


Crisis and Democracy – The Democracy in Crisis: Social Anthropological Perspectives on the Fragility of the Social Contract

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A number of authors and commentators on the Greek crisis have pointed out that the Greek financial predicament is a byproduct of a deep and chronic political crisis. I propose that we view this political crisis as a crisis of the Social Contract, which generated multiple spheres of economic, civil and civic exclusion, engendering specific public concerns with sovereignty, democracy and asymmetrical relations of power (cf. Thodossopoulos 2014; Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2010). An anthropological approach to the analysis of crisis and democracy in Greece allows us to document local patterns of accountability, historical and political causality and to analyze them in context. The power of indigenous etiology – how people make sense of political affairs – provides us with unique insights into their preferred avenues of claiming and exercising political agency and participation. The qualitative characteristics of Greek politics and governance – especially after 1974 – have been discussed in the literature under the inclusive terms ‘clientelism’, ‘populism’, ‘corruption’, ‘statism’, and they have been deemed responsible for the inefficiency of the Greek state, the lack of competitiveness of the country as a whole, and ultimately for the lack of fiscal discipline that led to the present financial meltdown.

I propose that we approach the post-1974 party-led clientelism as the result of post-civil war political developments – or else, as a civil war legacy that later governments had to negotiate. My argument revolves around the idea that in order to appreciate the political circumstances that led to the financial deadlock, we need to contextualize them historically (cf. Knight 2012, 2014) and in geostrategic terms (cf. Kirtsoglou 2006), firmly placing Greece in the international political and economic map. The immediate consequence of examining local developments as part of global conditions is that we can expand our conceptualization of Greek governance beyond taxonomic and dichotomous models of a lag in modernization.

A second outcome of such an approach is that it can offer us a plausible explanation of why a significant part of the Greek public resists (and have resisted even more ferociously in the past) various kinds of ‘reforming policies’. Local politics – particularly so after WWII – cannot be understood separately from the cold war (cf. Kirtsoglou & Theodossopoulos 2010), which led to the systematic creation of spheres of exclusion out of which, the ‘politically dangerous subject[1]’ was born –to paraphrase Foucault- as a species. At the very opposite end of these spheres of exclusion and by consequence of their existence, new elites were created, as inequalities and asymmetries between citizens proliferated, not only on the basis of differential economic development of groups, but as a consequence of ideological taxonomies.

What is more, it is this particular era, and perhaps for the specific local/international political reasons, which solidified the strong routes of state-nepotism and state-driven development in Greece (compare with Featherstone 2008: 11). The post-1974 political system had to deal with civil, economic and political inequalities that were an indispensable part of the Cold War climate, while the forms of capital accumulation were the same internationally both in their character and in their effects (cf. Varoufakis 2011; Mouzelis 1978). Clientelism-as-*partitocrazia* (cf. Lyrantzis 2011) became a form of dealing with various forms of political exclusion of the past. In the absence of a welfare system, this later form of clientelism became a simplistic spill-over mechanism of profits and power to wider sections of the population[2] (Laskos & Tsakalotos 2013: 24, 41), which resulted in the proliferation of spheres of exclusion and a Kafka-style bureaucracy that rendered party-patronage and the various micro-practices of corruption almost necessary for taking care of daily affairs. Both the state-nepotism of pre-1974, and *partitocrazia* of

the last three to four decades created and sustained political and economic elites with privileged access to state resources, a condition which hindered economic development and damaged the citizens' appreciation of democracy, transparency and equality as *par excellence* dimensions of the Social Contract.

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