

**Implementation of EU Environmental Policy: Role of Domestic Mobilization of Social
Actors in Southern Member State
Greece as a Case study**

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Introduction

The implementation of EU Environmental Policy is a highly complex process. It involves the Member States, the European Commission and Domestic Social Actors such as the environmental groups, the media as well as other interests groups like the business groups and industries.

Previous research have shown that domestic mobilization by social actors can play a significant role in achieving better implementation of EU Environmental Policy in member states. Domestic mobilization of social actors like the environmental groups plays a dual role where they pressure member states to implement and act as a source of information by informing the European Commission of any incorrect implementation (Borzel 2000: 142).

Southern member states like Italy, Spain and Greece have always been known to have problems implementing EU Environmental Policy. Studies have shown that this can be attributed to the low level of domestic mobilization in these countries where the environmental groups are weak and they lack of resources as well as environmental awareness (Borzel 2000: 160).

While resources as well as environmental awareness in environmental groups are important factors and may result in member states achieving better implementation of EU Environmental Policy, other factors like the opportunities and constraints provided by the EU are also important in shaping the capability of the environmental groups to mobilize. Even though this paper is based on ongoing research project, the examples and information

presented try to illustrate that the strength of environmental groups to mobilize depend greatly on the opportunities and constraints provided by the EU.

Focusing on Greece as a case study, this paper attempts to highlight relation or interaction between environmental groups and the EU. The constraints and opportunities of EU structures will shape and transform the environmental groups. I argue that these relations will affect the way environmental groups mobilize and their capability to influence i.e. to exert pressure on the government and to act as a monitoring system for any implementation problems. In other words, the environmental groups' capacity to exert influence is highly shaped their interaction with the EU.

This paper has been divided into five parts. Following this introduction, part two looks at the role of domestic social actors on the implementation of EU Environmental Policy and the third part provides an overview of the environmental groups in Greece. The fourth part will show how opportunity structures and constraints provided by the EU affect the mobilization of environmental groups in Greece. The final part will summarize the findings.

Role of Domestic Social Actors on the Implementation of EU Environmental Policy

Implementation entails the process of giving effect to EU environmental policy at the national level. It is achieved when EU legislation is enacted into national statute and administrative practice. Implementation also includes practical application as well as enforcement. The implementation of EU Environmental policy involves a complex set of interactions between the European Union institutions and the political systems of member states.

Studies have been done to show the role of domestic mobilization of social actors in achieving better implementation of EU Environmental Policy. The mobilization of domestic social actors plays a significant role in pressurizing public administration to implement EU Environmental policies effectively (Borzel 2000: 142). As the EU lacks its own monitoring system, domestic mobilization by social actor also act as a monitoring body where they inform the EU of any implementation problems in the member states (Borzel 2000: 148) .

One of the channels where domestic social actors can mobilize and exert pressure is through environmental groups. Environmental groups can draw attention of public authorities at the national and the European level as well as the public to occurrence of incorrect implementation with EU Environmental legislation (Borzel 2000: 148). Domestic mobilization is most effective when it is able to link up with the European Commission which may push an EU policy from above by opening infringement proceedings against non-compliant member state's authorities (Borzel 2000: 148).

Low domestic mobilization, where the environmental organizations are weak will more likely to contribute to low level of implementation in member states (Borzel 2000: 148).

Many literatures have raised the fact that the environmental groups in Southern Member States like Spain, Italy and Greece are weak which can be seen as a contributing factor towards the rather low implementation of EU Environmental Policy in these countries.

Greece does not prove to have an outstanding implementation record when it comes to EU Environmental policy. Greece has a centralized state structure and where there is low interconnection or network among social actors. Environmental groups in Greece often have limited access to the Greek state thus are unable to influence policy making effectively. However, the situation is increasingly changing due to the opportunities provided by the EU.

Environmental Groups in Greece

Based on national data, environmental groups in Greece can be categorized into three groups. However this paper will only focus on the first two types, because environmental groups in Southern Europe can mainly be categorized into environmental organizations and local or grassroots environmental groups (Kousis & Dimopoulou, 2000). Most environmental organizations in Greece were founded in the mid 1980s or early 1990s while grassroots environmental groups have flourished since the end of military dictatorships in the 1970s (Kousis & Dimopoulou, 2000).

The first type includes the 12 top environmental organizations that have more than 1,000 members each and obtained funds from the EU mostly from the LIFE programs. They also participate and share membership in EU environmental bodies like the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and they deal mostly with wildlife protection. Some of these organizations include organizations like Arktoouros, World Life Fund, Bird Life Greece, Nea Oikologia, EKPIZO, Helmepea, Elliniki Etairia and HSPN (Kousis et al., 2008: 1639).

The 12 environmental groups can be seen as the core group and they often play a consultative role in relation to the EU and at the member states level. They often promote EU environmental policy on the ground by communicating EU environmental policies to their members. They also provide information to the EU by highlighting any environmental problems in the state. These environmental organizations also carry out activities in order to raise public awareness through media campaigns as well as various environmental projects. Members of the core group also participate in the national alliances and have access to the

state although limited and are given specific responsibilities on conservation issues and have initiated and spearheaded all the major environmental campaigns of the nineties in Greece.

The second type, which is the local or grassroots environmental groups, makes up the majority of the environmental groups in Greece. They rely mostly on volunteers and operate outside of metropolitan areas with minimal resources. These groups normally have no access to state resources or EU funding (Kousis et al., 2008: 1639).

The Greek environmental organizations do not constitute a unified body. They differ in the way they mobilize and the way they deal with their environmental problems. The core organizations tend to adopt a more moderate tactics by addressing powerful actors in control of sources and activities that will enable them to intervene in the ecosystem (Kousis et al., 2008: 1639). Local environmental groups on the other hand, remain more confrontational and directly challenging those actors. Unlike professionally organized mobilization, informal mobilizations carried out by the grassroots environmental groups are usually massive but temporary and are usually not supported by larger environmental organizations.

Environmental Groups in Greece and the European Union

The opportunities and constraints of EU structures have shaped and transformed the environmental groups in Greece. The examples in the rest of the paper will depict how opportunities and constraints provided by the EU are related to the development of environmental groups in Greece and how it influences the way they mobilize.

One opportunity structure can be seen in terms of funding provided by the EU towards the environmental organizations in Greece. The EU provides funding opportunities through an

umbrella organization like the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) where environmental groups from Greece become members and work closely with EEB on environmental campaigns and projects. EEB serves as a single organization representative of European environmental groups that could serve as a channel of communication between other environmental groups and EC vice versa (Rootes 2003: 250). The EEB provide their Greek environmental groups with financial and manpower assistance to organize environmental campaigns and projects in Greece.

Apart from that, environmental organizations in Greece also receive funding mostly through the LIFE projects. The EU has also supported environmental organizations by assisting with specific information and awareness campaigns on environmental issues. The EC financial support has mainly been granted to environmental organizations that focus on priorities of EC programs. The core group which includes the 12 environmental organizations in Greece that have managed to secure EU funding lead all the major campaigns in Greece (Kousis et al., 2008: 1639).

Funds from the EU have enabled these environmental organizations to mobilize by carrying out environmental campaigns and projects in the effort to raise environmental awareness in Greece as well as promoting EU Environmental Policies. The WWF in Greece for example, has used the funds in order to carry out scientific research in order to influence environmental policymaking in Greece. Environmental Organizations like the Elliniki Etairia also carry out environmental projects like the *'Seminar on Awareness Raising on Access to Environmental Information in Greece'* and *'Project on Expanding Awareness in the Cohesion Countries of the Use and Potential of Economic Instruments for Environmental policy and Management'* which are funded by the EU.

Since the EU provides funding to the environmental groups but assigns to the state the role of inspector of the product, collaborations between the environmental organizations and the ministries have been especially encouraged and promoted by the EU. By having these collaborations, the EU has provided the environmental organizations in Greece an opening or access to the Greek government.

Environmental organizations in Greece have also become professionalized bodies with the appropriate structures and the scientific staff. A good part of the state's interaction with the environmental organizations is focused on EU programs such as LIFE. Collaborations among environmental organizations and the Ministries of Labour YPEHODE have also been initiated through EU programs and the wider strategies of the European Union regarding development (Kousis 2004: 401).

Access to the Greek state from the EU has allowed environmental organizations to monitor policy implementation closely. For example, every year the WWF in Greece issue a report entitled '*Commitments without Legislation: Environmental Legislation in Greece*' in which they report the development of implementation of EU Environmental policy that have taken over the course of the year. Apart from that, they also issue a newsletter entitled '*Did you know....*' every month which they send to all MPs and Greek MEPs informing them of the latest environmental crisis in Greece (Christopoulou 2009). They also inform policy makers in Greece about new scientific findings and solutions to some of the environmental problems.

Access to the state, due to various collaborations organized by the EU has also allowed environmental NGOs to engage in dialogue, provide their expertise and voice their concerns to the government.

Another example can be seen in the implementation of Environmental Impact Assessment in Greece. In the EIA on the Drainage of the River Aroanios project, environmental organizations like the OIKIPA acted in cooperation with other local authorities. In spite of the high level of fragmentation of the administration no cooperation problems were encountered in the EIA procedure (Heinelt et. al 2001: 303). The environmental organizations were assigned an important position by central government departments as advocates of environmental protection who were competent to introduce important environmental issues to the EIA debate. During the EIA debate, in an effort to ensure that the EIA was implemented correctly, the environmental organizations like the OIKIPA also at times resort to media campaigns by mobilizing the public to support their cause (Heinelt et. al 2001: 303).

Apart from that, the increasing role that the EU gives to the local authorities in terms of carrying out certain environmental projects has provided the environmental organizations in Greece a powerful ally when carrying out environmental projects and campaigns. Alliance with local authorities allowed the environmental organizations to check specific governmental projects and in the long run influence the policy underlying them. The availability of such allies gave environmental organizations great leverage. They have consequently taken the lead in many environmental protests, an early example being the successful resistance to the construction of a nuclear reactor at Carystos in Euboea (Close 1998: 59). In the early 1990s they have also proved their increasing value in environmental

management, notable examples being the organizations programs for recycling waste (Close 1998: 59).

Even though particular authorities still on occasion opposed environmentalist aims, this changed brought about by the EU has provided an avenue for environmental organizations to at least make a difference in the area of environmental policy Greece.

The funds provided by the EU have also acted as a constraint to the environmental groups in Greece. The funds have forced environmental organizations in Greece to compete with each other (Botetzagias 2000: 1). Apart from that, the funds have also widened the gap between the core organizations and the grassroots environmental groups where there is already very little interaction amongst them. This has affected cooperation and collaboration among the environmental groups in Greece which resulted in weak mobilization.

Evidence in Greece has shown that cooperation with other environmental organizations and grassroots environmental groups could add strength to mobilization and may often result in success. The Acheloos Dam project in Greece, where the environmental NGOs launched a massive campaign against the project, illustrated that much of the information which Greeks NGOs conveyed to their European counterparts during the campaigns came from grassroots sources as they were more in touch with the local communities (Close 1998: 66).

The core environmental organizations rely on the grassroots environmental groups for information as they have a closer link to the public or community in their area. They also have better chances of mobilizing the public to support their cause. Combination of pressure from the public, the core and the grassroots environmental groups would normally bring

successful results. Better relations with the grassroots environmental groups are more likely to increase the capability of environmental groups in Greece.

Even though the relation between the environmental organizations and the Greek state has considerably improved due to the efforts by the EU, cooperation with the government is still fairly limited. In the event that the environmental organizations fail to get a positive response from the state they have the opportunity to influence or to make a difference by turning to the European level for action.

Environmental organizations act as a consultant to the EU when it comes to environmental issues. The rise of domestic issues on international agendas has been explained with reference to the political activism of domestic groups and officials that turn to the European level in order to overcome domestic political constraints. The EU then simply becomes an alternative venue for environmental and other interest groups to push for their preferred policies. Literature on political contention and political protest has also argued that social movements and interests groups will turn to European level when the political opportunity structure such as the EU is more favorable than the domestic level (Princen 2007: 27).

An example of this can be seen in the research done by Koutalakis where he found that many environmental organizations in Greece used the complaint procedures provided by the EU in an effort to pressure the government to comply with certain environmental standards. Most of these organizations appear to be members of the EEB where they are increasingly active in disseminating information and assisting environmental organizations in issues related to the complaint procedure (Koutalakis, 2003:768).

Access to the EU has also allowed environmental groups to form coalitions with actors from the EU institutions, which have an institutional interest in expanding the EU's range of activities.

An example of coalitions with the EU institutions can be seen in the Acheloos Dam project. The Dam project of the Acheloos River shows how environmental groups mobilized using their network with other European environmental organizations like the EEB and some of its other members across Europe. The building of the Acheloos Dam project was declared by the Greek's government as a national interest project. The project was supposed to bring economic benefits to the country where the water from the Acheloos River could be diverted to irrigate the cotton crops in Greece. Initially, the project received strong support from the EU and the EU had also agreed to provide funds and resources for the project.

However, environmental assessment has shown that the project would bring massive environmental damage like soil erosions and landslides. Apart from that, it would also cause the destructions of particular habitats, like certain species of fish which are protected under the EU Environment Regulation.

The project quickly drew a major opposition from environmental groups in Greece. Campaign began with WWF Greece, Hellenic Ornithological Society and Hellenic society (Close 1998: 66). As these organizations are members of the EEB and have close link to the EU, they managed to gather support from other environmental organizations in Greece.

Even though the Greek government continued the project, the campaigns and mobilization led by the environmental organizations and the grassroots environmental groups had resulted in EU withdrawing funds for the project. The campaign was also able to show how funds from the EU were being misused by the Greek's government.

Apart from that, the campaign of the Acheloos project also managed to draw support from other European environmental organizations such as the Royal Society for the protection of Birds (RSPB) and its affiliate Birdlife international which lobbied intensively against the project (Close 1998: 67). Apart from that, the RSPB also send criticisms to the Commission with regard to the project.

One thing that has to be noted was the fact that the grassroots environmental groups also played a vital part in providing information to the environmental NGOs about the situation on the ground. The Acheloos case also prove to show the importance of cooperation and coalition among the environmental groups when it comes to influencing successful outcomes.

Conclusion

Environmental groups are most often influenced by the changes in the political opportunity structure. Many have pursued their goals through the European Union, taking advantage of the new opportunities provided by the EU structure (Kousis 2001: 143)

The examples in the rest of the paper have depicted how opportunities and constraints provided by the EU are related to the development of environmental groups in Greece. The strength of environmental groups to mobilize is highly shaped by the opportunities and constraints provide by the EU.

In Greece, one the EU provides opportunities such as funding towards the core environmental organizations. These environmental organizations often carry out environmental projects by the EU and they also serve as a source of information particularly in cases where there are breaches of environmental laws in accordance with EU Environmental Directives. Funding

has transformed the environmental organizations in Greece into a more structured and professional bodies. Apart from that funds have also enabled them to carry out various environmental projects in collaboration with the EU and the Greek state. Such collaborations have opened the doors of the Greek government to allow the participation of environmental groups in influencing policy making. This was crucial as it allowed environmental organizations to monitor closely the implementation of EU environmental policy in Greece.

Funds from the EU have also acted as a constraint where environmental groups compete amongst each other. Competition for funds has resulted in increased hostility among environmental groups which causes further friction and lack of cooperation which could be important when mobilizing and pressuring the government to implement and comply with certain environmental standards. Cooperation and coalition with the grassroots environmental groups in particular could be crucial as they could provide information on the ground and might be more influential in mobilizing the local communities on certain environmental issue.

The EU also acts as a body where environmental organizations can have their voice heard when it comes to environmental degradation in member states. The Greek government which can be described as highly centralized has provided little opportunity for the environmental groups to get cooperation from the government. The relation between environmental groups and the government has in recent years improved due opportunities provided by the EU but access to the state is still fairly limited. In cases where environmental groups do not get a positive response from the government they usually channel their complaints to the EU. Avenues for complaints have shaped the way the environmental groups mobilizes where they

source the EU with necessary information in order for action to be taken against governments that do not comply to EU environmental directives.

Research has shown that domestic mobilization of social actors like the environmental groups can play a significant role in achieving better implementation in member states. But what shapes their capability to pressure and to monitor implementation in member states?

In this paper focusing on environmental groups in Greece, the examples shown have illustrated that the capability of environmental groups to influence is highly shaped by the opportunities and constraints provided by the EU.

To a certain extent, EU opportunities have provided strength to environmental groups in Greece particularly to the 12 core environmental organizations. Funds and access to the EU have enabled these organizations to transform themselves into more structured and professionalized organizations. Opportunities by the EU have in a lot of ways helped to open avenues for environmental groups to influence the Greek state. This factor has also enabled them to mobilize better when it comes to influencing policy making.

However, only some environmental groups have benefited from the opportunities from the EU. Evidence has shown that funds from the EU have resulted in rivalry amongst the environmental groups in Greece. There have also been cases where the funds were misused by the state. As mobilization is stronger when there is cooperation among environmental groups, better distribution of funds may help strengthen other environmental groups in which may result in better implementation of EU Environmental Policy in Greece.

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