

## The Emergence of Inter-Agency to Address Social Needs amid Economic Crisis in Greece. An Irresolute Transformation

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### Abstract

*The economic crisis in Greece has acted as a catalyst for changes, and has promoted the participation of a plethora of organizations, state and non-state actors, in local interventions forming the recognition of a new welfare-mix with local governments which keep the central role. Local collaboration schemes, however, were based on a fragile background and face significant difficulties that hinder, if not cancel, their development and contribution to social protection. The barriers indicate the divisive central policy, the cautiousness of state actors but also the weakness of non-state actors. The paper aims to highlight the necessary conditions for the development of inter-agency schemes and, in turn, to examine the degree in which these conditions are met in a range of cases from the broader region of the capital city, Athens. Through the case study, the barriers regarding the operation and development of inter-agency schemes are shed light on as they are identified in the discourse of a number of key-informants from both the municipalities and local NGOs. It turns out that despite the need to develop broad schemes of collaboration, the conditions are far from ideal, while the future perspective is uncertain.*

**Keywords:** Greece, local social policy, inter-agency collaborations, welfare-mix, NGOs

### Introduction

The Greek economic crisis during the last decade has served as a leading cause and a fitted occasion for structural changes in the Greek society. Resistance to these changes has often proven stronger than the need for change, and in several cases, the state itself had been skeptical and ambivalent of supporting its choices. One such example is found in the changes related to social policy. At the local level, favorable conditions for a more active role of the local self-government in social protection were created. This was combined w-88(d)(er)-5.(t)-4hh2nntsi(t)-4(i)-4(on)-4110(





Fourth, it clearly states the hierarchy of problems by demonstrating priorities and choices for the content of social needs (Longo & Notarnicola, 2018). In other words, it affects the nature of the intervention in the community, its target and orientation. The set of four parameters contributes more or less to the identity of social policy.

*Inter-agency* comes to take advantage of the capabilities of the individual organizations and to address their weaknesses. It is promoted as a practice of upgrading social protection interventions (Davidson, Bunting & Webb, 2012). The promotion of all kinds of partne











The limited capabilities of the organizations of the Third sector in combination with the completion of the interventions also have a negative effect on the viability of the cooperation schemes. The completion of the financing implies the collapse of the bond since it is created primarily on the basis of mutual interest and secondarily on the basis of common principles.

### Conclusion

The three conditions are partially met since the obstacles to the development of inter-agency collaborations are substantial. As presented above, aspects of their development and operation as well as elements of the wider environment that hosts them limit their perspective. The general picture that emerges from the field research data leads to a number of observations. The divisive policy for the operation of broad forms of cooperation is confirmed. With the local level posing as a privileged space for the development of such type of collaborations, the local authorities provide the institutional environment that all kinds of schemes are developed and controlled. The decisions made by the local administration determine the schemes and more broadly shape the wider landscape of collaborations in the field of social protection. The Third Sector does not manage to function outside the framework set by local and partly central policies, bound by the need to ensure the viability of the constituent NGOs. However, the seamless cooperation is not guaranteed either by them or on the part of the organizations belonging to the public sector, let alone the possibility of joint action. The skills required for the implementation of joint interventions and the development of cooperation have not been acquired. Therefore, the dangers lurking in the lack of communication and the weak mechanisms of cooperation undermine, in turn, the perspective of inter-agency schemes. Obstacles include the instability of the common value space on which inter-agency schemes are constructed. At this point, too, top-down growth prevails through the resources allocated, based on central choices at state or even EU level. This also undermines the perspective and duration of the schemes.

With reference to the barriers that arise concerning/regarding the three basic conditions, the actual difficulties of developing inter-agency schemes are highlighted. These, as they coincide, should be treated cumulatively. Thereby, their presence makes it difficult to complete the schemes and strengthen the social protection network at the local level. It is not possible to formulate broader strategic goals as the schemes remain precarious and weak in terms of their composition. The dominant position of the municipalities, although it responds to significant - mainly functional- weaknesses, cancels the parity of the partners and gives the schemes a hierarchical structure undermining the importance of NGOs. Additionally, the complementarity of the parties that make up the scheme is relatively precarious due to the weakness of all partners to guarantee their smooth operation. Finally, the ambiguity regarding the common value background calls into question the objectives and means of intervention. Conclusively, inter-agency schemes are constituent element of the social protection mechanisms reality at the local level. However, they confront significant obstacles that complicate their effectiveness in the field of social protection and ultimately fail to diversify social policy at the local level.

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