

Governing the urban crisis: insights from the Athens' urban resilience agenda

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Abstract

In this paper I try to present briefly the starting theoretical and methodological points outlining the major hypothesis and arguments of my thesis, which is about urban policies during the time of crisis in Athens with an extra focus on resilience. Based on the primary findings of the research and the related literature review, I propose that resilience should be viewed as a governing logic of the urban crises, implementing different techniques to meet its ends, two of which are the making of the responsible citizen and the active community. In order to underline this, I concentrate on the official discourse, and especially the 'Preliminary Resilience Assessment', and the 'Athens Resilience Strategy for 2030'.

Setting the context

Since 2010, austerity measures have been adopted in Greece under the supervision of the so-called 'Troika' (European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund). The 'economic adjustment programs' have been presented as the right choice to face the rising sovereign debt, introducing a wide restructuring of the state functioning. The need for public legitimation of this choice of governing has been satisfied discursively by the presentation of the ethical and moral 'problems' of the Greeks, being the reason for the creation of debt (Douzinas 2011). From one point of view it was argued that the specific programs' targets were to 'normalise' the country, its institutions and its people (Galanopoulos 2017).

This was, in a way, a specific governing of the financial crisis, centred at the relationship between citizens and the state. Since then, many and more visible crises have been emerged in different fields and scales, in some cases portraying whole social groups as dangers for the Greek society (Athanasίου 2013). In a parallel way, it seems that the financial crisis in the national scale and its moral and ethical aspects, exacerbated the already existing crises in the urban scale, the level in which the effects of the austerity measures are more visible and experienced in different volume (Souliotis 2013; Maloutas 2014). As a result, specific logics of governance adopted in order to cope with their impacts and the social unrest following them, as Koutrolikou (2016) brilliantly shows.

Theoretical and methodological approach of resilience in the case of Athens

The 'program of Athens' urban resilience' was introduced in 2014, signaling at least on the surface a more holistic governmental approach of the urban crises. The local authority, along with Rockefeller Foundation (the sponsor) and in collaboration with experts, designed a program in order to deal with the impacts of the crisis in the urban space of Athens and prepare for other possible crises in future. Drawing on the recently developed concept of resilience in ecological and psychological studies, it is believed that it can offer a satisfactory understanding and governing of the crises (Alexander 2013). In Athens' case, these crises are divided to acute shocks (earthquakes, climate change, civil unrest, cybercrime) and chronic stresses (depressed macroeconomic conditions, aging infrastructure, migration, mistrust) following the 100 Resilient Cities Network's framework (City of Athens 2017). Urban resilience in this context, is defined as 'the capacity of individuals, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to adapt, survive and thrive no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience' (City of Athens 2017:13).

My thesis concerns the introduction of resilience as a logic of governing the urban crisis, focusing on the program of Athens, and its relation with the representation or/and production of new meanings or types of citizenship. By logic of governing I mean that resilience claims to turn into a mechanism of how to define and represent a crisis, and how to and who act upon it. Key role in order to support my argument theoretically plays Foucault's concept of governmentality, and people extending his writings, known as governmentality studies. Following Rose (1999:20) I am interested in, 'asking what authorities of various sorts wanted to happen, in relation to

problems defined how, in pursuit of what objectives, through what strategies and techniques'. In this respect urban resilience discourse, employed as a program by the municipality, and not as a social practice employed by citizens and social initiatives (see Katz 2004; Kousis & Paschou 2017), should be seen as a 'way of representing and knowing' the Athens' crises, emerging from a collaboration of the local authorities with the Rockefeller Foundation and its experts, and the different technologies or techniques which have been utilized to cope with the crisis as ways of 'acting upon it so as to transform it' (Rose and Miller 2008:15). Such techniques I argue include the active community and the responsible citizen notions, targeting the population, the citizens either as individuals and/or as social groups. In these processes power is evident, and following Foucault (1982) governing can be understood as 'acting upon their actions' and so upon their behaviours and their practices. According to this reading, following Rose (1996; 1999) resilience could be considered as part of 'advanced liberalism' forms of governing in different of course spatial, social and cultural contexts. As Rose (1999) argues 'advanced liberalism' means amongst others, a rethinking of the relation between citizen and the state, and the rearticulation of the responsibilities of each other. He thinks that citizens in this context are conceived as individuals and active, introducing the entrepreneur of self, and also that community finds a new way as a concept introducing new features instead of the 'social state'.

In the next sections, in order to discern the governance aspects of resilience I employ discourse analysis initially focusing on two official texts which are both parts of the 'program of Athens' urban resilience'. The reason why I employ discourse analysis is, amongst others, that it could underline the way that the above techniques work contributing to the production of different types of citizenship, considering that 'discourse is a part of a process through which things and identities get constructed' (Lees 2004:102-3). I try to examine 'the ways in which certain words, currently prevalent in urban policy discourse, are deployed' (Jacobs, 2006:48), providing 'an opportunity for the researcher to construct an incisive critique of contemporary policy' (Jacobs, 1999:204).

The responsible citizen

O' Malley (2010), analyzing resilience's implementation in military studies, claims that it turns into a technique of making adaptive and responsible subjects according to an uncertain world. He argues that it is a program through which subjects must adopt the desirable attitudes, such as patience and creativity, in order to survive. Many academics (see for example Evans & Reid 2013; Joseph 2013; Neocleous 2014), in a similar way, have agreed with O' Malley's (2010) view and the emergence of a different kind of subject.

Although the above-mentioned readings of resilience concern different fields, the same tension, the making of the responsible and adaptive citizen, appears in the case of Athens and its urban crisis context. At a public presentation of 'Athens' Resilience Program', the mayor of Athens notes that 'the coordination of Athens with the 100 Resilient Cities Network will help the city to respond to social, economic and natural challenges, turning on the active participation of its citizens, in order to be able to adapt, develop, and thrive despite all oppositions' (Kaminis 2015). This means in a way that this program could provide the means for people to adopt the desirable

attitudes. However, in the introducing letter of the strategy, the mayor of Athens argues more or less that the desirable types of attitude are based on the citizens' initiatives and responses to the crisis. Characteristically is referred that 'it is the people of Athens that have been and will be the key to the resilience of their city. Their agility and tenacity have been crucial every time that a disaster hits our city. It is with the assistance of the Athenians that we managed to support the most vulnerable of our populations during the hard last seven years of economic recession and the recent large refugee flows' (City of Athens 2017:7). Furthermore, is claimed that 'citizens act and support each other... but the official authorities do nothing to support these dynamics' (City of Athens 2016:51), adding that 'there is no support and training of the civil society, knowledge and structures regarding their proceeding, how to be more effective' (City of Athens 2016:75).

Of course, it is an early stage of the research, but some comments can be made. First of all, the crisis is presented as an opportunity for the growth of citizens' adaptive capacities. Secondly, according to the above mentioned parts, a specific division of roles for citizens and local authorities is interpreted. More specifically, an advanced role for the citizen is highlighted, being responsible for adopting specific attitudes according to the guidance of the program in order to deal with the crisis and survive. On the other hand, local authorities are responsible for the guidance of citizens' responses and actions, undertaking a supportive secondary role.

The active community

Apart from the responsible citizen, resilience has also been associated with a reinforced role of community (see for example Bulley 2013; Rogers 2013; Coaffee 2013). In the same way, Athens' resilience program tries to 'promote equitable, cohesive and supportive communities' in order to make the 'vibrant city' as it calls it, paying extra attention on the active involvement of citizens (City of Athens 2017). But what community really means, is not very clear.

What is a little bit clearer though, is local authorities' views about branding the city identity and belonging. The resilience strategy characteristically claims that it seeks to 'promote a new, inclusive, and exciting identity. The city aims at enhancing the its identity and promoting new types of belonging' (City of Athens 2017:5), 'a positive identity. One that can foster pride among its people while supporting the new types of identity and belonging that have emerged during the past few years. Athens has been a hotbed of social innovation, finding ways to survive across different cultures, religions and norms. The City of Athens should find ways to institutionally support the bottom up trends and initiatives that kept the city standing through the time of crisis' (City of Athens 2017:160). Once more, the local authorities' s role is to support institutionally these practices and construct the proposed identity. A key initiative worth mentioning is the SynAthina platform, 'where citizen groups can connect with each other and suggest activities that contribute to the improvement of the quality of life for the Athenians' (City of Athens 2017:73).

From the one side I can see an intention from local authorities to connect people and grow care intentions, values and spirits. From the other side it can be viewed as an attempt to institutionalise and control the different grassroots initiatives. From yet another side, it is neither because in the end it was more a publicity initiative and it

ended up involving people and organizations within specific networks. Therefore, Athens' municipality claims that because of its 'actions over the years and despite the continuing crisis, the city and its citizens already show important signs of resilience' (City of Athens 2016:5). Therefore there are many questions to be answered regarding the relation, if there is any, between grassroots initiatives and the local authorities' purposes (see Arampatzi 2017; Chorianopoulos & Tselepi 2018).

Concluding remarks

In this paper I tried to present briefly a view of the governing of urban crisis in Athens, which following Rose (1999) could be described as governing through resilience. Due to the primary stage of my research, I presented only some insights which will be analyzed further in next stages, accompanying them with the links between the different techniques being used and the adequate data.

What I attempted to show was what dominant discourse defines as resilience and how it can be achieved. According to the municipal statements, citizens and communities must strengthen their role in this game of survival and recovery, which in my point of view corresponds in a way to a form of local 'advanced liberalism' and governing people 'at a distance' (Rose 1999). This further means the decentralisation of responsibility from the formal authorities and the responsabilisation of citizens and communities due to the deficient role of the state, with local authorities focusing on the guidance of people (Coaffee 2013). For this reason a need for 'official' support is highlighted, meaning a tension from the City of Athens to guide and institutionalise citizens' responses. Additionally at this point, the interventionist role of resilience's implementation as a program is evident, being a part of the critique regarding the transferability of resilience from ecological sciences to social sciences. This critique focuses on the techniques that the program of resilience proposes as means for people to gain these capacities (adaptability, creativity), capacities which in ecosystems are natural (see O'Malley 2010; Reid 2012). Therefore, following Rose & Miller (2008:38) regarding the function of programs, resilience in Athens' case 'constitute a space within which the objectives of government are elaborated, and where plans to implement them are dreamed up'.

Furthermore, the encouragement of community's and citizens' role raises another significant topic. This is about the form of citizenship that is articulated in a city of crisis. The resilient citizen describes a citizen adaptable, responsible, creative, but many questions can be raised regarding if and how all citizens can become resilient (see Bulley 2013). In times of crisis there is a whole discussion about new forms of citizenship (see Zavos et. al. 2017), which have been emerged through a wide range of social initiatives has been developed through the time of crisis that aimed in the provision of social services (Vaiou & Kalandides 2017). In this case city, and especially in times of crises, is a major arena to examine what citizenship is all about (Holston & Appadurai 1996).

I hope that a general understanding of my thesis has been outlined, taking into consideration its starting point. In the next stages, my aim is at first to analyse further how this logic of governing really works and what types of citizenship are under

construction. Secondly, I intend to examine the reaction and the forms of citizenship that have been articulated from informal social initiatives of the city. In other words, the final aim is to make visible the relation between these two different approaches, top-down and bottom-up, of response to the crisis focusing on the articulated types of citizenship.

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Paper Title: The Impact of EU Cohesion Policy on European Identity Building: A Case study of the region of Crete in Greece

Paper Abstract:

This paper explores the impact of Cohesion Policy on European identity through a qualitative case study of the region of Crete in Greece. Bringing together elements from the EU studies and public policy literatures, the discussion revolves around what facilitates and what obstructs the attainment of indirect policy goals such as European identity building in each stage of the policy process. The paper posits that Cohesion Policy had a limited impact upon European identity building in Crete due to a greater or lesser extent to i) competition or mistrust created between central and regional authorities at the domestic level as a result of the multi-level governance model, ii) policy ambiguity in terms of both policy goals and policy means, iii) lack of an integrated policy communication strategy, and v) excessive bureaucratic burden as a result of policy layering. Empirical data in support of these arguments have been gathered through on-site fieldwork and elite interviewing in EU institutions HQ in Brussels and Greece (regions of Athens and Crete).

The Impact of EU Cohesion Policy on European Identity Building: A Case study of the region of Crete in Greece

Introduction

The economic, social and political crises in Europe during the past decade have posed an existential threat to the European Union. In particular, the implications of the Eurozone crisis and the enforcement of harsh austerity measures and fiscal adjustments in a number of EU countries, the lack of solidarity on the part of European leaders in handling the refugee and migration crisis, and the terrorist threat that is still looming over Europe are only some of the reasons that have brought the Union to the fore during recent years. This has resulted in an unprecedented rise of Euroscepticism across both old and new member states and has posed a serious threat to not only the Union's modus operandi but also to its intellectual underpinnings and very essence. It is in the light of this background context that my doctoral dissertation-of which the proposed paper discusses preliminary findings from one of three empirical case-studies- poses the question whether certain EU policies have the capacity to create positive images about Europe thus enhancing the sense of Europeanness and triggering European identity building.

Cohesion Policy, a policy that embodies the notion of solidarity and has the potential to bring citizens closer to Europe through tangible and visible results to a much greater extent compared to other European policies, makes for an ideal 'tool' through which the EU could pursue some more normative or cognitive goals alongside direct or material ones. In fact, with European identity politics gaining recognition in recent decades and leading to novel post-functional theories of European integration developed on grounds of identity-based factors, many would agree that the greater a shared European identity, the more sustainable the EU will be as a political regime.

Therefore, this paper examines the impact of EU Cohesion policy (CP) on European identity building and discusses preliminary findings and evidence from the region of Crete in Greece. This case study has been drawn-up by a process that includes: i) extensive literature review, ii) desk-based analysis of documents relating to successive Operational Programmes implemented in the region since 2000, and iii) semi-structured interviews that have been conducted in Athens, Crete and Brussels. The scope of the interviews consists in twenty elite actors involved in the practice and/or study of CP, operating at different territorial levels and representing diverse sectors.

Preliminary Findings

Challenges in the Formation and Implementation Stages of Cohesion Policy

a. Interplay between Different Levels of Government

The way the mechanics of CP have been configured has created a unique system of multi-level governance within which supranational, national and subnational actors have to cooperate in different stages of the policy. However, the balance between the three levels and most notably the national and regional ones as to which level of administrative authority should take ownership of regional development planning is not always easy to reach. In this regard, despite the fact that policy makers

and other stakeholders operating at all three government levels unanimously agree on that the transition to a ‘Shared Management’ model has been an absolute necessity in the field of CP (Interview 48, 2/8/17; Interview 55, 10/8/17; Interview 60, 4/10/17), the latter has also resulted in a series of unfavorable implications for the domestic level. In more detail, with reference to the role of the Commission, although EC officials would perceive the latter as being limited to the provision of the general strategic framework within which the policy operates (Interview 60, 4/10/17), both national and regional actors would have a different opinion and argue that it plays a much bigger role by practically imposing eligible thematic objectives and intervening in a number of situations, thus minimizing the freedom for decision-making to take place at the domestic level (Interview 53, 3/8/17). On a similar note, the excessive bureaucratic burden that governs the administration of the policy and begins from Brussels is nothing but an indirect means for the EC to keep a close eye on different stages and procedures (Interview 52, 3/8/17). This point is further discussed in the following section.

What has been more problematic, however, in the case of Greece is the ‘never-changing’ relationship between national and regional authorities, the latter making the burning issue not one of direct vis-à-vis shared management with regards to the EC but one about the level of centralization within the country. In this context, CP in Greece has been implemented in a highly centralized manner with the Ministry of Economy maintaining control over most if not the entirety of the process. Especially in the pre-2000 period, the role and input of subnational actions has been extremely limited whereas with regional priorities being systematically overshadowed by national ones (Interview 52, 3/8/17), the regional policy had in practice replaced the national development policy of the country (Ioakimidis, 1996; Interview 42, 18/7/17). Although the administrative reform of 2010 and the subsequent conferral of some financial independency to the regions during the current round has arguably strengthened the role thereof (Interview 44, 19/7/17), the overall process of decentralization in Greece has been widely considered to be devoid of essence and practical meaning and thus unsuccessful (Interview 43, 19/7/17; Interview 47, 2/8/17; Interview 50, 3/8/17). More importantly, the excessive centralization of the system has undermined the principle of partnership and not providing the adequate space for institutional adaptation and learning to take place, has cultivated a culture of mistrust between both central and subnational actors as well as towards social partners (Getimis and Paraskevopoulos, 2002; Interview 55, 10/8/17; Interview 60, 4/10/17). However, in the case of Crete, although initially restrained by the rigidity of the institutional framework, the cooperative culture and local activism tradition of the place owing notably to its regional identity (Andreou, 2006) has gradually contributed to consensus-building and a more participatory approach to regional development planning (Interview 48, 2/8/17).

b. Planning and Running Programmes

Apart from obstacles resulting from the interplay between the different levels of government, a number of practical problems relating to the planning and day-to-day management of EU programmes and owing either to the policy guidelines coming from Brussels or to the domestic capacities and practices in view of accommodating them can arise. In the first instance, the EC requirement to develop interventions that should fit into prescribed priority axes, dictated by broader European strategies at any given time, has often been perceived as a lack of freedom and flexibility on the part of national and subnational policy makers to develop needs-based and tailor-made solutions for their own country or specific regions (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 48, 2/8/17; Interview 50, 3/8/17; Interview 52, 3/8/17; Interview 55, 10/8/17). The *ad hoc* revisions of the policy during recent years, however, to cover areas and meet particular needs that have emerged from exceptional circumstances and events, such as the economic and migration crises, have also received criticism on grounds of minimizing the budget for development interventions (Interview 55, 10/8/17), redirecting funds away from long-term investments and therefore, undermining the consistency, coherence and understanding of the purpose of CP (Interview 42, 18/7/17). Finally, the ‘one-size-fits-all’ and

productivity-driven approach to regional development pursued by the EU through CP (Interview 44, 19/7/17) has not always been considered to be the best development option for Greece. In fact, EU incentives during earlier programming periods to subsidize economic activity in novel and more competitive sectors have arguably resulted in the weakening of the food and agricultural sectors in which the country traditionally had a comparative advantage (Interview 50, 3/8/17). According to this argument, the improper framework provided by both the CP and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been the reason behind the modest progress of Greece in terms of overall economic development as well as an eminent factor to have led the country into the crisis (Interview 50, 3/8/17). Most actors would argue, however, that the main reasons explaining low EU Funds' efficiency and absorption capacity and the suboptimal output of EU programmes in Greece would be the same reasons that could partially contribute to the understanding of the current socio-economic situation of the country; and these would be endogenous features and own practices (Liargovas, Petropoulos, Tzifakis and Huliaras, 2015).

In this regard, a number of factors emanating from the very nature and norms of the Greek state would come forth as key obstacles and constraints during the formation and implementation stages of the policy. In more detail, apart from the highly centralized and rigid institutional framework, different policy makers and stakeholders would highlight the long consultation process between the different actors during the planning stage of the process (Interview 47, 2/8/17; Interview 51, 3/8/17); the lengthy timeframes between the projects' approval and public procurement stages (Interview 50, 3/8/17; Interview 55, 10/8/17); the lack of designated intermediate bodies or specialized agencies that could provide technical assistance and practical guidance in setting up projects (Interview 51, 3/8/17); the understaffing of implementing bodies such as the Managing A (Interview 52, 3/8/17) or the *"misplacement of the right people away from the right positions"* (Interview 46, 2/8/17; Interview 58, 20/9/17) as a result of the 'politicization' of the Greek administrative system; and finally, the lack of information or experience on the part of beneficiaries on how to produce high-quality studies and good project proposals and thus gain access to EU funding (Interview 42, 18/7/17; Interview 46, 2/8/17; Interview 50, 3/8/17).

In terms of the strategic allocation of EU Funds, criticism would mainly revolve around the lack of an integrated and comprehensive development strategy within which targeted interventions could be developed (Interview 43, 19/7/17). This would then result in the segmentation of funding to small-scale projects lacking long-term planning and continuity (Liargovas, Petropoulos, Tzifakis and Huliaras, 2015; Interview 50, 3/8/17; Interview 51, 3/8/17) thus decreasing the potential of CP to produce tangible and visible results (Interview 48, 2/8/17). There is no doubt that the crisis has triggered a series of additional challenges which have inevitably impacted on the formation and implementation of EU programmes. In this respect, apart from the deterioration of the broader investment environment, the lack of liquidity due to capital controls and the brain drain (Crete OP, 2014), the big mismatch created between demand and available funding could not be addressed with national funds (Interview 44, 19/7/17). On a similar note, the various structural and legislative reforms the country had to undertake as part of the bailout agreements with its creditors and the required timeframe for policy makers to get accustomed to the new regulations and procedures would cause further delays in different stages of the policy process and aggravate the already complex and bureaucratic Greek regulatory framework (Interview 42, 18/7/17; Interview 47, 2/8/17; Interview 51, 3/8/17; Interview 53, 3/8/17; Interview 55, 10/8/17).

c. Bureaucracy and Regulatory Complexity

Notwithstanding the challenges discussed above, the one problem emphasized and framed as the most crucial by almost all interviewees, including officials at the EC, has been the bureaucratic burden and overregulation of the policy, which starting from Brussels and being further increased as it passes down to lower government levels, would become unmanageable (Interview 52, 3/8/17; Interview 55,

10/8/17). In this regard, most actors would agree on that, despite successive efforts to simplify the policy, every programming round had been more complicated than the previous ones thus making “*simplification a very complicated issue*” (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 52, 3/8/17). Adding to that, the centralized and overregulated nature of the Greek administrative system, the ever-changing national legislation dictated by the country’s structural reform and the inherent difficulty in interpreting the EU legislation and ‘jargon’ have arguably created a ‘hostile’ implementation environment (Interview 47, 2/8/17; Interview 52, 3/8/17; Interview 53, 3/8/17). As a result, with CP being broadly perceived as a long and complicated checklist and set of regulations with which national and subnational actors had to comply, this environment would often undermine the essence and strategic objective of the policy (Interview 60, 4/10/17).

It is worth stressing at this point that a substantial simplification of CP is hard if not impossible to achieve in practice notably due to the fact that the need to ensure political accountability makes complexity and bureaucracy two ‘necessary evils’. Yet, there are important counterarguments in favor of such a policy simplification. These arguments put forward, on the one hand, the incapacity of the EC to micro-manage EU-funded projects from Brussels and know the different realities on the ground, and on the other hand, the wide acceptance that central and regional authorities know better the needs and lacks of their respective areas and are thus better qualified to respond to these. Although these arguments were also presented in the Greek context, stakeholders and policy makers would focus elsewhere. In particular, on the side of arguments justifying the overregulation of the policy, many would see the increased control on the part of the EC as a natural response to previous practices of mismanagement or bad usage of EU Funds. In fact, in the case of Greece, apart from the lack of a long-term and sound development strategy, many reported instances of corruption, clientelism and usage of the funds for political purposes would contribute to the country’s bad implementation record (Liddle, 2009; Kalyvas, Pagoulatos and Tsoukas, 2014; Interview 43, 19/7/17; Interview 55, 10/8/17; Interview 58, 20/9/17). On the other side, however, this overregulation would be very much attributed to the ‘mismanagement’ of CP by the EC itself as the latter would increasingly use the former as a vehicle to pass regulations in a series of other broader fields through the Structural Funds mechanism (Interview 44, 19/7/17). In this respect, in the form of pre-conditions (‘conditionalities’ in the EU jargon) for development interventions to take place, a large share of the Structural Funds regulation would revolve around areas such as state aid and public procurement, which although falling outside the National Strategic Reference Framework would be *de facto* governed by it (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 55, 10/8/17). Given the already complicated national regulatory framework and the need for the country to proceed to further structural and legal reforms, this argument would be one of the most popular in the Greek context.

Having discussed the main challenges relating to the formulation and implementation stages of CP as perceived by stakeholders and policy makers at different government levels, it is not difficult to understand why the impact of the policy on the developmental process of the country has overall been considered rather modest. It has been argued that the latter has been the result of the combination of a series of structural, geophysical and endogenous factors (Liargovas, Petropoulos, Tzifakis and Huliaras, 2015). The domestic investment priorities and political choices such as the preference for hard infrastructure projects rather than investments in more competitive sectors (Ibid) and the limited utilization of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) (Interview 43, 19/7/17) and other available financial sources that could multiply financial allocations and generate more growth (Interview 55, 10/8/17) have also been reported as eminent factors. Adding to all the above instances of misuse of EU Funds, long delays in preparing and getting the different Operational Programmes approved, and low

compliance rates with EC requirements, Greece has gained a reputation for being a bad ‘EU policy taker’ (Interview 42, 18/7/17).

However, Crete has been one of the few exceptions to this rule as despite the difficulties of the Greek environment it has managed to build a good implementation record. In this regard, most actors would bring to the fore the competence and experience of the Managing Authority to produce high-quality work (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 47, 2/8/17; Interview 60, 4/10/17), the high absorption rates and the relative efficiency of the funds’ allocation (Interview 46, 2/8/17), the increased cooperation between regional and local governments and social partners in regional development planning (Interview 51, 3/8/17), and more importantly, the human capital and the vision of the regional political elite (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 46, 2/8/17; Interview 47, 2/8/17; Interview 49, 3/8/17). Moreover, the region’s innovative approach to regional development would often become an example for other regions to copy and/or learn from (Interview 51, 3/8/17) whereas the increased effort to simplify administrative procedures and ameliorate the exchange between citizens and public services would be acknowledged by both its Greek counterparts and the central government (Interview 50, 3/8/17). In this context, the Cretan political and administrative elite has gained a reputation for being hard-working, engaged and genuinely interested in bringing to fruition the underlying objectives of CP (Interview 48, 2/8/17). Therefore, one would expect that they would use all available tools and channels to achieve that; and this leads us to the contentious issue of communication and awareness-raising.

Challenges in Communicating Cohesion Policy

With Greece being traditionally among the largest beneficiaries of Structural Funds and thousands of EU co-funded projects having been implemented in a timespan of some thirty-seven years, it would be impossible for CP not to be visible and communicated in the country. In this respect, during the first two decades after the country’s accession to the EU the policy has been high on the national agenda and this was not only to be attributed to the clear financial benefits emanating from it (Interview 42, 18/7/17). Being openly in favor of deeper European integration already since the mid-1980s, Greece increasingly embraced the ideational underpinnings of the Union and the prospects CP would bring for a more socially and economically cohesive Europe in the pursuance of its ultimate objective, the political integration of its member states (Interview 42, 18/7/17). On a similar note, the notions of solidarity and multi-level governance that constituted the ‘buzzwords’ of the 1990s would largely be perceived as a great opportunity for national and subnational actors to assume more powers and gain access to policy making.

In this context, despite their different political affiliations, all Greek governments would adopt a pro-European and pro-integration position, and would be eager to extol the virtues and contribution of CP to the modernization process of the country. Adding to that, the compliance with EC communication requirements on the part of the Ministry and the Managing Authorities to acknowledge the EU through signs, flags and other promotion-related activities (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 52, 3/8/17), and the concentration of investments on easily perceivable infrastructure projects that could communicate themselves would arguably ensure the visibility of the policy as well as citizens’ awareness about it (Interview 52, 3/8/17; Interview 60, 4/10/17). However, in the aftermath of the economic and migration crises, whose impact has undoubtedly been more pronounced in Greece than elsewhere, CP seems to have lost some of its splendor and visibility. And although, clearly, rising Eurosceptic narratives in the country have been anchored to other factors relating most notably to the harsh austerity measures and the lack of solidarity in the present-day EU, the CP would not remain

intact from the broader contestation of the traditionally Europhile affiliation of Greece. In this regard, two important questions arise; if the level of citizens' awareness was that high, had the message of CP registered with them? And if so, had that been enough to countermand Euroscepticism at least to some extent? In order to provide an answer to these questions we need to look closer at three different elements.

Firstly, we need to examine what 'citizens' awareness' actually meant. Although most actors would agree that citizens were by and large aware about EU money being invested in the country (Interview 46, 2/8/17; Interview 50, 3/8/17; Interview 58, 20/9/17), their knowledge would often be limited to big infrastructure projects and they would not be able to identify any 'secondary' activities funded by the EU or name any concrete projects implemented in their surroundings (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 55, 10/8/17). Similarly, they would usually not know much about the different Structural Funds, the details of the Operational Programmes and, in many cases, they would even be unaware of the term 'Cohesion Policy' (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 47, 2/8/17). More importantly, however, people would be completely unfamiliar with the mechanics of the EU or the political system of the Union, the role of the EU institutions and the way decisions are taken at the supranational level (Interview 42, 18/7/17; Interview 51, 3/8/17; Interview 58, 20/9/17). This would have two serious implications. On the one hand, not knowing enough about the scope and regulatory framework of CP, people would often try to gain access to EU funding as if CP was to meet all individual needs and demands (Interview 47, 2/8/17; Interview 55, 10/8/17); on the other hand, having limited understanding of the broader economic and socio-political context within which the EU operates, people would be prone to the increasingly Eurosceptic media environment in the country and would not hesitate to "demonize" the EU for all their problems and distress thus tending to forget the positive aspects of EU membership (Interview 52, 3/8/17; Interview 58, 20/9/17). The opposite argument, sustaining that most people would still be able to isolate the benefits that had emanated from CP from the difficult socio-economic juncture, and that they would even acknowledge the significant contribution of the policy during the crisis and in the absence of any national sources of funding and/or public investments has also been developed (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 50, 3/8/17).

Secondly, we need to look at the way CP has been portrayed and promoted by the political and administrative elites. Although the successive pro-integration Greek governments and political elites would seem to embrace the underlying political underpinnings of the EU and the ideas of "Europeanism" and solidarity embedded in it, the CP would be notably used and publicized as a merely economic policy (Interview 42, 18/7/17; Interview 58, 20/9/17). There are two eminent reasons in support of this argument. In the first instance, with the scope of CP lacking consistency over time with regards to pursued objectives and set priorities, there was the question of what exactly was it that it should be communicated (Interview 42, 18/7/17). In fact, the successive reforms of the policy and its gradual transformation into an all-encompassing toolset through which the EC would legislate on all different areas would result in some certain ambiguity over the concrete purposes of the policy (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 46, 2/8/17). On a similar note, the gradual shift in the scope of CP from redistributive and socially-oriented priorities to more productivity-oriented ones would often create confusion over the message the EC wanted to pass through the policy and whether this was about "cohesion and convergence" or about "competitiveness and productivity"; because these two were neither the same nor could always go hand in hand (Interview 52, 3/8/17; Interview 55, 10/8/17). In the second instance, despite appearances, the EU and by extension CP would be in practice consistently treated as a big financial source or "*a cow that could be milked*" (Interview 42, 18/7/17; Interview 58, 20/9/17). In this context, owing to some of the intrinsic features of the Greek state we have already discussed, EU Funds would occasionally be 'exploited' for political or other

own purposes thus resulting in the association of CP with lack of transparency, corruption and bad practices. This would in turn have a direct impact on the image of the policy or the way the latter would be perceived at times by citizens (Interview 43, 19/7/17; Interview 60, 4/10/17).

Moreover, it has also been difficult from a practical viewpoint to communicate CP as something different than an economic and investment policy. In particular, with CP having actually replaced the national development policy in the pre-crisis period (Andreou, 2006) and constituting the only source of financing for public investments in the post-crisis period, it irrevocably communicated itself as such. In addition, given the fact that during earlier programming rounds a large share of Structural Funds allocations had been invested in mainly transport infrastructure projects, people would not directly feel the impact of the policy on their everyday lives; and yet, although social infrastructure and other socially-orientated interventions might have been more appropriate for bringing the policy and its ideational underpinnings closer to citizens (Interview 50, 3/8/17), such interventions have not been among the primary objectives of the policy as prescribed by the Structural Funds Regulation and the principle on the 'thematic concentration' of resources (Interview 46, 2/8/17). Finally, apart from challenges relating to what should be communicated, concerns have been also raised with regards to the broader difficulty embedded in communicating it. In fact, despite the efforts on the part of the Ministry and the Managing Authorities to use all available tools and resources, ranging from information events and campaigns to social media and interactive user-friendly websites to communicate the policy to the general public (Interview 44, 19/7/17; Interview 52, 3/8/17), the frequent association of the policy with major delays in the approval and completion of projects, the sub-optimal operation or maintenance of completed projects, and instances of corruption and broader misuse of the funds would at times jeopardize the image of the policy (Interview 60, 4/10/17). In addition, the increasingly Eurosceptic media environment that would mainly focus on the bad side of the story highlighting unfortunate examples and practices would further aggravate the already difficult communication process (Interview 44, 19/7/17). Finally, the unfavorable economic juncture would constitute another restraining factor; and it would make sense that within a context of generalized economic hardship and social unrest, campaigns for promoting CP and fighting Euroscepticism would not be considered a number one priority but rather a waste of money that should have been spent elsewhere (Interview 44, 19/7/17).

Thirdly, we need to take into account the way the EU as a whole is perceived as this will enable one to better understand how CP fits into the broader picture. In recent years, Greece has turned from one of the most pro-integration and Europhile member states to an increasingly Eurosceptic one following the diverse European crises and most notably the economic one. In this regard, although some actors would argue that the European consciousness would have been deeply ingrained among the Greeks after thirty-seven years of EU membership (Interview 55, 10/8/17), some other would stress that Greece has not fully understood and assumed the role and responsibilities for being an EU member state (Interview 48, 2/8/17). In fact, a large share of both the political elite and the electorate would identify the EU with the possibility of free funding and not the underpinning political aims, common values and broader mission the Union stands for (Interview 42, 18/7/17; Interview 48, 2/8/17). As a result, although there still exists a feel-good factor around CP in the country due to the dependency on and clear benefit from it, for the latter to make the case for solidarity and contribute to European identity-building it would require a fundamental change in the mindsets of both the Greeks as to what the EU stands for and most notably the European elites as to where the whole European project is going. Having reviewed the main challenges relating to the communication of CP in Greece and Crete, we shall now move to the discussion of the last aspect, namely the possible relationship between CP and Europhile or Eurosceptic perceptions through the lens of the Cretan identity.

Cohesion Policy and the Cretan Identity

Greece constitutes a highly unified state in terms of historical and cultural background and influences. As such, the Greek national identity, constructed around the country's glorious past and heritage and the numerous struggles towards independence, exceeds any regional ones. The country's cultural homogeneity can also be explained by two additional factors: the late unification of the Greek territory following the annexation of Dodecanese only in 1947, and the systematic and arguably successful integration policy followed by the state, which discouraged the development and emergence of distinctive regional and/or local cultures and identities (Interview 58, 20/9/17). Moreover, the boundaries between the regions as informed by the different administrative reforms on regional and local government have been decided in a rather random and geographically-related manner without leaving much room for a sentiment of regional identity to be developed (Interview 55, 10/8/17). As a result, Greek people hardly got attached to the idea of culturally distinct regions, the latter implying that regional identities in the country have been weak compared to some other old EU member states. Instead, local identities have been considered to be somewhat stronger, although once again not particularly pronounced (Interview 55, 10/8/17). Nevertheless, Crete remains an exception and constitutes one of the few, if not the only, Greek region with a clearly articulated and widely recognized identity.

Notwithstanding the fact that Crete forms an essential part of the economy and the historical and cultural heritage of Greece, it has retained a strong regional identity and distinct cultural traits. Moreover, it is considered to be one of the most extrovert and ambitious Greek regions. In fact, following its successful passage during recent decades from an agricultural economy to one combining all three main sectors of economic activity, Crete has managed to identify and exploit its comparative advantages and strong sectors while at the same time 'dared' to experiment with novel ones (Interview 48, 2/8/17). Finally, the region has acquired significant experience over time and has built a good reputation for planning and managing EU-funded regional development programmes (Interview 52, 3/8/17; Interview 60, 4/10/17). Without disregarding that the latter has been the result of many complementary factors, there is no doubt that the distinct identity and culture of the region has been a significant one. To that end, CP and the Cretan identity have had mutual interaction effects as the former has provided the space for the latter to be expressed and further enhanced, whereas the already existing culture and identity of the place has facilitated the formation and implementation processes of the policy. Let us briefly discuss the two arguments separately.

With regards to the impact of the EU on the Cretan identity, most actors would agree on that Crete has taken full advantage of the multi-level governance model provided by the EC and managed to both strengthen its voice and gain some access to policy- and decision-making processes (Interview 48, 2/8/17). In particular, having a long tradition of local activism and collaborative culture, Crete has been the first -and so far, only- Greek region to establish a representation office in Brussels, which has arguably turned out to be very beneficial in terms of networking and lobbying (Interview 49, 3/8/17; Interview 46, 2/8/17). In more detail, through active engagement and involvement with other European collaborative networks and associations, such as the 'Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions', the region would participate in various consultations on the future of EU policies and would identify prospective partner-regions with whom it would collaborate and jointly prepare project applications for centrally managed competitive EU programmes (Interview 46, 2/8/17). The success of this venture has resulted in the decision of the Regional Governor to establish a dedicated 'Directorate for European Programmes' within the Region of Crete in order to strengthen and 'institutionalize' engagement with EU programmes (Interview 48, 2/8/17). Other than that, CP would

directly reinforce the Cretan identity through concrete development strategies, most notably the ‘Smart Specialization Strategy’, introduced during the current programming round (2014-2020) in order to stimulate regions to identify and enhance their competitive sectors. In the framework of this strategy, Crete has promoted innovative and culture-related sectors such as agri-food, the latter resulting, among others, in the success of the region in ‘branding’ quality local products with the name ‘Crete’ (Interview 50, 3/8/17; Interview 51, 3/8/17; Interview 54, 3/8/17).

With reference, finally, to the role the Cretan identity has played in the practice of the policy, although some actors would not see any direct link between regional identity and the way CP has been unraveled (Interview 53, 3/8/17; Interview 58, 20/9/17), the majority would agree that the two had mutual interaction effects. In fact, the collaborative culture in the region and the mentality, engagement, personal endeavors and vision of specific elite actors and stakeholders seem to have been key factors in the wise selection of investments, the good implementation record and the overall advancement of the region (Interview 46, 2/8/17; Interview 52, 3/8/17; Interview 60, 4/10/17).

Conclusion

The paper has discussed the impact of CP on European identity building and Europhile perceptions in the region of Crete in Greece. In view of exploring this question, emphasis has been placed on the way CP has been designed, implemented and communicated, and the impact of the policy and the EU in a broader context on the Cretan identity. Despite the fact that the study has looked at the impact of CP on elites’ perceptions about the EU, where considered relevant and appropriate, the discussion has also been extended and touched upon the citizens’ level.

Although, as naturally expected, most elite actors and policy makers involved in the practice of CP would acknowledge the significance and value of the policy, they would also express their discontent with a number of issues relating to the design, implementation and communication stages of the policy. In the front of policy design and implementation, they would make the case for the practical difficulties embedded in the multi-level governance model and the need to further decentralize the EC ‘Shared Management’ model of CP; the sometimes frustrating lack of freedom and flexibility in directing resources to different sectors than the ones prescribed by the EC and considered to be more needed and relevant; and most notably, the heavy bureaucratic and administrative burden linked to the policy. On the communication side, despite efforts to communicate CP through all available channels and material, it would be registered mainly as an economic and investment-oriented policy with people, who in turn, similarly to the elites, would perceive the EU as a source of free funding. Moreover, they would admit that the ‘cohesive’ dimension of CP would not have probably reached the public, but they would also put some of the blame on the EC for its too broad and all-encompassing ‘branding’ of the policy in the first place. Finally, with regards to the interplay between CP and regional identity, they would sustain that the two have had a mutual interaction effect as on the one hand the EU had strengthen the Cretan identity while on the other hand the existence of the latter had facilitated the practice of the policy.

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- Interview 43: Deputy Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Greece, Athens, 19/7/2017.
- Interview 44: General Director at the National Coordination Authority for ESIF, Secretariat General for Public Investments and NSRF, Ministry of Economy and Development, Athens, 19/7/2017.
- Interview 45: Academic (Professor), University of Macedonia, (Skype Interview), 21/7/2017.
- Interview 46: Technical Adviser to the Vice-Governor of the region of Crete & Certified Evaluator of Private Investments, Regional Unit of Rethymno, Rethymno, 2/8/2017.
- Interview 47: Policy Officer at the Development Directorate of the Department of European Programmes, Regional Unit of Rethymno, Rethymno, 2/8/2017.
- Interview 48: Vice-Governor of the Region of Crete for European and International Affairs & Vice-President of CPMR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions), Regional Unit of Heraklion, Heraklion, 2/8/2017.
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- Interview 51: Managing Director of Science and Technology Park of Crete (STEP-C), Foundation for Research and Technology - Hellas (FORTH), Heraklion, 3/8/2017.
- Interview 52: Head of Unit A at the Managing Authority of the Region of Crete, Heraklion, 3/8/2017.
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- Interview 54: Former Consultant & local/regional development expert, Heraklion, 3/8/2017.
- Interview 55: Secretary General of National Investments and NSRF, Ministry of Economy and Development, Athens, 10/8/2017.
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