

ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN GREECE

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Introduction

In this paper we intend to trace the organisational transformations of Greek environmental organisations since the 1970s. In the first section, we are going to discuss the transformations of environmental organisations. Afterwards, we attempt to describe the political context in Greece. Next, we move to explore the institutionalisation trends of environmental organisations in Greece in the context of changes in the Greek society and polity in parallel of the Europeanisation of Greece. At the end, we consider the ‘Mediterranean syndrome’ that southern European countries are supposed to suffer from, namely, delay in environmental policy, which is usually attributed to the reactive character of environmental policy formulation and the fragmented administrative structures.

1. Transformations of environmental organisations

According to Andrew Jamison (1996, pp. 240-1), the knowledge interests of environmentalism in the developed countries can be conceptualised in three main

ways: “as a social cosmology, a set of technological criteria, and a way of organizing the production and dissemination of environmental knowledge” (p. 240), three ways which have been radically transformed from the 1970s to the 1990s, transforming environmentalism “from a critical social movement into an influential science and technology network of actors”. In fact:

- Concerning the cosmological dimension, environmentalists in the 1970s was proclaiming systemic holism (‘ecologism’), i.e., a new world-view, in which nature was conceived as a whole, earth as one, and natural processes in one place as affecting the environment thousand miles away. In the 1990s, as Jamison argues, globalism and the programme of ‘sustainable development’ are succeeding the previous holistic world-views.
- On the technological dimension, environmental movements in the 1970s were criticising certain technologies, for example, nuclear power, petrochemicals, etc., while they were proposing alternative criteria for technological development, such as resource conservation, recycling of wastes, use of renewable energy, small scale, etc. Subsequently, in the 1990s, environmental organisation became proponents of technological innovations of ‘clean production’.
- In terms of organising and disseminating environmental knowledge, environmental movements in the 1970s were against the rule of expert elites, while they were favouring traditional approaches to science and technology and encouraging participatory grass roots initiatives. Moreover, they were developing an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge, trying to combine natural and social science into innovative kinds of ‘human ecology’. On the contrary, in the course of the 1990s, environmentalism was transformed into professional, institutionalised and expert-dominated organisational forms.

Decline of contentious mobilisations

There are many examples of European environmental organisations (like Italia Nostra in Italy, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the UK, to mention only a few), which have chosen non-confrontational styles of action, relying more on their members’ subscriptions than their militant engagement. Similarly, many environmentalists originally with a radical and participatory profile in the 1970s and the early 1980s seem to have gradually shifted their orientation from protest to pressure, as many commentators of the transformations of environmentalism attest. For instance, some of the observed changes by Diani and Donati (1999, pp. 17-20) are:

- Political ecology organisations have abandoned contentious mobilisations in favour of referenda, petitioning campaigns, ‘green shareholding’, voluntary action in defence of the environment, lobbying, educational campaigns and production of educational and commercial products like books and videotapes.
- They have even granted their logos to commercial products as a form of ‘eco-label’ in exchange of money or support.
- In parallel, they have been accepted, at least to some extent, to institutional policy bodies and procedures or they have provided these bodies with their expert advice. Of course, such traits and trends require legitimisation and respectability, which

are not compatible with strong disruptive tactics, which was followed originally by the contentious movements.

Non-participatory trends and centralisation

In parallel to the decline of contentious mobilisations, environmental movement organisations (EMOs) seem to move from participatory to professionalised modes of operation, as some comparative studies suggest. Professional activists increasingly control campaign planning and co-ordination (Diani & Donati, 1999, pp. 20). Many employees of ecology groups' headquarters are trained in public relations, communication and journalism while others have higher education in science or law (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the criteria for recruitment of these people are increasingly professional rather than just their previous experience in environmental issues or other forms of political activism (*ibid.*). Members or supporters of environmental groups are in most cases involved in their organisations' actions without direct mobilisation but only through communication in mailing lists and appeals for subscription renewal (*ibid.*).

The trend towards professionalism is accompanied by the increase in the division of labour and the functional differentiation within EMOs, which in turn has increased the control of headquarters over campaigns and actions, even when the issues at hand are clearly local in nature (Diani & Donati, 1999, p. 19). The mission of local branches of EMOs is in many cases fund-raising. But organisational survival and autonomy of EMOs increasingly depend on sources other than memberships or public and corporate funding (*ibid.*).

The increasing professional structures of EMOs force them to compete with each other in order to attract financial resources from the same pool of potential supporters (Diani & Donati, 1999, p. 20). This developing competition discourages integration and collaboration within the movement (*ibid.*). As Diani and Donati argue in relation to the German case, the outcome may be that the mobilisation capacity of the movement decreases as a whole (*ibid.*).

Grass-root activism revisited

Although the aforementioned traits and trends of EMOs suggest that these organisations are moving from a participatory contentious model towards institutionalisation along with a gradually prevailing model of public interest lobby, there is some evidence for scepticism on these trends (Diani & Donati, 1999, p. 21). Indeed, there is evidence of grass-roots participation in the form of voluntary work rather than disruptive voluntary action (Diani & Donati, 1999, p. 18). Moreover, new participatory protest organizations or networks of groups were spawned in the 1990s (Diani & Donati, 1999, p. 21). For example, confrontational grass-root mobilisations occurred repeatedly in the United Kingdom in the 1990s promoted by, amongst others, Earth First!, the Environmental Liberation Front and anti-road coalitions (*ibid.*). In other European countries, like Ireland, Italy and Germany, local conflicts and protests were also significant. Furthermore, Diani and Donati report national networks of groups, like Women's Environmental Network in Britain and Ireland,

that favour voluntary, grass-roots participation rather than professional activism (*ibid.*).

By this revival of grass-roots groups and participatory protest organisations, one witnesses the unease created by the growing institutionalisation of major environmental actors in the periphery of the environmental movement (Diani & Donati, 1999, p. 22). Furthermore, major national EMOs have not played any substantive role in promoting local mobilizations but rather they have represented their local coalitions in media and institutions: they have acted as ‘institutional allies’ giving local conflicts a greater visibility (*ibid.*).

2. Political contexts in Greece

Opportunities for the emergence of social movements depend on multiple contexts, such as institutional, cultural and political, over which differences among social movements in different countries can be analysed. Here, we will refer to the political contexts in Greece, which have shaped Greek environmentalism. In particular, we will discuss the effect of such factors as political tradition, political culture and the role of the state in Greece.

Undoubtedly, comparing Greek environmentalism with corresponding western European cases, what one witnesses in Greece is a quasi-movement rather than a well-established and deep-rooted green movement (Demertzis, 1995, p. 194). Mass involvement as well as durable support and attractiveness are the fundamental (*sine qua non*) but missing elements for the development of an environmental social movement in Greece, which may be related to the lack of environmental consciousness in Greece (Demertzis, 1995, p. 196).

A number of factors can be mentioned as reasons for the lack of Greek environmentalism. First, the feeble economic situation of Greece did not leave much room for environmental protection to culminate in public debates during the post-war era. The rapid economic development, which lasted until the early 1970s, had modernised aggressively the Greek society. This modernisation was largely based on small manufacturing, middle range industry, tourism, construction and massive remittances of Greek immigrants (Demertzis, 1995, p. 196). In parallel, Greek economy suffered, and to a certain degree still suffers, from a parasitic or ‘grey’ economic activity. These factors have led to an unprecedented vertical and horizontal social mobility that has shattered traditional lifestyles and identities and have resulted a rapid and unplanned urbanisation (Demertzis, 1995, p. 197).

Second, Greek modernisation has contributed to the emergence of middle social layers with atomistic and state-oriented behaviour, which is related to the traditional Greek ‘statism’ (Mouzelis, 1986; Sotiropoulos, 1995). Diachronically, a common feature of the Greek polity is its over-concentrated administrative structure. This is due to both historical and political reasons. On the one hand, there are legacies of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires and the belated development of the Greek bourgeoisie (Demertzis, 1995, p. 197). On the other hand, the hierarchical (top-down) model of governance as well as the recurring influence of ‘clientelism’ both followed

and reflected the weakness of the Greek civil society. In fact, the clientelist influence is usually presented as the reason of the non-participatory character of the Greek political culture (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 10).

The relationship between environment and the state represents a highly debated topic due to the fact that there exist various national environmental policy implementations as well as national responses to transnational policy-making formed from such supranational institutions as the EU (Kousis, 1994). In particular, the Greek state is usually described as actively intervening in social relations playing the role of a powerful distributor of incomes, resources and advantages of all kinds (Demertzis, 1995, p. 197). Conservative or populist political elites, manifested through the two dominant parties in Greece in the last 25 years, have been using the state apparatus as a tool for an easy absorption of unemployment as well as a means to secure potential clientele. This recurring practice led governmental parties to adopt non-productive financial, protective and distributive policies (*ibid.*). In turn, these policies have reproduced the societal dependence on the state.

Another important component of Greek political culture is 'partyiness'. Greek scholars have noted the hegemony of parties as political institutions especially after the fall of military junta and the restoration of democracy in 1974 (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 12). Partyiness can be regarded as determinant of political opportunities for the rise of social movements, like the environmental, namely that social problems can become political issues in Greece only when they are intermediated by political parties (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 12).

3. Greek environmentalism in the 1970s

Greek environmentalism has essentially started during the mid 1970s (Demertzis, 1995, p. 194). In this infantile period, at least eight environmental mobilisations were recorded. Among them are the cases of Megara (1973), Volos (1975), Pylos (1975) and Karystos (1977-1979) (Demertzis, 1995, p. 194). They were all grass-roots mobilisations aiming to prevent new industrial installations (*ibid.*). These mobilisations included demonstrations, strikes, public debates and propagation of demands and ideas through local media. They signalled the first time for environmental problems to appear as social problems. Despite the rapid post-war industrial development, disorganised urbanisation etc. that had already caused serious environmental damages, it was only at that particular time and in those particular places that environmental problems became social problems concerning local citizens (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 13). Curiously, other industrialised and environmentally degenerated cities like Elefsis, Megalopoli, Ptolemaes as well as areas near Athens and Thessaloniki had never experienced environmental mobilisations (*ibid.*).

A first common feature of all the eight cases during this period was that the motivation of protests was not deep ecology but rather 'simple environmentalism' (Demertzis, 1995, p. 195). Moreover, the protection of environment was conceived firstly in instrumental/rewards terms and afterwards in terms of generalised beliefs or values (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 14). Protesters were expressing vested interests, that is, they were trying to protect their established economic roles

and jobs in the primary and tertiary sectors of the economy, which they regarded to be threatened by industrial expansion.

The factors facilitating the emergence of these mobilisations at that particular time and not before in more polluted areas can be traced to socio-economic structural conditions and the structure of opportunities (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 15). The former are related to economic security in rural areas, which became feasible for the first time in the mid 1970s. Indeed, the rapid economic growth of Greece over the period 1960-1980 allowed rural areas to restore a certain balance regarding economic security and employment after decades of massive exodus, migration and urbanisation (*ibid.*). This economic upgrading had an impact on people's attitudes towards environmental exploitation. New industrial installations were no longer hailed as offering new jobs to the local population but rather as putting into risk the environment and, subsequently, the already established economic roles and prosperity of local people (*ibid.*).

The structure of political opportunities was influenced by the fall of military junta in 1974 and the subsequent restoration of parliamentary democracy as well as the massive political involvement of citizens that led to a political system open to various social demands and political protests (Alexandropoulos and Serdedakis, 2000, p. 16). In parallel, the first environmental or ecological groups made their appearance in the late 1970s. These groups consisted primarily of students and intellectuals coming from the natural sciences and, thus, being quite familiar with environmental problems. Most of them were leftist individuals while some were anti-authoritarian, extra-parliamentary leftists with ecological interests. These were the first environmental activists in Greece and their identities were shaped under the influence of the anti-nuclear and peace movements in Western Europe (*ibid.*). These activists advocating scientific and technical solutions to environmental problems were the ones first to infuse into Greek universities the environmental problematic in a systematic and scientific manner (Demertzis, 1995, p. 195).

These early environmental groups were involved in the grass-roots mobilisations of the 1970s. They aimed to support and to transfer environmental knowledge and other resources to mobilised local communities as well as to act as 'carriers and transmitters' of new values and meanings concerning environment and people's relation with it (Tarrow, 1992, p. 188). In this context, activists attempted to attain a frame bridging or frame resonance between environmental values and the economic motivation of local citizens (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 17). Here, frame bridging refers to "the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem" (Snow *et al.*, 1986, p. 467)

Nevertheless, another common feature of all these mobilisations was that protesters had realised that their demands could be satisfied if only those were extended to the decision-making centre, that is, the state with its over-concentrated administrative structure in Athens (Demertzis, 1995, pp. 195-196). To accomplish this, while protesters were welcoming moral support and assistance of activists, they tended to address local politicians and political parties inviting them to act as intermediaries of their demands to the state. Thus, partyism and state paternalism did not allow

activists fully succeed in attaining a frame bridging between their ecological aspirations and the local protesters' claims (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 17).

At the end, all the above eight cases of mobilisations were successful and achieved most of their goals (Demertzis, 1995, p. 195). But, their attainments were not the result of their own efforts and dynamics but rather, as Demertzis notes, "the incidental incorporation of regional and local environmental uprisings into the competition between political parties at the central level" (*ibid.*). In other words, the success of these mobilisations could not be attributed to an independent environmental movement. Instead, it was more the outcome of a political exchange between protesters and party or state representatives (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 17).

4. Greek green politics in the 1980s

In its second phase, Greek environmentalism entered a rapid trajectory of growth. This is evident by the fact that almost 200 environmental pressure groups have been formed until 1987 in all prefectures of Greece (Close, 1998, p. 62). Nevertheless, the participation in those groups was not massive, as Close also mentions. However, the blossom of these groups was accompanied by significantly growing numbers of grass-roots protests. 'Nea Ecologia' (New Ecology), a monthly environmental magazine, recorded 111 environmental mobilisations during the period 1982-1992 (Close, 1999, p. 338).

Most of those mobilisations, although broader and more complex, were following the same motivation and framing scheme with their counterparts of the 1970s. Once again local citizens were protesting against industrial expansion and state-initiated plans in order to protect their environment and, through this, their vested economic interests and roles (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 18). Environmental groups trying to attain their own goal, which was the preservation of the environment, acted as allies to local protesters in these cases. The means of mobilisation used in these protests were both conventional pressure actions, such as letters, interviews, marches and demonstrations, as well as direct actions, like road blockade, localised general strikes and physical obstruction of the offending activity (Close, 1999, p. 338). Most of the mobilisations were successful at the end, although their success was again due to political exchanges among protesters, local authorities and politicians (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 18).

These mobilisations helped environmental groups and organisations attain a more visible status as defenders of the environment. They gained experience, credibility as well as access to new audiences and possible supporters, through press and broadcast media coverage of their actions in the context of those mobilisations (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 19). Thus, environmental organisations were strengthened after every successful mobilisation. In parallel, grass-roots mobilisations contributed in creating the necessary conditions to infuse environmental consciousness among citizens. The OECD report of 1983 pointed out that public

concern concerning environmental issues in Greece was increasing, although it was rather recently formed (Pridham *et al.*, 1995, p. 260).

The increasing quantitative and qualitative strength of environmental organisations and groups eventually led them to attempt a national co-ordination of their power. Although the first thoughts to form a unified political body existed as early as in 1984, they proved unfruitful mainly because of the wide dispersion of environmental groups across the country making their co-operation and communication difficult (Demertzis, 1995, p. 198). Another reason, according to Demertzis (*ibid.*) has been the flexibility of the established parties to absorb environmental demands in their programmes and policies. In the local elections of 1986, some environmental groups had participated but the results were disappointing. Nevertheless, the efforts towards a 'green coalition' did bare fruits in 1989 with the establishment of the Federation of Ecological and Alternative Associations into which more than 100 groups and associations were involved (Close, 1998, p. 62).

In the national election of November 1989, the Federation received 0.58%, but the hybrid electoral system allowed them to attain one parliamentary seat out of a total of 300 (Demertzis, 1995, p. 200). This achievement has granted them greater publicity because it was the first time in the Greek parliamentary history that a "non traditional leftist party had enter the Greek parliament" (*ibid.*). The Federation also attracted the attention of political parties, since that single parliamentary seat was the key for the balance of power in the Greek parliament and the formation of a viable government (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 22).

Despite the great expectations, in the subsequent national election of April 1990, the party of the Ecologists-Alternatives had managed to slightly increase its votes to 0.77% and to retain its single representative in the Greek parliament (Demertzis, 1995, p. 200). The limited success of this party seems to manifest that a Greek green party could not meet or politically represent, at that time, any widespread post materialist needs, ecological values or demands (*ibid.*). Moreover, as its received votes in the two national elections show, the green vote was proportionally greater in the wealthier, new middle class urban areas than in low income and environmentally damaged areas (Demertzis, 1995, p. 201). Finally, the inner intrigues and political discords, the functional problems and the disagreement over the organisational character of the Federation, all contributed to a total failure of its founding Congress that was held in February 1992 (Demertzis, 1995, p. 202). The result was that many far left activists abandoned the Federation and the single parliamentary representative declared herself independent (*ibid.*).

5. Greek environmentalism in the 1990s and afterwards

The break-up of the Federation of Ecologists-Alternatives has signalled the failure of a green party to give autonomous political expression to ecological concerns (Pridham *et al.*, 1995, p. 262) and to penetrate into the particularities of the Greek political, cultural and institutional context. Throughout the 1990s, the political ecological groups have been marginalised, while at the same time some of their members or leaders were absorbed by traditional political parties (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 25). Meanwhile, purely environmental organisations, which define

themselves as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rather than part of a broader environmental movement, have been increasing in number and strength (*ibid.*).

Over 195 environmental organisations were counted in the second half of 1990s in Greece (Tsakiris & Sakellaropoulos, 1998). Prominent role among these organisations were played by the local chapters of international environmental NGOs, such as Greenpeace, WWF, the Hellenic Ornithological Society – Birdlife Greece, Nea Ecologia – Friend of Earth Greece, etc. (Botetzagias, 2000). A 1998 survey conducted by the Greek National Centre for Social Research has noted that the great majority of environmental organisations were founded during the last two decades (Tsakiris & Sakellaropoulos, 1998). Moreover, 57% of them have maintained regular co-operation with the mass media in order to inform the public (*ibid.*). According to the same source, less than 10% have been involved in environmental seminars in schools, but many were accepting invitations to inform students (*ibid.*). With regards to the membership of environmental organisations, a survey by Kousis & Dimopoulou (2000) has noted an increase in their number, especially since 1992, although in many cases the members were not exceeding 500 people (p. 2). An important characteristic of the members of environmental organisations was their high educational level. Almost half of them were holding a university degree and more than half of them were working in scientific sectors and/or were self-employed (p. 1).

In a survey on Greek EMOs in the 1990s, Kousis & Dimopoulou (2000) have reported that, among the 99 organisations, which have responded to their questionnaire, about one third of them were of national level, one quarter of district level and 28% were local ones. The same survey shows that the major fields of action of these organisations during the period 1988-1999 were: environmental education, countryside and landscape protection, animal welfare, pollution, woodland/wild plants, cultural heritage, domestic waste, wildlife, tourism and recreational activities and urban environment.

A common characteristic of these organisations is their professionalisation as they are putting emphasis on ‘effectiveness’ (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 26). Moreover, the 1998 survey by National Centre for Social Research has concluded that 25% of these organisations have been conducting research funded by EU programmes on specific environmental issues (Tsakiris & Sakellaropoulos, 1998). This is, in part, consistent with the fact that the staff of these organisations consists mostly of small groups of highly specialised professionals (Alexandropoulos & Serdedakis, 2000, p. 26).

In another survey of Greek EMOs in the 1990s, Kousis and Lenaki (1999) have coded articles related to environmental protest events, which have been published in a prominent Greek daily newspaper. They found that 46% of protests occurred between 1988-90, 37% between 1991-94 and 17% between 1995-97. During the period of this survey, 1988-1997, Kousis and Lenaki have not observed any significant changes in the types of environmental claims (*ibid.*). According to the survey of Kousis & Dimopoulou (2000), in 1998-99 most environmental groups have been adopting contentious forms of protests less often than traditional pressure actions, such as press conferences or petitions. In the same survey, a gradual decrease of the gap between local and non-local protests has been observed. While in the end of 1980s local

protests were more in number than national and district level mobilisations, Kousis and Lenaki (1999) argue that local environmental activism has rapidly decreased in volume during the 1990s, although the number of national and district level protests had not changed dramatically. Furthermore, Kousis and Lenaki have observed a change in the ratio of participation between formal and informal organisations in protests since 1988, which increased significantly from 0.386 in the late 80s to 0.70 in 1995-97 (*ibid.*).

Via social network analysis on a database of 196 Greek environmental organisations active during the 1990s (as compiled by the National Centre for Social Research), Botetzagias (2000) has concluded that among these organisations there exists a 'hard core' group of 10 prominent environmental organisations. These organisations, as Botetzagias argues, are the most important not only in terms of 'movement centrality' but also in terms of membership and possession of assets. In his words, "the members of the 'hard core', participate in the same 'alliances', have the same kind of relations with state agencies, have secured public/EU funding and are given specific 'responsibilities' on conservation issues" (*ibid.*). These organisations are: WWF Greece, Arkturos, Hellenic Society for the Preservation of Nature (HSPN), Hellenic Ornithological Society – Birdlife Greece, Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature and the Cultural Heritage, Mediterranean-SOS, Society for the Protection and Study of the Mediterranean Seal (MOM), Sea Turtle Protection Society (STPS), Greenpeace and Nea Ecologia. Furthermore, Botetzagias is showing through social network analysis that these organisations are well linked to each other. However, concerning their organisational structure, the vast majority of these organisations is non-participatory and, except HSPN and STPS, which do not have any non-voting members, all other organisations of the 'core' have more members with non-voting rights than members with voting rights (*ibid.*).

Through all the above, one would be tempted to assume that the 1990s have manifested a trend towards institutionalisation of the Greek environmental activism, as this is testified by the aforementioned traits of:

- a gradual decrease of the number of local protests,
- a change in the ratio of participation between formal and informal organisations in protests,
- a shift of environmental organisations towards routine-oriented actions and
- the dominance of a non-participatory organisational type among the most prominent Greek environmental organisations.

However, from a plethora of environmental studies centered at the local level, there is a counter-evidence that local environmentalism in urban and rural Greece illustrates a revitalised form of contentious activism, which is mobilising local publics into community-based environmental actions. A good example is the work of Kousis, Petropoulou and Dimopoulou (2001), presenting and analysing a number of different environmental profiles of an urban locality (three adjacent municipalities in north-eastern Athens) and a rural locality (the Chanea Prefecture in Crete). The purpose of this work is to contribute to an understanding of Greek environmentalism at the local level during the 1990s, its changes since the 1980s, the addressed issues and problems in its agendas and the differences between the urban and the rural setting. Through an

analysis of national daily and local press articles, Kousis, Petropoulou and Dimopoulou have found some very interesting trends in the dynamics of urban and rural environmentalism in contemporary Greece (*ibid.*):

- First, successful mobilisations for environmental protection at the local level seem to be the outcome of coordinated collective action encompassing both grassroots activists and environmental organisations. Thus, community-based environmental activism becomes politically effective when it develops across horizontal network structures and is exposed into more pervasive impacts.
- Second, local activist constellations, consisting of citizens and other directly engaged groups, differ from environmental organisations in the ways they confront the environmental problems and issues of their concern. While the latter tend to focus on environmental training and education, the former are devoted to conflictual challenges of the state and market domination over contested environmental topics.
- Third, environmental activism is not necessarily linked with the weight of prevailing economic activities. For instance, in agriculturally or touristically developed regions, protest against these activities, whenever they become sources of environmental degradation is limited. This is because activists are in general economically dependent on these activities and they are deprived of any other resources to confront the situation.
- Fourth, comparing local level rural and urban environmental mobilisations shows that in general rural environmental activists are more homogeneous, less likely to be affiliated to political parties and less numerous than their urban counterparts.

6. Conclusion: The 'Mediterranean syndrome' and comparisons

Many studies are exploring the heterogeneities in European environmental policies through comparative research among EU member states. For instance, some scholars argue that there exist in Europe two different worlds of environmentalism (Baker *et al.*, 1997), different national approaches of environmental policy implementation across North and South (Pridham, 1994), which have created the so-called 'Mediterranean syndrome' (La Spina & Sciortino, 1993).

In another popular view about the existing dichotomy in European environmental national policies, there exist 'leaders and laggards' among the EU states, which are differentiated according to the degree and timing of policy implementation of environmental innovations (Börzel, 2000). The former are considered to be leading in the adoption of techno-scientific innovations and corresponding legislative regulations. At a later stage, the latter usually are the mere 'importers' of environmental innovations and policies, often negotiating for more flexible conditions of adoption at their local contexts and even demanding extra structural funds in order to implement these policies (Brinkhorst, 1991).

Usually, the reasons for such a dichotomy and the claimed laggardness in South Europe (specially in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal) are attributed to endemic traits in these countries such as (Börzel, 2000; Pridham, 1994):

- low level of economic development and environmental regulation due to parochial policy conceptions and implementations, which are often reactive, not proactive, exhibiting a certain degree of administrative lethargy;
- fragmented administrative structures and legislative processes, which block the sustainable production of public goods (including the environment), hinder the effectiveness of regulative and distributive policies and dissipate existing environmental protection responsibilities;
- vested interests and powerful economic forces resisting ecological modernisation;
- a weak civil society sustained by a paternalistic and clientelist political system and a deficient civic culture which favours consumerist individualistic values and sanctions non-co-operative collective action and non-compliant public behavior;
- local traditional cultural features, such as the idiosyncratic national pride in ‘patrimonio’ in Italy and Spain, the particular Greek concern for national monuments and other strong patterns of localistic and territorially-based national cultures.

However, the Mediterranean environmental policy deficit is often criticised as being grounded on misleading theoretical premises and other conceptual errors concerning the implicit environmental policies in the countries of South Europe. As Kousis and Lekakis argue: “First, by concentrating on implementation deficits, they hold the rather myopic view that environmental change is solely a result of current environmental policy implementation. Second, they neglect to see the behavioral context of a possible failure in adopting and/or implementing environmental policy” (2000, p. 2). For these reasons, using a political economy theory of the state and the supra-state (EU), Kousis and Lekakis claim that the behavioural features of the Mediterranean actors are in fact structurally pertinent to any other EU country, southern or northern, including the EU as a whole. To see this, one need to abandon the ‘glasses’ of experiences from some more developed northern countries and not overlooks the rich local political cultures, which have developed intensely in southern countries. For this purpose, examining southern European contentious politics through recent social movement theories, Kousis and Lekakis demonstrate that the role of Mediterranean civic societies is stronger than anticipated (by the proponents of the South-North divide) in sustaining an active civic engagement for environmental protection and preservation. In fact, the previously discussed trend of institutionalisation of EMOs in Greece (which in general is attested in all Mediterranean countries) provides an argument opposing the relative isolation and laggardness of Mediterranean environmental policies by manifesting the strong adaptation and co-evolution of southern environmental actors inside various collaboration schemes within Europe (Eder & Kousis, 2001).

A similar plea for the alleged backwardness and laggardness of environmental policies in the southern EU states is expressed by Gonçalves (2002) in her study of how environmental impact assessment directives are implemented in Portugal and how, at the same time, the occurring changes in civic culture are challenging political and administrative practice. As a matter of fact, Gonçalves holds that these changes have produced certain legislative and institutional developments in Portugal, which have even outreached existing EU regulative schemes. In this sense, Gonçalves argues that “contrary to the prevailing argument about the dichotomy between leaders and

laggards, at the end of the day, the latter are also becoming pioneers in legal-institutional innovation in this field” (2002, p. 249).

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