

Philanthropy, Knife Crime and The Permacrisis: Diversity and Social Exclusion

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Abstract

The present study aims to contribute to the discussion about the importance and the benefits of philanthropy under the consequences of the crisis continuum (permacrisis) and risk situations that marginalize young people with adverse childhood experiences.

Keywords: Philanthropy, Knife crime, diversity, exclusion, permacrisis.

Introduction: under the prism of the permacrisis

In the Greek case, the financial crisis of 2009, the refugee crisis (2015), the SARS-CoV-2 health crisis, but also the recent energy one, compose of a crisis continuum that can develop an important hermeneutical framework of the decline or transformation of the Welfare State and the emerging of philanthropy as an organizational reason.

Consequently, the present study attempts to explore philanthropy as an emerging organizational reason. We assume that is of great importance that under the prism of the neoliberal discourse, philanthropy seeks to mediate institutionally to the managing of the socio-economic causes of adolescent violence. Also, it is a common topic that the risk phenomena and crises as a continuous social condition of everyday life are more likely to have significant negative consequences on socially vulnerable populations.

According to our research, the youth violent phenomenon as a social phenomenon in Greek society responds to the transformation and the decline of the Welfare State and the emerging privatization of the sectors of education and health as a result of a continuum of crisis in this country.¹ (Kamarianos, Kyridis, Fotopoulos & Chalkiotis 2019, Gouga 2021).

Finally, we consider the study of the decline of the Welfare state and the consequent emergence of philanthropy as an organizational form and rationality, under the burden of the crisis continuum, to be important as a framework for exploring issues and aspects of social policy, politics of diversity, and social exclusion. More concretely, the understanding and the analysis of the core characteristics of philanthropy as an organizational reason in connection with social phenomena such as knife crime², orients us towards a biopolitical approach to the social phenomena, tackling the pathology of social exclusion as it is differentiated by a detached and fragmentary approach of poverty and marginalization.

The reality behind the "knife crime" debate in Greece

At the end of June 2021 in the center of Athens, a young girl will be stabbed by another young girl. They are both sixteen and seventeen years old. The life of the seventeen-year-old victim was seriously endangered. The victim had to be hospitalized. The two young girls had been fighting before. The two underage girls had made an appointment to resolve their differences on the hill of the Hippeios (Equestrian) Kolonos. In ancient times, Kolonos was considered the most aristocratic municipality of ancient Athens. It was a riparian municipality and was crossed by the river Kifissos, which today has been undergrounded under Kifissos Avenue.³ Nowadays, Kolonos is a densely populated working-class district that was heavily rebuilt mainly in the 1960s and 1970s.

On Saturday night shortly after 22:00 in a neighborhood of the Northern suburbs of Athens (Kifissia), a group of 14-year-olds fell victim to a robbery and beating. Money and mobile phones were forcibly taken from the victims.

A 14-year-old boy was taken to the hospital covered in blood.

In another case, it was seven in the afternoon. There were still quite a few people in Syntagma Square, in the center of Athens. An 18-year-old man from Chania was also there when suddenly a "crowd" of angry juveniles appeared in front of him. Before he could understand what they wanted from him he started getting punched in the face. The goal of the underaged was to take the bag he was wearing around his waist. There was panic at the scene. Loud shouts forced the perpetrators to flee. A short time after the robbery at Syntagma Square, a juvenile, eight years old, whose participation was identified in the attack against the 18-year-old in the most central square of the Greek capital, was identified. The 8-year-old was not arrested and remains under protective custody while being investigated by Greek police for his parents' responsibilities (neglect of supervision of a minor).

The above cases are an indicative part of a large number of cases, many of which occur not only in the streets and squares but inside and outside the courtyards of Greek schools. In Greece, mainly since 2009 during the socioeconomic crisis, there has been a growing concern regarding the increasing number of cases of juvenile engagement in serious youth violence. In light of the socio-economic effects of the pandemic crisis, the current concerns have increased (Gouga 2021). Beyond getting sick, many adolescents' social, emotional, and mental well-being has been impacted by the pandemic (Centers for Control Disease and Prevention 2021). We argue that following the British Youth Council Report (2019) most of the recent juvenile violence cases-such as knife crime- are the consequence of various underlying socio-economic issues, following years of cuts to public services and the decline of the Welfare state (Gouga 2021; British Youth Council 2019).

As John Poyton⁴ argues, young people are trying to adapt to the decline in the quality of their daily life. According to Poyton in order to deal with the effects of poverty and vulnerability in their everyday life, young people 'are not carrying knives specifically to go out to perpetrate violence and murder' they are just trying to adapt (British Youth Council 2019, p.7). As we mentioned above, in the Greek case, the financial crisis of 2009 and then the refugee crisis (2015) but also the recent SARS-CoV 2 health crisis and in our days the energy crisis, consist a crisis continuum from 2009 to 2022, which can be an important hermeneutical framework of the decline or the transformation of the Welfare State.

The Welfare state decline, diversity politics, and Philanthropy

In the above chapter we tried to indicate the importance of understanding the core characteristics of juvenile crime, the schools, and neighborhood crime, under the consequences of the continuation of crises, the effects of the decline of the welfare state, and the emerging of philanthropy as an organizational reason, governed by the neoliberal discourse of privatization of the sectors of education and health.

The Welfare state decline

The continuation of the crisis and the retreat of the welfare state in Greece, with its consequent impact on social subjects' everyday lives, entail, among other things, a particular re-allocation of the terms relating to the debate on juvenile violence. According to Matsaganis the rise in unemployment is strongly linked with highly increased poverty "while in the past the correlation between the two has been rather weak" (Matsaganis 2011, 510). More concretely, by the beginning of the Greek debt crisis, unemployment

increased from 7.8% (before the economic crisis- 2008) to 26%, which means that more than 1,200,000 people were unemployed at the end of 2013 (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2015a) and in 2015, 1,111,300 Greeks were in jobless households (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2016). The Welfare state in Greece following the recent research by Kamarianos, Kyridis, Fotopoulos & Chalkiotis (2019) was already weak enough before 2009, due to underfunding and the fiscal crisis deprived the Greek welfare state of vital resources (Kamarianos, Kyridis, Fotopoulos & Chalkiotis 2019; Matsaganis 2011).

Undoubtedly, the prolonged period of the debt crisis shaped a negative framework for the Greek public Health and Educational system the two main pillars of the modern welfare state. By the end of 2014, the Greek economy had already “shrunk” by almost 24%, comparatively to 2007-2008. In addition, the youth unemployment rate in the EU-28 in September 2015 was 20% (Eurostat 2016a; Papadakis et al. 2017), which means that almost 4,125,000 young people (aged 15–24) were unemployed in the EU. The Greek youth unemployment rate was even higher. In April 2015 the Greek youth unemployment rate was 51.6% and by the end of 2016, it was more than 46% (Spain 42.6%, Italy 37.1%) (Eurostat 2014a, Eurostat 2016a&b; Papadakis et al. 2017).

The COVID-19 crisis and its associated measures disproportionately impacted young people in terms of unemployment, especially in 2020, when the youth unemployment rate rose 1.4 percentage points (pp) while the overall unemployment rate increased by 0.4 pp, but then youth unemployment decreased slightly more in 2021 (-0.3 pp compared with 2020) than the overall unemployment rate (-0.1 pp, from 7.1% in 2020 to 7.0% in 2021) (Eurostat 2021).

In May 2021 the youth unemployment rate (under 25) was 17.3% in the EU and 17.5% in the Euro area, down from 18.2% and 18.4% respectively in the previous month. At the same time the Greek unemployment rate -although there was a decrease to 38.2% in May from 49.8% in April- remains first in the ranking with Spain next (36.9) (Eurostat 2021). Consequently, according to the Eurostat data the Greek youth unemployment is still more than double as high as it was before the beginning of the Greek Debt crisis and also the Greek youth unemployment rate is almost double that of the EU. As a result, in our days of the pandemic crisis, almost one out of two young people in Greece is unemployed (49.8% April 2021, Eurostat 2021, Papadakis et al. 2017). In comparison, the youth unemployment rate in the EU fell to 13.0% in 2021, from 13.3% in 2020 (Eurostat 2021).

In conclusion, the socio-economic phenomenon of the Greek debt crisis had much more significant consequences over the same period than the other economies of the European South, which were contracted significantly less (Gouga 2021). The lack of trust and security in everyday life highlights the pathologies of Western modernity in two basic actions for social cohesion: the reduction of common meanings and finally the erosion of common bonds. The short-term individual conventions of choice, and the carving of subjective paths, render the brief and cut-off instrumental subjective strategies, to dominant narrations of the public sphere (Gouga & Kamarianos 2011). The significant effect of liquidity of education policy and the frequent change of the legal-regulatory framework are indicative, as they generate risk for the successful confirmation of the subjects’ expectations (Giddens 1999). Organizational transformations and ruptures with the past, in turn, produce new perceptions on the part of the subjects. The quality of these subjective conceptions is important for the quality of the institutional consolidations in the interdependence of the structure with the subjective. Linearity, -as a result of provided subjective strategic choices in a stable organizational framework- is replaced by liquidity -as an effect of dynamic change-, because of the economic and digital determinism of the recent crisis (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2015a; OECD 2014a, 1; Papadakis et al. 2017; Gouga & Kamarianos 2020).

Knife-crime and diversity politics

In the case of Greece and because of the debt crisis, the severe consequences of neoliberal economic policies were a common topic since 2008. (Kamarianos et al 2019). The decline or the transformation of the welfare state is a central concern not only for Greek scholars, but also for the wider community of researchers and policy experts (Spinthourakis, Gouga & Kamarianos 2017). Because of the importance of the phenomenon for the social cohesion of the European societies the EU and more specifically the European Commission, introduced a multi-service provision, in an attempt to address the causes of social exclusion, highlighting

the need for service provision, the responsibility for which would not fall on the state (Spinthourakis, Gouga & Kamarianos 2017; Sakelaropoulos 2001; 2011)

The main result of the new narrative was the redefinition of the aspects of privatization as new challenges emerged for social policy. Consequently, following Papadakis et al., one in three young people in Greece and half the NEETs, face severe difficulties in their daily lives. Day-to-day obstacles such as poverty and risk caused by the weakness and occasional absence of social policy mechanisms (Papadakis et al. 2017; Kourahanis 2018), are related with social phenomena such as school dropout and adverse childhood experiences, that render them more likely to be vulnerable to involvement in divergent activities, trapping them into dismal conditions. More concretely 30.8% of young people and 45.8% of NEETs describe their situation as difficult and unbearable. According to the study of Papadakis et al. (2017) the conditions under which a large percentage of young people in Greece narrate their social situation are impressive (Papadakis et al., 2017).

Moreover, in the capital of Greece, a city of four million citizens, young people seek help as they live in precarious circumstances. Vulnerable and without any social or state protection, 'children in the shadows', "invisible" to the state mechanisms, those young people struggle to live through.

But the problem is not only Greek. The pathology has been also noticeable in the European Union since 2015. Because of the "refugee crisis" more than 700,000 people sleep on the streets or in shelters. (European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless 2020; Paidakaki 2021). The three main citizenships of first-time asylum applicants were Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis. In Athens, more than 600 homeless children survive (Paidakaki 2021, Eurostat, 2016).

Those homeless children are consequently directed into delinquency or precarious status, being trapped in dismal conditions that violate human rights (Kourachanis 2021). According to Eurostat migrant integration statistics (2021), more than 24% of native-born young people and 40% of foreign-born young people had the risk of being in poverty or socially excluded in 2019 (Eurostat (2021; Gouga 2021).

According to statistical data presented by the Hellenic Police (2020), during the crisis, there has been an important increase in juvenile delinquency. Drug use or knife crime phenomena are some of the consequences of the permacrisis and relevant austerity policies over welfare state (Spinthourakis, Gouga & Kamarianos 2017, Matsaganis 2013, Papadakis 2017).

In this chapter, we have attempted to highlight the importance of the policies that resulted in the retreat of the social state and the emergence of new organizational discourses, such as philanthropy. The strengthening of philanthropic policy and praxis observed nowadays under the impact of the permacrisis, especially in matters of diversity politics, has important implications both for the social structure and the subject itself. According to the fundamental position of the Spinthourakis, Gouga, and Kamarianos study (2017), the shift towards philanthropy and charity as a substitution of social state responsibilities, mainly concerns the socio-political aspects of the social subject's identity. Philanthropic actions and practices are being presented as social policy towards a general idea of human well-being, with a certain impact on youth's everyday life. Under that prism philanthropy and charity as a hegemonic narrative, not only affect the change in the role of the welfare state, but also alter the conception of social action and the definition of the social subject (Spinthourakis, Gouga & Kamarianos 2017).

Philanthropy as an organizational reason

In the previous chapter, we focused on the importance of the decline or retreat of the Welfare state and the consequent emergence of new organizational reason and rationalities such as philanthropy. Philanthropy as an evolving socio-economic framework of policy and practice under the impact of the permacrisis, enables the option of exploring problems of social policy, deviance, and social exclusion such as knife crime.

Characteristically, the U.N. Millennium Development Goals Report is indicative of the evolving of new organizational reasons and rationalities such as philanthropy, by mentioning the importance of cooperation between the State institutions and structures like business, and civil society locally or globally, in order to

reduce social pathologies and saving children's lives (U.N. The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011. p.4).

The relationship between the role of the State and Philanthropy is not an unprecedented and unforeseen structure. On the contrary, the beginning of the welfare state and the first steps of European social policy were closely related to structures of a broad range (Parton 1996, 5; Spinthourakis, Gouga, Kamarianos 2017).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, an important part of the social role of the Welfare state is assigned to private, voluntary, and charitable philanthropic/charity structures. The Welfare state is no longer responsible for the well-being of citizens (Nickel & Eikenberry 2010). In connection with business and the market reason, philanthropy, is not anymore what Sophocles defined in his writings as an act of trust in the subject's dignity and respect for human rights and public goods of Health and Education. According to Eduardo Galeano modern philanthropy is the opposite of solidarity. Solidarity is a horizontal structure between equals. On the contrary, modern philanthropy is a relation between unequal statuses. Between vulnerability and power.

Under the above theoretical framework, philanthropy is a process of legitimization of social inequality. In corporate capitalism, philanthropy provides rewards such as higher customer loyalty, and valuable assets in times of crisis. (Freeman, Harrison & Wicks 2007; Spinthourakis, Gouga, Kamarianos 2017). According to Giroux (2002), charitable action is a core process in the dystopian culture of neoliberalism. That kind of philanthropy according to Giroux (2002), disorients social subjects as they seek identities, social roles, and values (Spinthourakis, Gouga, Kamarianos 2017).

Obviously organizations such as eg. Metadrasi (Metadrasi.org) have a significant positive impact on children's lives. For example, it is worth mentioning that it covers the costs of operating the first dormitory for children in Greece, which can offer an evening shelter to up to one hundred homeless children, either because they are unaccompanied minor refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Somalia, or because their families cannot support them. Today, according to the official data of the National Center for Social Solidarity, 3,776 unaccompanied children live in Greece, of which 889 survive in informal or precarious conditions. Metadrasi, like many other similar humanitarian organizations, is utilizing a humanitarian award. More concretely it is utilizing part of the humanitarian award of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, with the contribution of the Municipality of Athens and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The organization founded at the end of 2019 a Day Center for homeless children and in March 2020, when the first wave of the pandemic broke out, a Mobile Unit for locating and providing immediate assistance to children on the streets of Athens. The problem is such efforts from different organizations seem a disconnected and ephemeral narrative, as it is most likely to be discontinued after funding ends. Under this framework of liquidity and discontinuity, philanthropy becomes a process of legitimization of social inequality and social exclusion. In fact, under that framework at the core of philanthropy as an organizational reason, lies the prevention of the absorption of social and public resources, such as the healthcare system, and social security (Spinthourakis, Gouga, Kamarianos 2017).

The above analysis guides us to the theoretical framework of M. Foucault on Biopolitics. Biopolitics according to Foucault can be defined as the conjecture of power, means, and knowledge which in the end compose a technology of governance (Foucault 2012, 291 & 36-37; Foucault 1980, 143).

In place of a Conclusion

A Foucaultian analytical approach to the knife crime phenomenon under the impact of the permacrisis and diversity politics highlights how neoliberalism effects areas that are not exclusively and not primarily economic such as family, crime, and criminal policy (Foucault 2012, 295 -296).

Moreover, according to the German thinker Jurgen Habermas, the hegemony of neoliberalism as the current governmental rationality seems uncontested. The main characteristics of that governmentality are deregulation, privatization, and individual responsibility (Dean, 2014, 151; Mavelli 2016, 40; Gouga & Kamarianos 2011).

In any case, the above analysis undermines that organizational forms like the Market and Welfare State do not necessarily work either in parallel or in opposition. (Spinthourakis, Gouga, Kamarianos 2017) The above observation sets the issue: Which are the organizational and regulatory criteria that must be set? First, the involvement of social subjects in public and social wealth is crucial, for the avoidance of slipping into vulnerability and poverty. It should be noted here that those who suffer from social exclusion when absorbing public and social wealth are concurrently excluded to a much greater extent from the most important asset of public wealth: that of equal participation in politics. (Spinthourakis, Gouga, Kamarianos 2017). Thus, it is important to o strengthen solidarity within the local community in the pursuit of collective benefits and the service of common social interests.

In conclusion, intervention in juvenile delinquency problems as a diversity politics is a value orientation process and ultimately a democratic daily practice value with a "social footprint", where the social footprint is to answer the young needs, undertaking public coherent long-term social commitments such as the will to strengthen education and social protection systems of modern western societies.

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