SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Dear Anastasios Valvis, Sotiris Petropoulos, Katerina Kaisari and Asteris Huliaras.

I am pleased to inform you that your article „A Blessing or a Curse? The Impact of the Refugee Crisis on Organized Civil Society in Greece" is accepted for publication (with minor revisions).

Best regards,

prof. Anna Krasteva

editor-in-chief, Southeastern Europe

Blessing or Curse? The Impact of the Refugee Crisis on Organized Civil Society in Greece

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Abstract

Several studies have identified variables that influence NGO objectives, organizational structures and activity, often related to the wider socio-economic context. Among the most important are the availability of funding and the density of networks. Both factors affect NGOs either by driving them to adjust priorities and widen or limit their operations and/or to become more or less extrovert. This paper aims to assess whether, how and to what extent the recent refugee crisis has impacted on the Greek NGO ecosystem in terms of professionalization, organizational structures and networking. Available funding, mostly from European institutions, has suddenly and spectacularly increased while International NGOs (INGOs) established operations to Greece - some in cooperation with local partners. Likewise, several Greek NGOs embarked on a process of significant operational expansion, mostly "in the field" and as part of an "emergency response". In addition, a series of grassroots organizations have been created - mainly at the local level. Based on a series of interviews with executives of the most recognizable Greek NGOs, funders and policy makers, the paper argues that the impact was both positive and negative and varied extensively depending on the size and type of organization under focus.

Introduction

Over the last decade, Greek Civil Society (CS) has received much academic attention, mostly driven by the different and quite challenging conditions that Greece was facing after the beginning of the economic crisis that led to a reduction of GDP by more than a quarter and to surging unemployment rates that particularly hit the young (Huliaras 2015).

The 2015 refugee crisis had important repercussions on organized civil society in Greece. The increasing number of people in need put much pressure on already stressed NGOs., At the same time the availability of funding from international institutions and the arrival of many International NGOs (INGOs) impacted on the nature, scope, priorities and operation of several Greek NGOs. This paper aims at examining this impact.

The paper is based on the findings of a research project on the impact of the Refugee Crisis on the NGO ecosystem in Greece that was funded by the EU and national resources. It attempts to assess the changes that the refugee crisis brought to the NGO ecosystem. The first part will present, in brief conclusions reached by a number of

relevant studies in other parts of the world. Given the complexity of the subject and the need to make some theoretical observations beyond the Greek context, the paper uses concepts developed by transnationalization and network theory. The second part will focus on how the refugee crisis impacted on NGOs, presenting relevant data and insights from professionals and volunteers working in the NGO sector.

Concepts, Hypotheses, Methodology

There are several definitions of organized civil society. Our paper focuses exclusively on NGOs, considered by many observers as some of the most important actors of organized civil society. It defines NGOs as 'self-governing, private, not-for-profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people' (Vakil 1997: 2060).

Our research examines the interaction between INGOs and Greek service-providing NGOs in the context of the post-2015 refugee crisis. It does not deal neither with Greek human rights groups nor with small transnational advocacy NGOs that established a presence in Greece - mainly in Eastern Aegean islands - during the crisis. This does not mean that these organizations' impact on the welfare of the refugees and the ways the 'crisis' was framed in public debates was insignificant. Quite the contrary. However, the high levels of politicization of these actors meant that their interaction with the local societies and more professionalized social-service providing organizations was rather limited. Examples are "Team Humanity" of the Danish-Syrian activist Salam Aldin (Kathimerini 2019: 26) and the German "No Borders Group" (Murray 2017: 73-4). . These groups arose mostly from 'spontaneous international volunteerism' and local initiatives and were the first to provide help to refugees arriving to Lesvos island while UNHCR and established international NGOs were still absent. However, soon their lack of expertise in crisis management combined with their lack of proper understanding of context and their tendency to put individual agendas ahead of collective aid needs made their efforts short-lived (Guribye & Mydland 2018). Thus, their interaction with more established NGOs was limited.

 Several studies have identified the availability of funding as a decisive factor in the development of organized civil society. Sheth and Sethi (1991) have pointed out the role of international funding for the growth of the NGO ecosystem in India during the 1990s. Many years later Jalali (2008) reaffirmed its continuing importance. Salgado (2014) emphasized the importance of EU funding for the growth of European NGOs. In fact, "the more European funds are allocated to a specific issue, the more voluntary organizations (working on this topic) will be expected to use these funds and be transformed by this use" (Salgado 2010: 4). Following the same line,
Huliaras and Petropoulos (2016) have highlighted the importance of EU financial resources on the Greek NGO ecosystem, giving birth to many new actors and affecting objectives, strategies and administrative practices of others. Lewis (1998) has also analysed on the role of international funding on the interaction of Local and International NGOs.

Networks are also of crucial importance. As DeMars (2005: 44) has argued, NGOs "are constituted by their principled mandates and crucial partners, and perhaps primarily by

their partners". Therefore, NGOs might be at least as much partner-driven as principle-driven.

Transnational networks' significance in creating, implementing and monitoring international standards and processes has been widely discussed in the relevant literature. Different processes of building transnational alliances, such as 'global framing', 'internationalization', 'externalization', 'international coalition formation', 'diffusion' and 'scale shift' have been used to illuminate the two-way directions of networking. Through transnational networks, local causes can receive a wider, globalized attention. According to Bulut (2009: 266), advocacy strategies can spread from one locality to another. Keck and Sikkink (1998) have also noted that this is also possible with what they have called as the 'boomerang pattern'.

The content of these relationships are directly related to exchanges, the flow of information and of other resources, including funding, among the participating NGOs (Nonaka 1991, Gulati 1995). Moreover, several studies have focused on the governance mechanisms of such networks (Ebers 1997, Jones et al. 1997).

In a progressively globalizing world, networking and partnerships are becoming a *sine qua non* for the survival of Local NGOs (LNGOs) and for the provision of more inclusive and targeted services. Although partnerships do not entail operational subjugation since partners retain a level of operational autonomy from each other, yet, it is this constant interaction that brings added value to them through the exchange of know-how either in field operations or in organizational practices. The added value is expected to be higher when networks and partnerships are of transnational nature. Transnational networks facilitate the diffusion of norms, resources, political responsibility, and information.

Yet, partnerships between INGOs and LNGOs might be unequal. It is very common for INGOs to maintain control over funds and exercise substantial power over their local partners (Huliaras and Tzifakis 2013:314-317). For example, in the post-1995 Western Balkans INGOs disregarded local communities' needs, avoiding to constructively design projects *with* their local partners.

A systematic look at the dynamics of network structures can generate meaningful insights on civil society organizations activities (Diani 2015: 1)

The creation, maintenance and strengthening of networks is of high importance not just for the survival of NGOs but also for reaching common targets (Kapucu 2005, Smith 1997). Takahashi and Smutny (2002) persuasively argue that this is not always the outcome of free choice, but the result of pressures from donors or the by-product of external social, political and financial factors present in specific points of time. When these factors or pressures cease to exist, it is possible that the networks can easily collapse.

Networking and available funding could ideally lead to a more professionalized and organizationally competent NGOs sector. (Stewart 2016: 16).

In short, the availability of funding and the opportunities for networking are crucial factors in the development of NGOs and organized civil society in general.

Our research is based on descriptive and explorative analysis in order to identify patterns of NGOs' transformation during the refugee crisis. The first part of the paper is based on reports by international organizations, the European Commission and other agencies and on a variety of secondary resources. In the second part the qualitative data derive from in-depth interviews conducted during 2018 with representatives of key NGOs, as well as with other stakeholders such as executives from philanthropic foundations that were involved in the refugee crisis. In addition, our research is supported by 107 completed questionnaires collected during the first phase of Thales II Project on the Evaluation of Greek NGOs, an on-going research programme conducted by a University of the Peloponnese team with the authors' guidance and participation.[1]

The independent variables in our research are (i) the funding made available to NGOs during the refugee crisis and (ii) the activities of INGOs and International Donors in Greece and in relation to the crisis, while the dependent ones are (i) the level of networking, (ii) the professionalization of NGOs (iii) the mobilization of volunteers and (iv) the change of priorities / scope of activities (often referred in the literature as the 'succession problem').

The article is based on five (5) main hypotheses:

H1. The refugee crisis has led to a change of scope for many LNGOs not only due to the urgent character of the crisis, but also due to funding opportunities made available by international donors

H2. The level of competition among the NGOs targeting the available funding has significantly increased

H3. The massive mobilization of INGOs that started operating or expanding their presence and operation in Greece as a consequence of the refugee crisis had a positive impact on the Greek NGO ecosystem, providing local/national NGOs with the chance to socialize, exchange ideas, learn best practices, build networks and create partnerships

H4. Collaboration with international donors and other INGOs improved the professionalization of the Greek NGOs

H5. The refugee crisis along with the engagement of the NGO ecosystem rejuvenated the volunteer movement in Greece.

The pre-crisis status: A weak Greek Civil Society

Several scholars have concluded that post-junta Greece was characterized by low levels of social capital, associational density, and civic engagement.[2] In the classical

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[1]Thales II is a research program focusing on Greek NGOs and their performance during the 2016-2019 period. For additional information see www.greekngosnavigator.org

[2]See: Sotiropoulos D., Karamagioli, E. (2006), *Greek Civil Society: The Long Road to Maturity, CIVICUS – Civil Society Index Shortened Assessment Tool,* Report for the Case of Greece, Athens.

introduction to modern Greek politics, Keith R. Legg and John M. Roberts (1997: 198) have argued that "if a latter-day Tocqueville was to visit Greece, he would not conclude that [it] is a country of joiners". Analysts trying to explain Greece's civil society weakness have noted several factors ranging from the dominance of political parties (partitocracy) and the 'statist economy' to the lack of tax incentives and proper civic education in schools (Huliaras 2016).

During the 1990s Greek Civil Society started transforming. According to many scholars, political parties altered their position about the associational sphere, providing voluntary organizations with more space to develop. Simultaneously, economic growth brought into the forefront cultural shifts, such as the rise of post-materialism (Theocharis 2011). Within this context, new NGOs emerged, while existing ones were strengthened, along with the increase of social activism (Clarke et al 2015; Sotiropoulos & Bourikos 2014; Simiti 2017).

The introduction of various funding mechanisms during the 1990s, mainly related to EC and EU Structural Funds, created opportunities for Greek NGOs to flourish, though in a more *t*op-down than a bottom-up process (Huliaras & Petropoulos 2016). Yet, a series of alleged scandals reported by the media, many related to the misuse of state funding for developmental projects outside Greece, brought about a significant blow to the still emerging Greek NGO ecosystem.

The negative image has been depicted in various reports during the 2000s demonstrating again low levels – in relation to other western countries – of civic engagement. The 2005 Civicus Survey noted widespread apathy and the limited influence of Civil Society Organizations (Sotiropoulos & Karamagioli 2006), while in the 2008 and 2010 European Social Survey(ESS) rounds, Greece ranked as one of the three countries with the lowest levels of social capital in Europe (Jones, Proikaki & Roumeliotis 2015: 29-33).In a 2013 Eurobarometer Report, Greece was labeled as one of the five European countries where a majority of respondents claimed that "European citizens do not need NGOs" and 46 per cent argued that they do not trust associations (the third highest figure in the EU).

The economic crisis that hit Greece in 2009-10 found Greek Civil Society Organizations in a state of uncertainty. Although the sector has grown in the previous years, yet, their public image remained blurry. The paradoxes that characterized the Greek CSO ecosystem were still present. The number of active NGOs remained unknown, due to the absence of a centralized national registry, while the regulatory framework remained also weak and fragmented (Valvis 2014). However, despite this negative image, scholars identified some positive trends. Several informal citizen networks and grassroots movements were formed – mainly providing social services to vulnerable groups (Valvis & Petropoulos 2014).

Although the plight of the Greek economy has been devastating, it has also activated new trends in collective action and solidarity networks. The main reason for this can be traced to the welfare state's inability to provide certain social services, shifting the responsibility towards the traditional institution of the family, philanthropic organizations, private initiatives and civil society organizations (Huliaras 2015). New

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Hadjiyanni, A. (2010), 'On Social Cohesion in Greece' *The The Tocqueville Review,* XXXI(1): 7-40.

forms of social mobilization initiatives were born (Simiti 2015), activities were strengthened, while people started devoting more time and money to social activism (Clarke et al. 2016).

The gradual withdrawal of the state, especially in the provision of social and welfare services, created a gap that was filled, to some extent, by NGOs and informal solidarity networks. The unavailability of state funding strengthened NGO autonomy while pressing them to reorganize in order to compete in a more demanding milieu (Tzifakis et al. 2017).

Yet, was Civil Society practically strengthened? According to Simiti (2017), the increased density of civil society "may be a misleading indicator of its strength". After all, the economic crisis exacerbated social needs shifting the nature and patterns of civic engagement and placing new barriers to civil society's range of activism and autonomy. Even the rise of volunteering should be acknowledged as potentially misleading and ambiguous, since, according to Clarke, it may conceal economic and psychological survival strategies from the volunteers themselves, questioning, thus, their motives and their true commitment (Clarke 2015: 78). Thus, although the crisis has provided Greek civil society with a chance to evolve, it is probably questionable whether the latter has managed to capitalize the momentum the economic crisis created.

The refugee crisis as a tipping point

Amidst the economic crisis, Greece, as the EU's south-east border, has found itself as the gateway to a large movement of displaced people mainly coming from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Since 2015, over one million refugees and migrants crossed Greece's land and sea borders. Thus, Greece had to face an unprecedented influx of people.

The massive inflows of refugees and migrants continued uninterruptedly until February 2016, when the borders between Greece and North Macedonia closed, trapping thousands of refugees in a remote border area in Northern Greece (Idomeni). During the same year a notable decrease (over 90%) in the influx of migrants and refugees was noted (European Commission, April 2018a). The main reason was the Agreement between EU and Turkey, known as 'EU and Turkey Statement', which aimed at blocking the illegal entry of migrants/refugees to Greece, specifying, also, a scheme for deportation to Turkey of those people who were not eligible for a refugee status (Lehner 2019).

The situation was significantly better in 2017 in terms of living conditions for the refugees/migrants. The number of sea arrivals sharply decreased, while attempts were made to improve conditions in the camps, securing better access to healthcare, sanitation, and education services. While, the first half of 2018, refugees and migrants continued arriving to Greece, the numbers were much lower (12,824 arrivals as of June 2018 according to UNHCR).

As Chtouris and Miller (2017) have noted, "NGOs have been a determining factor in remedying the problem with involvement of hundreds of volunteers and citizens, who became active outside the traditional state frameworks, as well as the networks of major organizations, to create, on-site structures and networks for refugee support". However, NGO engagement in the refugee crisis was not immediate, In fact it

developed gradually. According to Skleparis and Armakolas (2016) the humanitarian response, can be divided in three chronological phases: 1) The first phase from May to late August 2015, during which small local volunteer groups dominated the scene; 2) The second phase from September 2015 to mid-January 2016, during which a gradual professionalization of the humanitarian response was observed, with national and international NGOs increasing their presence and contribution; 3) The third phase from mid-January to August 2016, when the EU – Turkey Agreement was signed, while the Greek state, along with major international and national NGOs, assumed the overall control of the response to the refugee crisis and small-sized civil society actors were side-lined (Skleparis 2015:173-174).

The period since September 2016 and onwards can be described as the one of 'normalization' during which state agencies, especially local authorities, progressively became more active with municipalities (Athens, Thessaloniki, Livadia, Trikala, Karditsa, Larissa, Nea Philadelphia-Nea Chalkidona, Tripoli and a consortium of municipalities in Crete) playing a critical role in implementing accommodation programmes in their respective areas along with major local and international NGOs (e.g. Praksis, Iliaktida, CRS, ARSIS, Solidarity Now, Nostos, Intersos and TDH). Since August 2017, the humanitarian response has been downsized, with several local and international NGOs minimizing or shutting down their programmes (e.g. Norwegian Refugee Council), while the funding structure has also been reshaped with the Greek state progressively undertaking almost complete control (Joint agency briefing paper 2017).

In the first phase of the humanitarian response, both the Greek state and professional (I)NGOs were accused of failing responding effectively to the crisis (Skleparis & Armakolas 2016). The new Greek government elected in January 2015, underestimated the extent of the humanitarian crisis, having as first priority the on-going negotiations with the EU on revising the Structural Adjust Programme and restructuring the Greek debt. Additionally, the Greek government failed to develop a coherent strategy for the migration issue, based upon the belief that Greece is a transit country rather than the migrants/refugees final destination (Skleparis & Armakolas 2016). Concurrently, the reaction of major Greek NGOs was also limited, eschewing to engage with the crisis, largely due to the fact that they were already implementing aid programs for those affected by the economic crisis in mainland of Greece, unable to immediately boost up their operations in the islands (Skleparis 2015).

Apart from that, for many donors, Greece was not a country in need. This was confirmed by a representative from the NGO Oxfam, who argued, in view of the evolving refugee crisis in Greece (2015), that "while we understand that many in Greece are in difficulty, the sort of financial support these people need is not within Oxfam's remit. Therefore, we do not currently have plans to operate in Greece" (Devaney 2015). Nevertheless, Oxfam would initiate operations in Western Greece a few months after, offering support to refugees settled in Ipeiros.

However, from September 2015, civil society actors in many different forms (e.g. professional NGOs, volunteers and ad hoc groups) embarked upon addressing the humanitarian crisis, substituting the State (Evangelinidis 2016). National NGOs such as the Greek sections of Doctors without Borders (DwB-MsF), the Hellenic Red Cross, and more local ones such as Agkalia and Starfish Foundation, along with

volunteers from all over the world, played a key role in dealing with the large flows of refugees/migrants (Skleparis 2015). National and international media welcomed the robust engagement of NGOs with praising editorials, articles and videos (Breitenbach 2016; Westcott 2015; Kouvelaki 2016; Kougiannou 2017).Yet, questions of who is in charge in coordinating the NGOs and the volunteers were placed quite early by the media (Karras 2015).

But, since a coordinating body was missing, especially in the very first stages of the crisis, 'total chaos' prevailed in the islands (Meaker 2015). Maria Galinou, one of the co-founders of the Salvation Army's Greek branch, argued that "with Greek culture, it's all or nothing. Everybody has brought so many clothes and so much food but there has been waste" (Meaker 2015). As a result, without an official coordinator, an overlap in the activities and services provided to refugees/migrants was more the rule than the exception. The image of more rescuers barging towards an incoming boat with refugees in Lesvos than the actual number of refugees in that boat gives an idea of the existing overlaps at that time.

Since mid-January 2016, the response obtained a more institutionalized and professionalized character. The Greek state, accompanied by professional national and international humanitarian NGOs, took the responsibility of addressing the humanitarian crisis. As the NGOs presence was expanding, there was limited information regarding their profiles and activities, particularly in the first year of the refugee crisis (Kitching et al. 2016). According to the media, local people testimonies and local authorities, tens of new organizations emerged since the outburst of the refugee crisis, exceeding all expectations.

The Greek state was unprepared for the arrival of such a number of actors, being impotent to regulate and coordinate them, which was confirmed by statements made by the then Minister of Migration Policy, Mr. Giannis Mouzalas (Mpourdaras 2016). Simultaneously, the Greek Ombudsman (2017) underlined the absence of coordination among the several humanitarian actors. On the onset of the refugee crisis, UNHCR, was the only agency having a relatively general overview of the number and services provided by NGOs, across Greece. From August 2015, UNHCR has been constantly publishing an updated map, entitled the 3 Ws, "Who's Doing What Where?".[3] At that point of time, this tool was the only source of information, presenting the humanitarian response in terms of actors and activities.

Under strong criticism by the media for the absence of coordination and its ability to oversight the operation of the INGOs, especially in the islands and in the camps, the State, through the Ministry of Interior, attempted to establish an official registry, underlying that only registered organizations will be provided with access to operate in the camps. On January 28, 2016, a joint Ministerial Decision banned all independent, unregistered volunteer activities in the islands and placed NGOs and other civil society actors under the supervision of the Greek state (Skleparis & Armakolas 2016). The same Ministerial Decision created a Committee to be responsible for registering, certifying and coordinating civil society actors operating in the islands (Skleparis 2016). It has been estimated, combining records from local

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[3]UNHCR. (2015). Who's Doing What Where?, Retrieved from https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/46328

authorities and ministries, that the number of INGOs involved in the refugee crisis from the very beginning was approximately 170 (Huffington post 16.9.2016).[4] However, only 70 organizations (61 Greek and 9 foreign) appeared in the Ministry's Registry.[5]

Since August 2017, most local and international NGOs have progressively started phasing out, with the Greek state slowly taking overall responsibility of the camps in the islands and in the mainland. However, in the absence of an organised exit strategy, NGOs (e.g. Caritas Hellas, Actionaid, Danish Refugee Council, Oxfam, Solidarity Now) argued that "there is no actor to hand over our work, lessons learned and our experience in the refugee crisis" (Joint agency briefing paper 2017: 8). As a result, the significant experience and knowledge acquired by (I)NGOs during the refugee crisis seems not to have been capitalised to the maximum level by other national actors. Nevertheless, several attempts to pass on relevant know-how have been recorded with IRC seemingly playing the most active role in this field (Emirza 2018).

The refugee crisis as a transformative power for the Greek NGOs

NGOs have played a critical role as service providers during the refugee crisis so far. They were considered by many experts and international organizations' officials more competent than state institutions to deal effectively with the emergency. Hence they became the primary UNHCR partners and received a significant share of the available funding from international donors (EU and UNHCR). In fact, the programmes run under UNHCR, such as the Accommodation scheme and the Cash-Based Intervention, wouldn't have been fulfilled without partnerships, primarily with (I)NGOs.

Public opinion, especially during the first steps of the crisis, shared the positive NGO image. In an opinion poll conducted by Dianeosis (2016) titled "The Refugee Crisis and the Greeks", NGOs, as far as their work on the refugee crisis and the provision of support to the incomers is concerned, received the second best grade of all engaging actors (72%), only behind the Greek Coastguard that had won much praise in the media for its "heroic interventions to save lives".

Although gradually the role of NGOs seemed to move to the background, with the Greek government assuming more responsibilities for hosting refugees, NGOs remained the principal UNHCR partner, maintaining a central role in these programmes (UNHCR, 2018).

Though the economic crisis initiated in 2010 had led to an increase of available funding towards Greek NGOs, this was not directed to exclusively one sector. Therefore, the skyrocketing of funding due to the refugee crisis that followed was unique, especially due to its (a) magnitude and (b) sectorial concentration. It is, perhaps, safe to argue that the refugee crisis became a *deus ex machine* for the Greek NGOs, not only because the Third Sector was encountering severe financial constraints and budget cutoffs beforehand, but also due to the positive effect on public acceptance.

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[4] https://www.huffingtonpost.gr/2016/09/16/koinwnia-mko-ethniko-mitrwo-_n_12044464.html
[5] https://mko.ypes.gr/home_in_mitroo_report

The European Commission (2018b) has allocated more than €393 million in emergency assistance since the beginning of 2015 to support the Greek authorities as well as international and local NGOs in order to contain the refugee and humanitarian crisis. This emergency funding came on top of the €561 million already allocated to Greece for 2014-2020 (€322.8 million from AMIF and €238.2 million from ISF).[6] In addition, in terms of the Emergency Support Instrument, the Commission released €650 million for the period from 2016 to 2018. For the period of 2015-mid 2018, the Commission has allocated the majority of its funds (49%) to UNHCR, while, surprisingly, the Greek state and (I)NGOs have been granted the same amount (20%). However, most of the UNHCR funding was allocated to (I)NGOs as well, through two programmes, the Accommodation Scheme programme and the Cash Based Intervention (CBI) programme, thus in reality the percentage of funds eventually channeled to (I)NGOs was much higher.

The vast amounts from the humanitarian response channeled from the UNHCR and the European Commission were directed to well-known national and international NGOs with a remarkable track record and with a proven ability to implement large-scale projects and to successfully deliver the outputs expected by the donors. Yet, with a closer look, other, not so well-known NGOs benefited as well.

NGO	Total Amount Received (in mn euros)
Danish Refugee Council	44.5
International Rescue Committee	28.74
IFRC	17.6
Norwegian Refugee Council	17.3
Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund	15.26
Medecins du Monde	14.3
OXFAM	13.5
Save the Children	9.65
Mercy Corps	6.57
Terre des Hommes	5.83
CARE Germany	3.73
Spanish Red Cross	2
Metadrasi	1
Smile of the Child	0.8

A striking example is Iliaktida, a local NGO operating before the crisis almost exclusively in Lesvos island. Iliaktida, prior the refugee crisis has had an annual turnover of 200,000-300,000€, a relatively small-sized NGO. Yet, under the new circumstances, Iliaktida reached an annual turnover of approximately €13 million (Dimitriou 2018).

In addition, the refugee crisis brought about a series of, rather intense, funding from private sources. Companies, philanthropic foundations and increasingly wealthy individuals financially supported initiatives tackling the crisis. Being less bureaucratic

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[6]European Commision (April, 2018). Managing Migration-EU Financial Support to Greece. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20180404-managing-migration-eu-financial-support-to-greece_en.pdf

and not excluding local population as potential beneficiaries *per se*, new organizations such as Zaatar (Orange House), Starfish Foundation or Chora were created, while informal groups once supporting Greeks affected by the economic crisis reshaped themselves as to support the thousands of refugees. Thus, even in the less formal segment of civil society, available funding did have a significant effect. Findings from Thales II survey concerning a sample of 19 NGOs operating in the refugees/migrants sector reveal that a total of 4.5 million euros were collected during 2016-7 from individual donors (Thales II 2019). This represents a 23% increase from a rather 'difficult' funding source, stressing the ability of the sector to attract funding. Theodorou (2018) mentioned that during 2016 more than 3 million US$ were rather easily raised from small-medium NGOs in comparison for example to Obama's effort to fundraise for UNHCR.

The available funding was earmarked exclusively for the refugee crisis, pushing several NGOs towards shifting their priorities (Kouvaras 2018). Yet, this shift was not so dramatic. By examining the official data of local/national organizations engaged in the refugee crisis, the conclusion is that the majority had in the past at least some experience and in some cases specialization in dealing with migrants and refugees or other vulnerable groups. Iliaktida is a good example, since it has implemented in the past programmes related to refugees/migrants, though its general focus was on people with mental disabilities, that turned to people with disabilities in general and later on to vulnerable populations. Even in the area of child protection, where Iliaktida currently operates a guest house for unaccompanied refugee minors, it has implemented a similar programme for the local population of Lesvos in the past (Dimitriou 2018). The same applies for the Greek NGO PRAKSIS, the most important partner of UNHCR since the beginning of the crisis. PRAKSIS has been specializing on the provision of social and medical services, as well as shelter to vulnerable populations including migrants.

Interestingly, however, other NGOs avoided getting engaged in the refugee crisis directly. This is particular the case of NGOs that have been founded during the economic crisis, such as the organization Ithaca Laundry. Although they did provide services to refugees in the context of their ongoing projects for vulnerable groups, they strategically abstained from a more formal and institutionalized participation for various reasons, one of which related to the bureaucratic burden and the lack of organization that characterized the refugee camps (Kountourioti 2018).

On the other hand, the increase in the available funding for the relief of refugees seems to have multiplied the competition among NGOs. Organizations with specific expertise in particular areas found themselves competing with other non-expert organizations for funding. This brought another disturbance in the ecosystem, given that the non-expert NGOs couldn't offer practically the quality of services the experienced NGOs could. On the opposite, they increased the workload of the most experienced NGOs through referrals. A striking example is the "Greek Council for Refugees" (GCR). GCR by its status focuses on the provision of legal services to refugees. Yet, similar services have been also provided by other NGOs. Although this could reduce the overall burden for GCR, the lack of experience of some NGOs resulted to an excessive workload for its team through referrals (Konstantinou 2018). The legal services budget's segmentation and the lack of coordination reduced the opportunities of the more specialized NGOs to hire more experienced personnel in

order to meet the mounting needs.

The effects of the presence of INGOs on the Greek NGO ecosystem were also quite ambivalent. In principle, the presence of INGOs could have had a positive effect on national NGOs in terms of networking, training and future collaboration. For some, this engagement created a great momentum for the Greek NGOs in terms of socialization and networking. Some of these INGOs were already present before the refugee crisis and expanded their activities and engagement by appointing experienced international staff not only to support their administrative personnel but also to engage in field operations. Other INGOs started operating in Greece on the occasion of the refugee crisis.

Interestingly, the organizations already present before the crisis had a more inclusive approach, showing willingness to build bridges of collaboration with national NGOs. On the other hand, those that appeared driven exclusively by the urgency of the humanitarian crisis seemed to avoid creating bonds with national NGOs. In any case, our interviewees agreed that INGOs' presence has had a generally positive impact, although their experience on coping with the humanitarian crisis was mainly related to different settings derived from activities in the developing world (Alverti & Miliari 2018). Some national NGOs, such as Actionaid Hellas, were 'forced' to develop relations (for instance with Caritas) in order to tackle collectively specific needs. They also run an advocacy campaign with Oxfam (Kouvaras 2018). Other INGOs assisted national NGOs in terms of capacity-building in the field. According to Ms. Konstantinou from GCR, a good example is the organization Save the Children which supported the professional development of GCR, providing, also, psychological support to the field personnel.

Though research has revealed also a negative impact, with other INGOs working in an opportunistic way and without a clear plan or strategy to foster local capacity, additional positive initiatives were highlighted. Charalampides (2018) from the Greek branch of Greenpeace pointed out a constant cooperation with Doctors without Borders: although both organizations have collaborated in the past in other occasions (like in Tahiti and Thailand), it was the first time such collaboration was launched in Greece. Greenpeace had also taken the initiative to create a front with ten other NGOs on the basis of promoting dignity and hope. Although this attempt didn't flourish, it has become the precursor for the forthcoming coalition against climate change, titled 'Break Free'.

The various formal and informal fora that have been introduced also offered the opportunity for the creation of a culture of enhanced communication and coordination among the different national and international actors (Xanthopoulou, 2018). Specialized working groups on health issues under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Health, under the coordination of the UNHCR and the Ministry of Migration, as well as groundbreaking initiatives in the local level, such as the one introduced by the Municipality of Athens, the so called ACCMR (Athens Coordination Centre for Migrants and Refugee Issues), have developed norms of mutual exchange of information and ideas and, in some cases, led to joint activities (Veizis 2018).

Nevertheless, not everything was positive from the presence of INGOs. According to Dimitriou (2018) from Iliaktida, the arrival of INGOs had also an adverse effect on

the NGO sector. INGOs, enjoying better solvency and economic capacity, were more attractive to Greek experts and specialized personnel as potential employers, not to mention that they were offering better wages. This meant that local NGOs would be deprived from very skilled prospective employees on the same time that such need was on the rise. Yet, Mr. Dimitriou underlined that with the INGOs' phase-out, such personnel moved to national NGOs carrying with them the know-how acquired.

However, though the refugee crisis promoted the professionalization of local NGOs, it took time to blend new ideas and practices with established hierarchies, old-fashioned norms and traditional organizational structures (Dimitriou 2018). Other interviewees, nevertheless, do not share this view. For them, the cooperation between national and international NGOs does not seem to have led to any significant know-how transfer (Veizis 2018).

Interestingly, networking and collaborations did not arise among LNGOs and informal groups as well. Interviews with representatives of informal groups, engaged in the provision of services in Greece, unveiled bidirectional negative perceptions between NGOs and informal solidarity networks and mistrust that hindered potential cooperation (Charalampides 2018; Representative from Love & Serve Without Boundaries 2018; Representative from Refugees' Refugee 2018).

As mentioned earlier, the availability of funding is considered as a major transformative power towards the professionalization of NGOs. Yet, for those organizations with a previous experience in implementing projects funded by international donors, the difference was not remarkable, though even these NGOs were forced to improve bureaucratic processes and introduce new operational procedures aligned to donors' demands. Thus, in many cases, an expansion of not only the field personnel but also the administrative departments has been recorded. For example, PRAKSIS had to significantly expand their accounting department from 3 to more than 18 employees (Chalaka 2018).

On the contrary, for other NGOs, like Iliaktida, this resulted in a drastic change in organizational structure. Not only did the number of personnel increase, but also external consultants were appointed. The change was so significant that there were cases of NGOs, with no prior experience, subcontracting other NGOs in order to implement specific components of a project. Local NGOs were sub-contracted by INGOs or directly by an international donor (UNHCR) and were obliged to follow specific contractual rules such as utilizing specific forms and tools for reporting, maintaining records in a professional manner, undergoing regular inspections, etc. INGOs and international donors burdened themselves with the responsibility to support local NGOs reaching the required standards and aligning them to the procedures required. To this end, some INGOS, such as IRC, have implemented, small-scale training seminars directed to their sub-contractors (Drymalitou 2018; Emirza 2018). Likewise, other organizations, even large and more professional ones such as MsF and Caritas, have embarked in a process of enhancing their personnel skills due to the immense need for efficiency.

Data from Thales II also reinforce this finding. From a total of 107 organizations, 19 were directly related to the refugees/migrants sector. From those, a 84% highlighted the existence of an organogram, job positions and job descriptions, a good indication

of professionalization in a sector that neglects such procedures and tools. It should be noted that this figure is higher than the 78% scored by NGOs taking part in the survey but with different sectorial focus as well as from the 64% score from Thales I survey (covering the period 2012-2015) (Thales II 2019).

Likewise, further analysis of the findings of Thales I (2012-2014) and Thales II (2015-2018) surveys highlights the advancement of the sector: NGOs of the first period working on the relevant field were implementing projects of a circa 500k euros per year with 21% of the budget being directed to operating expenses (expenses not related directly with operations in the field). During the next period, average yearly budget skyrocketed to 6 million euros (with international funding increasing by 541%) while operating expenses, pushed by the urgent needs in the field, decreased to 4% (Thales I 2016; Thales II 2019).

Even in the less organized, more informal, part of the new ecosystem, capacity building needs were *discovered* and, though not a top priority, attempts to cover some of them were made. For example, various refugee crisis related organizations contacted HIGGS, an organization providing capacity building to NGOs, for support, while CampFire Innovation, a NGO created solely for supporting small-medium NGOs operating in the refugee sector as well as relevant informal groups, was created (Emirza 2018). Yet, again, for some it is debatable whether professionalization was always a positive development, leading to a transformation of their original goals and their spontaneous character (Stewart 2016: 2).

Last but not least, there is a consensus among our interviewees that the refugee crisis has mobilized a greater number of volunteers. People outside and inside Greece enthusiastically took the initiative to support refugees, also reinforced by the inadequate response by the state. Many people in Molyvos, Lesvos, for example, the main entry gates for refugees during 2015-6, took the initiative to support incoming people mooring on the shores of the island. As transporting them to the port of Lesvos was initially illegal, people would gather in Molyvos with limited resources: locals would prepare them meals and try to accommodate basic needs. This image, massively disseminated through social media, mobilized numerous people that went to Lesvos to help. Likewise, many people across Greece supported the big masses moving from Southern Greece to Idomeni and from there to Northern Europe. Such people would act on their own initiative, formulating informal groups or, some of them, joining existing NGOs. Ms. Theodorou highlighted that more than 24.000 volunteers supported more than 100 organizations during the past years, with 80% of them coming from outside Greece. In addition, according to Thales II, on average each NGO focusing on the refugees/migrants sector was supported by 1.629 volunteers, up by circa 78% from the 923 volunteers per organization during the 2012-2015 period (Thales II 2019).

Although this important volunteers' movement has been recorded, it has taken a looser form mostly outside the official camps. Besides, the available funding has worked as a deterrent factor since only official personnel from NGOs could operate within the camps (Kouvaras 2018). In addition, after the initial period one could find two tiers of people working in the field: the unpaid volunteer mobilized by a sentiment of solidarity and the well- paid NGO employee. This contradiction created obstacles of further increasing the wave of local volunteers. Furthermore, it heightened the debate

between organized and un-organized responses to the crisis: at times NGOs were portrayed as part of a 'system' that does not really support refugees, as simply sub-contractors for the provision of social services, contrary to what volunteers' groups could achieve.

In general, NGOs retained their regular volunteers, but since the number of personnel increased dramatically, the impact of volunteers sharply decreased (Dimitriou 2018). In addition, another characteristic of the 'new' volunteers was that they had specific objectives and motivation for offering their time, money and effort, rather than to cover the needs of organizations. After all, the refugee crisis images promised for real action so being asked to support the organization of resources in a warehouse seemed to many unfulfilling (Chalaka 2018).

Conclusion

The refugee crisis has affected the Greek NGO ecosystem. Yet the impact varied extensively depending on the type of organization under focus. The findings indicate that in general, the impact was both positive and negative, unequal in respective to different NGOs and much depending on the specific characteristics and behaviors of certain actors. However, those NGOs affected the most, were small and medium-sized ones.

In terms of thematic scope (H1), it appears that the refugee crisis and the subsequent availability of funding have led small and-medium sized NGOs to a shift of priorities. Yet, this change was not widespread, since most of them had already a track record in providing support to vulnerable groups, including migrants and refugees. Still, some NGOs have redirected part of their activities towards the refugee crisis, to a large extent responding to the availability of funding. A few have reframed their mission, downsizing their support to other vulnerable groups in order to focus on migrants and refugees. For most LNGOs, the change of direction and focus was not contradictory to their mandate: "We could not stay idle as the crisis evolved, we are people of taking a stand irrespective in the very end of the cause" most of our interviewees would say. However, only MsF decided to reject funding. Being consistent with its core mission statement and reacting to the EU-Turkish Deal that was accused as irreconcilable with human rights values, MsF refused to accept EU funding, concentrating its operations mostly outside the refugee camps (MSF 2016).

Before 2015, several Greek NGOs faced an existential crisis due to the reduction of institutional and private funding as a result of the economic crisis. In turn and given the rising needs for social support, this led to a growing rivalry for securing scarce financial resources (H2). As a result, the availability of funding for the relief of the refugees was something that social-providing NGOs could hardly resist. In turn, financial competition and the initial dearth of coordination mechanisms combined with the immediate needs of the refugee population led to much project overlapping and a spatially unbalanced set of services. Various LNGOs provided identical services, such as psychological support, translation services legal counseling and non-formal education to the same beneficiaries with very little knowledge of what other NGOs were doing.

The presence of INGOs has also affected the Greek NGO ecosystem in various ways

(H3). LNGO staff and volunteers were given the chance to sit around the same table with representatives of international NGOs and donors during various meetings organized by the UNHCR and other coordination authorities. This has provided them with opportunities of building ties with INGOs. INGOs brought with them a long experience of responding to similar crises in other parts of the world. These meetings and all informal exchanges of information and practices acted as a training process for Greek NGOs.

Nevertheless, joint endeavors were limited and even the relatively few instances of cooperation between INGOs and LNGOs were deeply unequal, with the latter acting mainly as sub-contractors. INGOs preferred to cooperate in grand-scale projects with other INGOs and local authorities rather than to team up with LNGOs. A striking example is the very ambitious and innovative project "Curing the Limbo", where IRC and CRS joined forces with the Municipality of Athens.[7] While numerous Greek NGOs participated in projects targeting to the relief of refugees, yet, these two INGOs have not shown any interest in collaborating with them. Even in cases where INGOs provided LNGOs with capacity building, training and other services (as mentioned earlier on the case of GCR and Save the Children), these interactions have not advanced further to a deeper relationship, not even leaving hope for the creation of a partnership that could last in time.

Thus, the density of transnational networking and the development of partnerships were disappointing. In fact, well-established Greek NGOs had already been engaged with some INGOs in the implementation of other projects in the past and, hence, the refugee crisis worked only to the direction of re-affirming these bonds. In general, INGOs did not show any particular interest in interacting with LNGOs. After all, their initial planning was for a short-term presence in Greece, particularly during the peak of the refugee crisis.

We have noted changes in the administrative structures of local/national NGOs (H4). Again, these were more obvious in small and medium-sized organizations which, in order to meet the needs of the projects and the criteria of specific international donors, proceeded to drastic administrative changes including appointing experts with proven experience in project management and in the development of operating procedures. New staff was hired, while in some cases the multiplication of their activities in different geographic areas required subcontracting to other LNGOs.

A noteworthy effect is the networking of professionals. The presence of INGOs and their international staff has presented a great opportunity for Greek professionals to exchange information and best practices at an individual basis. INGOs hired Greek professionals offering attractive salaries. Although at the very beginning this affected negatively the LNGO ecosystem, it seems later to have benefitted LNGOs since, with the gradual disengagement of INGOs, these professionals moved to LNGOs bringing with them new experiences and a valuable expertise.

Lastly, a massive movement of ordinary people seeking to offer either in kind or with personal work to refugees (H5) has been recorded, especially during the peak of the

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[7]https://curingthelimbo.gr/

crisis with the daily disembarkation of hundreds of people in the islands, particularly in Lesvos. The shocking images in the media played a significant role in mobilizing volunteers.

Several grassroots organizations and associations were formed in the islands of the eastern Aegean as well as in Athens, Eidomeni and a few other locations in 2015-6, providing assistance to refugees and migrants arriving from Turkey. Many members of these groups perceived themselves in moral terms, as a progressive 'solidarity movement', essentially different from the 'non-political professionalized philanthropy' of international and national NGOs. However, as the numbers of refugees and migrants increased, the members of these informal 'solidarity groups' faced the enmity of the local communities and found themselves increasingly isolated. Moreover, their lack of expertise and experience in needs assessment, project implementation and mobilization of resources gradually became more apparent as EU and UN-funded NGO projects multiplied. At the same time, some international NGOs (like the Doctors without Borders) became more and more critical of EU migration policies and campaigned against them. Advocacy by established and well-known NGOs left very little political space for grassroots groups. As a result, their initial 'internationalism' was abandoned. Gradually politicization was 'localized', leading to the adoption of typical Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) discourses (asking national authorities to 'relieve' the islands from a 'refugee burden'). This in turn has led into a convergence of local extreme left and extreme right-wing stances. Recent research seems to lead to the conclusion that this may have a lasting effect, inducing 'natives' hostility toward refugees, migrants, and Muslim minorities; support for restrictive asylum and immigration policies; and political engagement to effect such exclusionary policies" (Hangartner 2019).

In the media, the 'solidarity of generous Greeks' narrative survived, but became individualized and de-politicized, this time focusing on 'heroic grandmothers welcoming refugees'. In a few cases, grassroot groups chose to become formal humanitarian non-governmental organizations. As the grassroot movements, declined, many of their volunteers were hired by the state to work in the refugee camps while some moved to LNGOs and, to a lesser extent, INGOs.

Perhaps the most remarkable challenge the NGOs will face has not arrived yet and is related to the dependency culture connected to the generally easy access to funding that the refugee crisis has brought. NGOs that have expanded the most, need now to find alternative ways to finance their activities. If, however, the positive effects of the refugee crisis, such as professionalization, networking, and organizational modernization, to the extent that they took place, are used wisely, perhaps a new promising era for the Greek NGO ecosystem will emerge. If not, many small and -medium-sized LNGOs will be brought again in front of an existential crisis similar to the one they have faced a few years ago due to the economic crisis.

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