundation runs the 'Eva' programme which aims to empower and socially integrate female asylum seekers and refugees (Social Work Foundation). The extent to which these are pragmatic and their effects on mothers and children will be focused upon during the research process.

Connected to motherhood is the issue of childcare. Of particular interest was the mentioning by an employee at the Greek Council for Refugees that working asylum

seeking/refugee women depend on informal networks for childcare; an example was given of a woman who was paid by parents €50 monthly to care for their children whilst they assumed work responsibilities and who was caring for ten children simultaneously, placing them at risk. The needs of this population will be focused upon during the research taking place in the UK and Greece and recommendations will be given according to findings.

A final point to be made; as social inclusion is detrimental to the European Union, programmes such as 'Equal' and 'Raxen' aim at providing equal opportunities for employment and at 'measuring' racist and xenophobic reactions and ideology with a view to introduce multi-ethnicity as celebratory and requiring respect. Castells (1998) argues that the formation of a European identity is possible with the 'process of social construction… a blueprint of social values and institutional goals that appeal to a majority of citizens without excluding anybody, in principle' (p.333). In this light the European Union promotes equal right for all its citizens. The benefit of asylum seeking and refugee mothers of these will be discussed with the participants of the forthcoming research on 'mobile motherhood'.

4. Further research

Ribbens (1994) states that women are 'oppressed' by 'expert ideas', whilst scant attention is given to their own experiences and ideas (p.1). For this reason qualitative research will take place at the two sites, UK and Greece, by using narrative analysis (Riessman 1993). Its appropriateness is based on its approach which 'examines the informant's story and analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity' (Riessman 1993:2). Regarding interpretation Riessman states that it is 'inevitable because narratives are representations' (*ibid*). This research aims to gain a better understanding of the experiences lived by transient asylum seeking and refugee mothers and to investigate the level of fulfilled needs and their visibility in service provision and planning and to make further recommendations.

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Contemporary Greece: Structures, Context and Challenges.

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Title of paper: Family Help by Greek Grandparents

Introduction

Grandparenthood is important both as a personal experience and for its impact on others (Smith, 1991). Around three-quarters of adults will become grandparents (Giarrusso, Silverstein & Bengtson, 1996). As people are living longer and healthier lives than in the past, they are more likely to see their grandchildren grow up and enter adulthood than in previous generations, and they will experience being a grandparent for a longer portion of their lives than ever before. Some may even see their great-grandchildren grow up. The combination of living longer and women having fewer children than in the past is producing what Giarrusso et al. (1996) have called the 'beanpole family; meaning that individuals have fewer brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles but more grandparents and great-grandparents who are alive for longer periods of time.

Grandparenting in Greece is a particularly important area of study due to the large number of grandparents involved in supporting their adult children in terms of emotional, practical

and financial assistance. Many grandparents in Greece are the main childcare providers for their grandchildren (either day-care for very young grandchildren or after-school care for older grandchildren). Very little research has been carried out in Greece on this important topic, and no previous studies have investigated how grandparents actually feel about this aspect of their role and the reasons for high or low levels of involvement in childcare. This study combines qualitative and quantitative approaches[1].

In Greece, as in other Mediterranean countries, significant social changes have occurred in recent decades. Women now work outside the home in greater numbers and, although less rapid than in other countries, divorce is on the increase. At the same time, today older people are often still in good health at retirement and not yet in need of care, they have active social lives and hobbies to fill their time, and many have pensions or savings that allow financial independence from their families. Individualistic values are on the rise (Georgas, 1991). A number of grandparents live far away from their grandchildren due to earlier and continuing migration to urban areas (mainly Athens and Thessaloniki, but also to the regional cities in recent years) and multigenerational households are decreasing.

There has been very little research carried out on grandparents in Greece, although a few national surveys carried out since the 1990s have indicated the significant role that grandparents play in Greek families as providers of childcare. No previous research has been published to date where grandparenting has been investigated from the perspective of the grandparents themselves. The aim of this study was to carry out an in-depth exploration of

the role of grandparents in Greece by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. Specifically, to explore types and frequency of assistance and support given by grandparents to the parental generation, and the grandparents' reasons for providing such help.

Study Design and Methods

In the light of very limited previous research undertaken on the role of grandparents in Greece, the decision was made to design a mixed-method study, as it was felt that a combination of quantitative and qualitative data would lead to a deeper understanding than the use of any lone method. The few previously published quantitative surveys of childcare in Greece have shown that grandparents play an important part in looking after their grandchildren e.g. the Greek data from the EU survey on Income and Living conditions of 2004 (National Statistical Service of Greece, 2006) found that 80% of 0-2 year olds are cared for by a grandparent when the mother works. However, these surveys did not go into much depth as to what exactly childcare entails, nor as to how frequently grandparents provide the various forms of assistance under the umbrella term "childcare". Thus, it was decided to collect questionnaire data about which forms of practical assistance grandparents provide for the parental generation in the care of their grandchildren, as well as their reasons for doing so. No studies have been published to date where Greek grandparents have been interviewed qualitatively, thus it was also decided that Greek grandparents should be interviewed to gain further insight into their role as providers of family help.

i) Study 1: Grandparent questionnaire on family help

Quantitative data was collected from 190 grandparents. The grandparenting questionnaire was carried out in 2004 as part of a large national survey (EUROFAMCARE) of persons who were caring for an elderly family member. EUROFAMCARE was an international research project funded within the 5th Framework Programme of the European Community[2]. There were a total of 1014 participants in the EUROFAMCARE survey, 190 of which completed the grandparenting questionnaire. The primary aim of the questionnaire was to gather quantitative data about the assistance provided by grandparents in the care of their grandchild (day-care, babysitting, picking up / dropping off the grandchild, financial help, emotional support or advice and help with household tasks e.g. cooking), the frequency of involvement in these tasks and to examine the data in terms of gender, educational and income level, employment status and urban/rural differences. The questionnaire also covered the reasons for the grandparent's involvement in the care of their grandchild (e.g. enjoyment, helping the parents financially, sense of duty / obligation) and in addition the grandparents were asked to rate how important they felt their help was to the parental generation (on a Likert-type scale).

Sample characteristics:

- Mean age 62
- 90% of sample were women
- 83% married / cohabiting
- 52% rural, 37% urban, 11% metropolitan residence
- 64% low educational attainment, 27% intermediate, 9% high

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[2] Contract N° QLK6-CT-2002-02647 "EUROFAMCARE"

ii) Study 2: In-depth Interviews with Greek Grandparents

Twenty two semi-structured interviews were carried out with Greek grandparents between January 2004 and November 2006. The aim of these interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of Greek grandparents and the influences, attitudes and meaning attached to grandparental roles. The study was necessarily exploratory because very limited literature existed on grandparents in Greece. Criteria for participation in Study 2 were that the grandparents had to be Greek and to have at least one grandchild under the age of 15. A maximum variation sampling strategy was used to select the first 12 participants. Maximum variation sampling documents diverse variations in order to attempt to identify important common patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In other words, study participants with very different experiences of the grandparent role were deliberately selected for the first 12 interviews. Included in this sampling were: rural and urban grandparents; maternal and paternal grandparents; those with many grandchildren and those with only one; working class and middle class grandparents; employed persons, housewives and pensioners; and grandparents of a wide age range. These first 12 interview transcripts were analysed using Grounded Theory techniques and the selection of interviewees subsequently proceeded using theoretical sampling.

Summary of Questionnaire Results

The quantitative data show high levels of involvement in providing day-care (38% daily and a further 27% weekly), as well as grandparents providing regular household help, picking up or dropping off a grandchild, babysitting, giving financial assistance and emotional support (see Table 1). The frequencies show a general trend for grandparents to either be regularly involved in providing assistance (at least once per week) or not at all. Of those grandparents who were providing assistance, few did so less regularly than once a month.

Interestingly, many of the hypothesized differences in involvement of grandparents in assisting with the care of their grandchildren, such as urban/rural differences, and differences according to the educational level of the grandparent, were not found. The lack of significant finding according to area of residence might be explained by the fact that urbanization is a relatively recent trend in Greece (Georgas, 1991); therefore looking at current residence may not be that useful since many grandparents who are now resident in urban or metropolitan areas grew up in rural areas. Grandmothers were significantly more involved providing day-care ($p=0.05$) and giving household help ($p=0.001$) than grandfathers.

The vast majority of questionnaire respondents (89%) felt that the assistance they offered in the care of their grandchildren was 'important', 'very important' or 'essential' to the parental generation. The importance rating was significantly positively correlated with all six forms of assistance.

Table 1. Frequencies of assistance given by grandparents in the care of their grandchildren (n=190).

Forms of assistance	Daily	Minimum once/week	Minimum once/mth	Less than once/mth	Vacations	Emerg.	Never
Emotional support	**50%**	**24%**	5%	4%	4%	5%	**8%**
Day-care	**38%**	**27%**	4%	2%	5%	8%	**15%**
Household help	**26%**	**18%**	3%	3%	2%	14%	**34%**
Pick up/drop off	**24%**	**24%**	16%	3%	7%	4%	**21%**
Babysitting	**18%**	**32%**	**19%**	7%	4%	8%	11%
Financial support	12%	**14%**	**21%**	7%	12%	13%	**21%**

Table 2. Frequencies for the most important, second and third most important reasons for providing assistance in the care of grandchildren (n=190).

Reasons for providing assistance	Most important reason	Second in importance	Third in importance	Total
I enjoy it	65%	17%	11%	93%
I believe it is best for the child	14%	41%	20%	75%
Sense of duty	9%	22%	34%	65%
It helps the parents financially	6%	10%	22%	38%
There are no practical alternatives	4%	8%	9%	21%
I have no choice	3%	2%	2%	7%
It helps me financially	-	-	2%	2%

Two-thirds of the grandparents gave their own enjoyment as the main reason for providing assistance and in almost all cases "I enjoy it" was rated as one of the three most important reasons for giving help. Believing it was 'best for the child' and feeling a 'sense of duty' also appeared very frequently in the top three reasons for grandparent involvement in the various forms of assistance (although rarely as the most important of the three reasons). Whilst only a very small percentage of the sample said that helping the grandchild's parents financially was the most important reason for their assistance, in over a third of all cases helping the middle generation financially was in the top three reasons for involvement, indicating that economic motivations are noteworthy. Virtually none of the grandparents reported that they themselves were helped financially by the care they provided to their grandchild (i.e. by receiving payment for services rendered, as sometimes happens in other countries e.g. the USA and UK). Very few respondents reported feeling they had 'no choice' about their involvement in the care of their grandchildren.

Summary of Interview Findings

The interviews showed that the role of a grandparent in Greece has two main components: grandparents as a resource for the parental generation, and the grandparent-grandchild relationships. Maternal grandparents and grandmothers who were either not employed, or who held flexible jobs (e.g. self-employed or family business), were most involved in providing regular childcare - except when they were already actively involved with their first set of grandchildren. However, all of the grandparents interviewed were providing some form of support: looking after grandchildren, providing financial support, household help or emotional support. Grandmothers were predominantly involved in providing family help, but the grandfathers had an important role in assisting the grandmother and thus reducing

burden. Grandmothers provided a good deal of household help, mainly in the form of preparing meals for the grandchildren, especially when the mother was employed. In cases where no *practical* help was provided by the grandparent in the care of their grandchildren, justifying why not took up a good deal of the interview, indicating that the theme of family help is of central importance to today's Greek grandparents.

i) A useful role for the grandparent

The qualitative data showed that grandparents provided the most help in the care of grandchildren when this was perceived as an important and valued part of their role, and when they did not have other social roles which demanded a significant amount of time and effort, such as that of employee or caring for an elderly parent, or when they were already involved in looking after another set of grandchildren.

Mr Costas:
"When you live along side the child and you provide for all his needs, you feel closer to him... and you feel that you are giving something valuable to a new life... This role, this attempt by the grandparents to fill in for parental absence, also gives a lot of satisfaction to the grandparents. That is it makes them livelier - more alive - because when they stop working they feel much less useful."

However, having a good relationship with the parental generation was of paramount importance; without a good relationship with the parents of their grandchildren, grandparents were either not permitted to provide, or did not offer, family help and thus

contact was limited. A number of researchers have described women as the "kin-keepers" (Hagestad, 1985; Troll 1985), meaning that they are in charge of maintaining ties with both sides of the family[3]. The interviews supported this finding, as it was difficult relations with the grandchildren's mother that resulted in reduced contact with grandchildren. Even when relations with the daughter-in-law were good on the whole, grandmothers emphasised that they were never as close as they were with their own daughters, and that they tried to resist interfering in parenting issues with daughters-in-law.

Mrs Evangelia:

"You don't know how they'll take it - they're not your own child. With your own child, you don't care if they take it the wrong way, they'll get over it."

This study, as well as past research (e.g. Drew and Smith, 1999), has indicated that conflict with the parental generation can have an effect on the psychological well-being of grandparents. Conflict is also associated with irregular contact between grandparents and grandchildren.

ii) Grandparents are the "best choice"

According to the participants of Study 2, both parents and grandparents trusted grandparents above other sources of childcare. In general they did not trust "strangers" to look after the children, and in particular they did not trust *public* childcare facilities – which were said to be overcrowded and unregulated.

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[3] However, kinship structure is not egalitarian, in most cases the closeness of the mother-daughter bond means that adult daughters see their mothers more often than sons do and thus maternal grandparents often see their grandchildren more than paternal grandparents do.

Mr Petros:

"There is something else too. Our children put their faith in us. There is trust... they know our way of thinking, they have complete peace of mind."

Mrs Litsa:

"Neither the grandparents [Mrs Litsa's daughter-in-law's parents] *nor the parents wanted to leave the child with a stranger when it was very young. They were mistrustful – it was the first grandchild and they didn't want to leave it."*

By looking after their grandchildren they believed they were providing stability during difficult times, such as divorce or problem relationships in the parental generation, or more commonly they were simply attempting to "fill the gap" that they felt was left by both parents working many hours per day. In such situations grandparents were trying to minimise the impact of social change on the family by keeping care within the family. Grandparent provision of family help was a *reaction* to a "new" problem; the mother's absence from the home and specifically the long working hours and low pay of the parents of the grandchildren.

iii) When grandmothers do not want to provide care

The grandmothers in Study 2 provided most family help when they enjoyed it (and perceived it as a useful and valued role) and when they felt needed by their children. So, what about grandmothers who do not enjoy spending a lot of time with their grandchildren

and do not want to dedicate large amounts of their time to babysitting, but they feel pressured to because their children cannot afford to pay for alternative "suitable" childcare? In Study 2 it was found that grandmothers who were well off financially experienced greater choice; they had the option of caring for private childcare arrangements for their grandchildren when their children could not afford to do so and they did not want to provide care themselves.

Mrs Konstantina:

"I tell them 'Take money from the company and pay a girl to look after them because I can't do it... every single day... I don't have the patience."

But when neither the parental generation nor the grandparent could afford this option, and public childcare facilities were either not trusted, or did not cover the entire working day of the parents, grandparents were placed under considerably more burden.

Mrs Rena:

"I had them [every afternoon, after school] *because their mum came back at seven o'clock in the evening... the children couldn't manage – what would happen otherwise? There's only me... I used to get home from work really tired. It was really very difficult because there was only a year between them. "*

iv) Summary

The grandparents' experiences and attitudes to their role were often discussed in the context of social change and how it has impacted grandparent roles. The participants believed that grandparents have a less important role in the family today, in terms of having less influence over their children or grandchildren and receiving less respect as elders compared to their own grandparents, but less formality and power also means that grandchild-grandparent relationships are closer. It would appear that today Greek grandparents give more practical assistance – in the form of childcare and household help - than in the past, since employment amongst women with young children is rising and thus mothers are absent from the home during day-time. In some cases this role adds a great deal of meaning to the grandparent's life. Where there is financial pressure for grandparents to provide free childcare, grandparents experience more burden. Many grandparents believed that their children preferred grandparents to other childcare options, although further research with the parental generation needs to be carried out to investigate this assertion.

Discussion

The comparison of data from Study 1 with the limited previous research conducted in Greece regarding grandparents as providers of childcare is problematic as the publications do not always specify whether the figures are for help on a daily basis or the number of hours of care provided per week. The National Survey of Fertility and the Family of 1999 (Symeonidou, 2005) found that when both parents worked 46% of childcare for children under the age of 3 was performed by grandparents. The percentage of grandparents providing childcare was less for older grandchildren; only 29% of the 3-5 year olds were

looked after by grandparents. The Greek data from the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (2004) looked at who was providing childcare for children that spent over 30 hours per week being looked after by someone other than the parents; the survey found that twice as many 3-5 year olds (57%) were being looked after by grandmothers as the previously mentioned survey. The SHARE data on grandparents in Europe (Attias-Donfut & Ogg, 2006) found that 45% of grandparents in the Greek sample provided "almost daily" childcare; the Greek, Spanish and Italian grandparents, provided a mean number of 400-500 hours of grandchild care annually. In Study 1, 38% of grandparents said they provided day-care (whilst the parents worked) on a daily basis, thus it would appear that the grandparents in my sample were providing day-care with largely the same frequency as previous studies have found.

In Study 1 a striking 65% of the respondents gave "I enjoy it" as the most important reason for providing assistance in the care of their grandchildren, and almost all of the respondents (93%) gave this as one of the three most important reasons (see Table 2). The interviews also showed that grandparents who were providing childcare often enjoyed looking after their grandchildren, as it gave them an important and valued role as well as providing the opportunity to develop a close bond with grandchildren *exclusive* of the parents. This was also found by a similar study in Italy by Gattai & Musatti (1999). But the participants provided day-care, or other forms of assistance, also because they felt that the parental generation *needed* their help. This need was either financial, or the due to other factors like the mother working long hours and thus the grandmother helped out by cooking meals. The fact that two-thirds of the questionnaire sample reported enjoyment as their *main reason* may have been influenced by a response bias; this reason appeared first in the list of reasons. In addition, it may be that looking after grandchildren was seen in a particularly positive

light in comparison with the other role of the questionnaire respondents as carer for an elderly family member. Nonetheless, the interviews support the finding that grandparents do enjoy helping with the care of their grandchildren, particularly when they see it as a useful and valued role for themselves.

The employment rates of older women in Greece are very low. The SHARE data on grandparents in Europe (Attias-Donfut & Ogg, 2006) found that over 90% of the Greek grandmothers aged 50-70 in their sample were not active in the labour market. The fact that grandmothers are either retired or have never held paid employment outside of the home may make caring for grandchildren more attractive, as it is a continuation of their maternal role. Attias-Donfut and Segalen (2002) have emphasised that grandmothers in Spain are the last generation of women not to have held paid employment and they willingly undertake a task that prolongs their maternal role. Grandfathers played an important role in reducing burden, by assisting the grandmother and taking the grandchildren out to give the grandmother a break, or to allow her to complete household tasks in peace.

The vast majority of questionnaire respondents (89%) felt that the assistance they offered in the care of their grandchildren was 'important', 'very important' or 'essential' to the parental generation. The importance rating was significantly positively correlated with all six forms of assistance. These data indicate that most grandparents feel that their role in providing family help is valued and necessary, and that they provide the most help when this is the case. Similarly, Tobio et al. (1998) found that two thirds of the working mothers in their Spanish sample rated the kinship support that they received (in the care of their children) as 'important', 'very important' or 'without their help I could not work'. Interestingly, they found that this importance rating was highly significantly associated with

age, with younger working mothers rating kinship support as more important than older mothers.

Interestingly, in the interviews it emerged that many grandparents believed that young grandchildren – in particular – should ideally be cared for by a grandmother in the absence of the mother, and furthermore grandparents who provided day-care emphasized that the *parental generation* also believed that grandparents were the best caregivers for their young children. This supports Houndoumadi's (1996) findings that 80% of new mothers preferred to leave their child with their own mother if they had to leave their child in someone else's care. Houndoumadi also found that maternal grandmother involvement in childcare was significantly negatively correlated with employment-related separation anxiety amongst mothers, and that mothers with the lowest level of education reported the highest separation anxiety. Research from Italy also shows support for the notion that parents trust grandparents more than other sources of childcare. Musatti (1992) found that Italian working mothers – particularly those of lower socio-economic status – prefer grandmothers to paid babysitters when a day-care centre is not available or considered unsuitable, and that the decision to entrust children to the grandmother is based mainly on social and economic considerations.

According to the participants of Study 2, parents trusted grandparents above other sources of childcare because in general they did not trust "strangers" to look after their children, and in particular they did not trust *public* childcare facilities – which were said to be overcrowded and unregulated. Private childcare facilities, whilst they may be trusted to a greater extent by parents, are often not affordable; many of the grandparents in Study 2 provided support for Paxson's (2004) finding that the cost of a private nursery in Athens for two children is equal

to or more than the average monthly salary of a secretary or public sector employee[4].

Furthermore, few private nurseries accept children under the age of 2-2.5 years old (before

they are toilet-trained) and in public nurseries, whilst they must accept the children of any

age whose mother is in full-time employment, it is not uncommon for a sole child-care

worker to have as many as fifty small children in her charge (Paxson, 2004).

Although the questionnaire sample was biased in that all of the grandparents were also

involved in caring for an elderly relative[5] (their spouse, parent or aunt/uncle etc.), it is

important to remember that family solidarity is still very much the norm in Greece. Only

0.8% of elderly people (over 65s) are living in institutions[6] as opposed to 8-11% in Western

Europe (Symeonidou, 1996). This means that most grandparents of young children in

Greece are also caring (to a greater or lesser extent) for elderly relatives. However, it is

possible that the grandparents in this sample might have held more "traditional" values since

they were caring for an elder, and therefore they could have been more likely to be involved

in also caring for grandchildren than non-caring grandparents. On the other hand, there were

surely also grandparents in the sample who could not do much for their grandchildren

because they were over-burdened with the care of the elder, so the frequencies of

involvement in the various forms of assistance might in fact have been lower than for other

groups of grandparents. Furthermore, involvement in the care of an elder is likely to reflect

lack of alternatives and social norms as much as a tendency towards a caring nature.

However, it is recommended that this questionnaire be repeated with a sample of Greek

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[4] The cost of private nursery place in Athens in 2007 ranged from 300-400 euros per child, whilst the average monthly income of a full-time supermarket cashier or civil servant ranged from 600-800 euros.

[5] In order to be included in the EUROFAMCARE survey the respondent had to provide care for one or more dependent older person aged 65+, for at least 4 hours per week (excluding those providing only financial support or companionship).

[6] Although this could also be linked to a lack of good quality, affordable care facilities.

grandparents who are not involved in caring for an elderly family member in order to compare findings.

Conclusions

Contrary to popular belief, today's grandparents are more involved in providing childcare than in the past, especially when the grandchildren's mother is absent from the home due to employment. However, grandparents who are not providing day-care may spend less time with grandchildren than in the past due to changes in lifestyle and geographical distance. Providing day-care can be a way for grandparents to play an enjoyable and valued role in the family and (according to the grandparents) provides a trusted and economic childcare solution for parents. However there can be problems such as interference in childrearing issues and burden placed on grandparents.

In future studies it will be important to gather data about the impact on parental and grandchild generations when receiving family help from grandparents, and to compare the different perspectives. Whilst Houndoumadi's research with new mothers (1996) has indicated that women experience less separation anxiety related to returning to work when grandmothers are providing childcare, and that they place a great deal of trust in grandmothers, further research - both quantitative and qualitative in nature - is needed to fully understand the experiences of the parental generation when grandparents are involved in providing family help. Furthermore, the impact on grandchildren who have received intensive care from their grandparents has not been studied to date in Greece. It is important to establish whether or not family help by grandparents is desirable from their perspective.

Most importantly, adequate funding needs to be dedicated to the further investigation of the important role that grandparents play in the Greek family and society.

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