Refugee Related Organisations in Greece and their Cooperation Networks in the Context of the European Asylum Regime

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Introduction

- General problem:
  - Even though the CEAS defines common standards and procedures, the living conditions of asylum seekers in European countries differ extremely.
  - Obvious gap between official declarations (talk) and actual behaviour (action) within the EU, governments and NGOs.

- Using the theory of neo-institutionalism, MAREM asks for the role of organisations, their cooperation networks and their impact.
State of the Art

- One can find recent research about the changing asylum related situation in Greece (Cabot 2014; Tirandafyllidou 2014; Katsiaficas 2015; Kalpouzos & Mann 2015; Mogiani 2016 etc.).

- Regarding refugee related organisations and their cooperation networks there is a research gap.

- In the MAREM-project, we try to fill this gap doing research on organisations.
**Theory: Neo-Institutionalism**

- Organisations adapt to their organisational field, in this field organisations influence one another.

  ➢ Gap between talk and action: Institutions influence the formal structure (talk) but leave actual strategies (action) untouched. Organisations rather rely on their informal structures.

- Isomorphism is a process of alignment caused by regulative requirements/compulsion of institutions and may be emerge through:
  1. Political institutional frameworks (coercive),
  2. Standardized responses through imitation (mimetic),
  3. Normative expectations due to professionalisation (normative).
Data & Methods

- Semi-structured expert interviews

- Most partners were interviewed 2 times (2014 and 2015), examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I)NGOs</th>
<th>Gov. Organisations</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aitima</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>University</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMEPO</td>
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<td>Afghan Community</td>
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<td>Amnesty Int.</td>
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- Repetitional interviews are needed to examine the development of network activities
Results – Financing Situation

“But this is a really very very very difficult and that’s why we try to find other sources of funding, which has been proved as very very difficult, because we apply to foundation to many other organisation but we not easily get funding. We hope that in the future the situation will be improved”.

(AITIMA 2014)
Results – Networks

“During last year we became member of three European networks: one is ECRE and the other is BECUM and third is ENA – European network against racism. So this is good for our organisation because it means that our work is recognized and on the other hand this enables us to advocate at the European level”.

(AITIMA 2014)
Results – Networks

“We give some information to them because we try to learn from the other countries with similar problems like Greece. Of course the situation here is very different from every other country in the EU”.

(IMEPO 2014).
Results – Networks

“It’s a key element. We cannot do what we do without the other organisations (...)
even in research field we work close within a platform, national and international,
we exchange information regularly”.

(Amnesty International 2015)
Results – Isomorphism

“All the projects related to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in an European context (...) are 100 % finance by private MSF funds, we don’t take a single Euro by the Greek State or European Union, because we believe they are responsible for that, to take money from them it is difficult to criticize them”.

(MSF 2015)
Results – Isomorphism

“The authorities are more or less responsible for the fund and implementing projects, so it is more important what the state wants to do”.

(AITIMA 2015).
“The new government said that they will fulfill international regulations, that means that people will be able to apply for asylum and have a fair examination of their asylum applications because now we have the New Asylum Service but we don’t have branches all over the country, this means that access to the asylum procedure is not granted”.

(AITIMA 2015)
Conclusions

- Most NGOs are under-funded and do not work closely with the government.
- Hence some organisations consciously reject dynamics of isomorphism by e.g. trying not to rely on governmental resources.
- Large number of networks in general, several hints to mimetic isomorphism by e.g. exchange of knowledge and experience.
- Efforts expanding networks on European levels followed by the possibility of normative isomorphism (takeover of certain paradigms).
Conclusions

- Orientation of networks to the EU-Level may lead to new dynamics regarding representing Greece in the EU
- Gaps between talk and action are especially visible at the interconnection between EU and national level
- Legitimization in the institutional field by trying to fulfill EU guidelines, while the EU is only providing little help to Greece
References


References


Foto-source: http://www.abc.net.au/news/image/6771606-3x2-940x627.jpg