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Antonios Karvounis

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Paradiplomacy and social cohesion: The case of the participation of the Greek municipalities in European city networks

Antonios Karvounis, Hellenic Ministry of Interior

Παραδιπλωματία και κοινωνική συνοχή: η περίπτωση της συμμετοχής των ελληνικών δήμων στα Ευρωπαϊκά δίκτυα πόλεων

Αντώνης Καρβούνης, Υπουργείο Εσωτερικών

ABSTRACT

The recognition of the international role of the paradiplomatic initiatives of local authorities, in combination with the limited academic attention of paradiplomacy for city networking, set the framework of the present article. Its main theme is focused on the participation of the Greek municipalities in European social city networks during the programming period 2007-2013. The general research finding of the article is that the participation of Greek municipalities in European social city networks entails changes at the levels of structures, policies and procedures, but the above results are filtered by the endogenous framework of mentalities, bureaucratic procedures and organisational deficits of local government.

KEY WORDS: European city networks, city diplomacy, soft governance, administrative reforms.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η αναγνώριση του διεθνούς ρόλου των παραδιπλωματικών πρωτοβουλιών των τοπικών αρχών, σε συνδυασμό με το περιορισμένο ακαδημαϊκό ενδιαφέρον της παραδιπλωματίας για τη δικτύωση των πόλεων τις τελευταίες δεκαετίες, συνιστούν το πλαίσιο της παρούσας μελέτης, η οποία ασχολείται με τη συμμετοχή των ελληνικών δήμων σε ευρωπαϊκά κοινωνικά δίκτυα πόλεων στη διάρκεια της προγραμματικής περιόδου 2007-2013. Το γενικότερο ερευνητικό συμπέρασμα της μελέτης είναι ότι η ευρωπαϊκή δικτύωση των δήμων συνεπάγεται αλλαγές σε επίπεδο δομών, πολιτικών και διαδικασιών, ωστόσο, τα ανωτέρω αποτελέσματα φιλτράρονται από το ενδογενές πλαίσιο νοοτροπιών, γραφειοκρατικών διαδικασιών, και οργανωτικών ελλειμμάτων της τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ: Ευρωπαϊκά δίκτυα πόλεων, διπλωματία πόλεων, ήπια διακυβέρνηση, διοικητικές μεταρρυθμίσεις.

1. Introduction

Ivo H. Daalder, former U.S. ambassador to NATO (2009-13) has recently asserted that cities are playing a significant role in “addressing the many global challenges that our nations and others must confront—from climate change and cyber security to terrorism and pandemics...” (Dossani and Amiri, 2019). City diplomacy is a particularly good match for the numerous pro-

grammes and initiatives of the State Department to enhance national security and prosperity of U.S. citizens through non-coercive methods of statecraft, such as public diplomacy - see the recent City and State Diplomacy Act (Karvounis 2020, pp.55-65). Attempts to understand and explain local/regional competences in foreign relations have been predominantly carried out under the heading of 'paradiplomacy' (see among others Duchacek 1990; Soldatos 1990; Michelmann 1990; Keating 1999; Hocking 1993; Aldecoa 1999a; Paquin and Lachapelle 2005; Lecours 2002). Yet, so far, this paradiplomacy research agenda has been very constructive in conceptualising mainly the external activities of regions and in making descriptive inventories of their paradiplomatic activities and instruments.

In this contribution, however, we argue that the paradiplomacy framework and its future research agenda should be broadened and complemented by the impact of the city diplomacy. Empirically, we build our argument on the Greek experience. More specifically, in this article we present an account of the impact of the paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities on the policy domain of social cohesion, in the framework of their participation in European city networks during the 2007-2013 programming period.

International city networks have contributed to the circumstances under which the decisions affecting the functioning of the political, economic, cultural and other domains become less dependent on nation state regulations, but more forced by powers that bloomed tremendously in the last few decades at supranational and subnational (regional/local) levels. There are various examples of these networks that promote a number of priorities: social issues (eg. Cities Alliance-Cities without Slums), information society (eg. Global Cities Dialogue), peaceful coexistence of people (eg. Sister Cities International-Global Citizen Diplomacy Network) and so on. Despite their disparity, however, international city networks share common aspirations: exchanging experiences and knowledge, enhancing the skills of their members' executives, exerting influence, securing international representation and defending their interests.

First, we present an overview of the paradiplomacy literature. We then step beyond and propose that the paradiplomacy framework should be combined and complemented with the city diplomacy theoretical framework in order to explain how municipalities' external activities are developed in the particular circumstances of the international city networks. Next, we turn back to the Greek case and apply our research strategy to a narrative of the impact of the participation of the Greek local authorities in European city networks in the social policy domain. From this, we suggest the added value of city networking depends on the internal barriers that put limits on the paradiplomatic activities of the municipalities.

2. Paradiplomacy

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, in the early 1970s, were among the first who had argued in their co-edited *Transnational Relations and World Politics* about the possibility of "transnational relations" among non-state actors like multinational corporations (MNCs). In this sense, Keohane and Nye opened the floor for further discussions about new players in international relations. Yet, the interest in studying the international activities of subnational governments and municipal authorities (frequently called paradiplomacy) has grown since 1980s. Two major trends in international relations have mostly been the main reasons for that academic interest. The first, outward, has promoted integration among countries, creating regional and supranational blocs

(see EU). The second trend, inward, has generated increased decentralization of federal and unitary states, providing greater authority to non-central authorities. In this context, sub-national authorities (regional/local) are treated as emerging or established actors in domestic politics. As the US experience of subnational diplomacy has made clear above, this is hardly surprising since local/regional authorities are most noticeable for their design and/or implementation of public policy within the boundaries of their decentralized territory, and for their interaction with the central state. Sometimes forgotten is the fact that local/regional authorities also operate within the broader international context, that they can be international actors. Besides, paradiplomacy is an integral part of regionalization and is no longer restricted solely to the federal or decentralized states, as most scholars have assumed. Paradiplomatic activities can be viewed as an outcome of the growing role of cities and regions, which has been apparent at the economic or political as well as social and cultural levels (Sanalla 2014, p. 162). For some years now, the broader debate suggests the idea that cities play a vital role in addressing the world's problems, with hallmark books as Edward Glaeser's *Triumph of the City* (2011) and Benjamin Barber's *If Mayors Rule the World* (2013).

Nevertheless, paradiplomacy studies have focused primarily on postmodern federal states, in which subnational units proactively engaged in foreign relations. They largely ignore unitary Westphalian states. As a matter of fact, the initial serious surveys on the role of subnational governments in external affairs appeared in the beginning of the 1970s and were mostly concentrated in North American academia (Levy 1975; Swanson 1976; Burmester, 1978; Sample and Trani, 1980). The 1970s was the period of genesis of paradiplomacy studies, when political scientists began to seriously consider regional governments as new actors in international affairs. This turn happened in the context of the "great transnational revolution" in international relations theory, as well as under the impact of the "Quiet revolution" and "New federalism" – those changes in domestic politics that took place in Canada and USA, respectively, at that time. The researches on paradiplomacy that were conducted in the 1970s predominantly based on case study analysis of the involvement of Canadian provinces and US states in international affairs (Kuznetsov, 2014, p.43). But the real progress in the quality of paradiplomacy studies came to light during the 1980s, when a group of North American political scientists, including Ivo Duchacek, Hans Michelmann, John Kincaid, Panayotis Soldatos and others, besides providing a narrative of regional international activity, also attempted to conceptualize the phenomenon of paradiplomacy and tried to create some explanatory theoretical patterns in order to understand the causes and consequences of constituent diplomacy for federal systems (Duchacek, 1984; Soldatos, 1990; Kincaid, 1990; Soldatos and Michelmann, 1992; Michelmann, 1989; Fry, 1989). So, the first definition of paradiplomacy was produced by Ivo Duchacek and Panayotis Soldatos (1990). They concurred in that "paradiplomacy is a concept that refers to international activity by sub-national actors (federated units, regions, urban communities, cities). This concept supports, complements, corrects, duplicates or challenges the nation states". Later the security issue was added to the definition of paradiplomacy. Noe Cornago (1999), a professor at the University of the Basque Country, talked about "sub-state governments' involvement in international relationships, through the establishment of formal and informal contacts, either permanent or ad hoc, with foreign public or private entities, with the aim to promote socio-economic, cultural or political issues, as well as any other foreign dimension of their own constitutional competences". In the 1990s, the global changes in world politics, like the fall of the Iron Curtain and the high-speed strengthening of the European Union as a new supranational regime, drastically increased

the role of subnational entities in many parts of the globe, particularly in Europe and in new post-communist federations like Russia (Keating 1999; Borrás-Alomar, 1994; Hocking, 1999; Aguirre, 1999; Aldecoa and Keating, 1999; Stern, 1994). The activities in the international arena of the Basque Country and Catalonia in Spain, Flandreau and Wallonia in Belgium, Tatarstan in Russia and other regions, attracted a lot of attention from the side of the European researchers, and, as a result, paradiplomacy studies expanded outside North American academia. The concept of the "Europe of the Regions" became dominant in the European discourse at that time and brought more recognition to the idea of high diversity in Europe at the subnational level (Keating, 1999; Borrás-Alomar et al., 1994; Hocking, 1999; Aguirre, 1999; Aldecoa and Keating, 1994). In the 2000s the scholarly interest in paradiplomacy geographically spread worldwide and the field gained its new academic stalwarts among researchers from Latin America and Asia (Zhimin, 2005; Zhu, 2005). It is especially interesting to mention the publication by Jain Rurnedra in 2005 of the monograph *Japan's Subnational Governments in International Affairs* (Rurnedra, 2005). The innovatory component of this work consists not only in the fact that it is the first comprehensive research on constituent diplomacy in Japan, but, more importantly, that Rundera's research breaks away from the rather strong prepossession in the literature of the previous decades that the phenomenon of paradiplomacy is an attribute of federal or quasi-federal states, like Canada or Spain, but not common for unitary nations like Japan.

Thus, more than 45 years have passed since the first studies of paradiplomacy appeared and, although some scholars have analyzed the internationalization of the noncentral government using comparative politics or international relations' theories, the vast majority of these studies are still taking place only in federal countries and on specific cases (Lecours, 2002). Still, in the 1980s, and in parallel to the scholars' attention to paradiplomatic activities of the regions, a great surge of intercity collaboration came up when a variety of city networks emerged. These networks were different from what existed before in the sense that they were outward-looking: they helped cities to organize themselves around particular issues, so that together they could have a significant impact on a European or global scale. It was the time when city diplomacy started to abandon the traditional peacekeeping cause.

3. City diplomacy & City networking

3.1 The concept of City diplomacy

There are very few definitions of the concept of 'city diplomacy'. In fact, the concept has never been seriously treated and described. Most of the definitions given to city diplomacy are functional, limited to the activities of cities. The definitions mainly come from specific organizations and international city associations active in promoting such actions.

Specifically, in Recommendation No. 234 of 2008, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe defines city diplomacy as "a tool of local authorities and their associations to promote social cohesion, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction in order to create a stable environment where citizens can live together in a state of peace, democracy and prosperity" (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities 2008a). In its No.251 (2008) decision, the Congress argued that "city diplomacy expresses the growing importance of the city as a political actor at the international stage. Cities and their networks are involved in initiatives to build and consolidate peace in other areas" (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities 2008b).

In the same year, the 1st World Diplomacy Conference of Cities was organized by the international network of United States Cities and Local Authorities (UCLG), the International Cooperation Office of the Union of Dutch Local Authorities (VNG) and the City of The Hague. The Conference was held in The Hague (11-13 June 2008), following the relevant preparatory conferences in Perugia (2006) and Barcelona (2007). It adopted the Hague Agenda for City Diplomacy, which set out the definition of city diplomacy given by the Council of Europe (VNG 2008).

The Committee of the Regions (2009a) maintained that "modern diplomacy is no longer expressed and practiced by national governments, given the need for dialogue, cooperation and coordination to achieve the objectives of peace, democracy and respect for human rights in Europe. At all levels, closer cooperation between national governments and local and regional authorities is a natural but also necessary direction for a multilevel and more effective approach and strategy". Indeed, the CoR emphasized that "cities and major cities play an important role in international cooperation provided they cooperate with other municipalities in international networks".

Similarly, the Glocal Forum described city diplomacy as a form of decentralization of international relations management where municipalities were seen as key players, especially in conflict zones. Although the Federation of Canadian Municipalities did not define urban diplomacy in this way, it approached the international role of local authorities in terms of war and peace (Bush 2003).

These definitions are examples of extremely restrictive approaches to city diplomacy, focusing on security (conflict prevention, peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction actions), cooperation with developing countries, culture and entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, the Netherlands Institute for International Relations identified six dimensions of urban diplomacy: security, development, economics, culture, networks and representation (Van der Pluijm and Melissen 2007, pp. 19-33). As Van der Pluijm and Melissen have argued (2007, 11), "city diplomacy can be defined as the institutions and processes by which cities engage in partnership with actors at the international political scene in order to represent themselves and their interests vis-à-vis others".

Indeed, according to Sizoo (2007, pp.6-8), cities play different roles in the international arena: as lobbyists, exerting pressure on international organizations, while promoting and defending the interests and concerns of their residents; as mediators, negotiating agreements between local authorities; and as partners in projects, participating with other local authorities to promote or implement specific policies.

La Porte argues that the specific initiatives of city diplomats are similar to those of any diplomat or representative of an international body: collect information to better understand international developments; provide information for their region; represent their city in international organizations; negotiate agreements with other cities; and implement a variety of conflict prevention and peace enforcement actions (La Porte 2011, p.8). Saskia Sassen (2002, 1991) points out that even the so-called World Cities (eg New York, London), which are able to regulate their affairs more autonomously than others, increase their influence when they belong to networks that facilitate the exchange of know-how with other cities.

Indeed, Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007, p. 15) point out three reasons why a city chooses its diplomatic representation: First, to serve the interests of the city itself and its citizens in matters of security, due to the influx of large numbers of immigrants or to the need for environmental protection measures. Secondly, to meet the needs of citizens who may wish to participate in collaborative projects to support developing countries. Third, to express solidarity with actions

in other cities because they either face particular difficulties (e.g. natural disasters) or share common interests (e.g., participate in demonstrations on local problems).

City diplomacy is embodied in different forms and fields: intermunicipal agreements; cultural exchanges; town-twinning; EGTCs; and (thematic/geographical) city networks. This latter form of city diplomacy is the research focus of our present article.

3.2 Concept and practice of international Cities networks

City networks have become widely understood in the literature as formal or less formal collaborative initiatives to exchange information and disseminate experiences in urban policy, and sustainable development (Labaeye and Sauer 2013, p. Vii). As Sassen has pointed out, whether they are large, 'global' or small cities, their international influence is even greater within networks (Sassen, 2002, 1991). Indeed, Perulli et al. (2002, p. 69) point out a number of areas in which international city networks are active: urban and sustainable development, environment, culture, transport, information and communication technologies, tourism, health. Even when looking at Europe alone, there is a multifold of city networks existing today. An example of an early pioneer is EUROCITIES, which was founded in 1986 by six European cities as a network through which cities could share knowledge and influence EU policymakers. Other examples are the climate-oriented networks of Energy Cities and Climate Alliance that began in the 1990s, when local climate action became an important issue for many European cities. A recent example is the European Network of Living Labs that brings together the many living labs that are currently emerging throughout Europe. Finally, also the EU itself contributed to the establishment of several city networks, of which the URBACT ones is a prominent example. These examples of European city networks, together with many others, create a dense web of connections between cities in Europe.

Atkinson and Rossignolo (2010) refer to international city networks as 'mild forms of governance' and proceed with a conceptual delimitation and an analysis of their added value. Conceptually, international cities networks can be defined according to (a) their structures: horizontal, vertical and polycentric (Dematteis 1994; Dematteis and Guarrasi 1995); (b) their nature as creators of synergies and complementarities (Camagni and Salone 1993); and (c) their function as sources and conveyors of knowledge (Trullén and Boix 2003).

For his part, Barber highlights three features of international city networks. Firstly, the networks of local authorities are not limited in their composition to 'recruiting' only local authorities. On the contrary, in European city networks we may find a wide range of bodies such as 'universities, chambers of commerce and private sector bodies' (Barber 1997, p. 22). Secondly, the role of persons and support given by the local communities in establishing effective networks is prominent; this is also highlighted by Payre (2010, p. 264). The third feature of these networks is the Brussels office as an 'embassy' and a mini-representation of these local councils (John 1994; Hooghe and Marks 1996, pp. 82-85).

Bouteligier defines networks in terms of functions and internal organization: exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practices; improving cities 'operational capacity; and representing cities' interests internationally (Bouteligier 2011, p.15).

We could generally argue that an international city network is a multilateral international cooperation of local authorities, more or less structured, focused on one or more issues of common interest, and aims at improving business and operational dynamics of all stakeholders through exchange actions, influence and targeted projects, in the short or long term.

The present research is moving in this direction, aiming to cover this poverty of empirical studies in this field. The empirical part of this article attempts to evaluate the learning process and to highlight the limits of the paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities which participated in European socially oriented city networks.

4. The paradiplomatic activities of Greek municipalities in European city networks

During the programming period 2007-2013, 114 Greek municipalities took part in 136 European city networks (Karvounis 2017b). This article places indicatively particular emphasis on those Greek municipalities which participated in city networks whose statutory purpose was the promotion of social cohesion.

(a) Design of urban health policies

The Municipality of Maroussi participated in the city network "Building Healthy Communities" (URBACT II), which aimed to create an inter-municipal network of cities that would support the 10 partner cities (Lecce-Italy, Maroussi-Greece, Bacau-Romania, Baia M-Romania, d -Poland, Lidingo-Sweden, Barnsley-United Kingdom, Belfast-United Kingdom, Madrid-Spain), through actions to exchange experience and know-how to actively address and improve the planning and implementation of urban health services provided for European citizens. The total duration of the project was 37 months (PHASE I & II) and was completed on 19/7/2011. In the final project / network evaluation report, the Municipality of Maroussi appeared to have promoted actions to launch a mobile medical testing unit, as well as social inclusion initiatives.

(b) Improving disability services

Headed by the Municipality of Andravida-Kyllini and the partnership composed of the Municipalities of Mesto (Czech Republic), Cellino San Marco (Italy), Guimaraes (Portugal), Nantes-Metropoles (France), Salzburg (Austria), Pamplona (Spain), South Bublin (Spain) County Council (Republic of Ireland), Gdynia (Poland), Velenje (Slovenia), Bijeljina (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Smolyan (Bulgaria) the city network "United European Citizens" (UNIZENS), in the framework of the European Programme for Europe 2007-2013', encouraged co-operation between Member States to eliminate barriers to social inclusion. As a result of the project, people with disabilities gained access to facilities used for the programme, the citizens became more aware of the social problems and the municipality more open-minded, allowing European citizens from different countries to visit and get to know the area (Karvounis 2017a, p.109).

The Municipality of Igoumenitsa (Municipality of Igoumenitsa 2015) participated in the city network called 'Fo(u)r Europe' ('Unity in diversity - social exclusion is a European issue'), in the framework of the European programme "Europe for Citizens, 2007-2013", which also included the cities of Velbert (Germany), Chatellerault (France), and Corby (United Kingdom) (Karvounis 2017a, pp. 83-84). The four cities have, inter alia, exchanged experiences and innovative actions on people with disabilities.

(c) Integrated intervention in degraded areas

The Municipality of Nea Ionia, Volos, participated from May 2008 to December 2009 in the “Urbameco Cities” (URBACT II), a city network composed of the municipalities of Constanta (Romania), Lodz and Wroclaw (Poland), Tatabanya (Hungary), Birmingham (Hungary) United Kingdom), Arnhem (Netherlands), Göteborg (Sweden) and Greater Lyon (France). The URBAMECO network focused on strategies and plans that could promote sustainable integrated urban regeneration, with a particular focus on developing the local economy as a key element in combating social exclusion. For its part, the Greek Municipality prepared a local action plan for integrated interventions in four degraded areas (Aliveri, Refugees, Xirokampos, New Delta). The themes of the action plan included broadening citizens' dialogue and participation, protecting the environment, enhancing employment and social cohesion, local crime prevention councils, improving the attractiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises and monitoring actions (Municipality of Nea Ionia 2009).

(d) Roma action

Furthermore, the Department of Social Policy, Innovative Actions, Public Health and Gender Equality of Heraklion has been supporting the municipality's participation in the Council of Europe's Roma Alliance for Integration of Roma since 2011. This network has successfully assisted the municipality in planning actions for the Roma population. Indeed, in November 2013, the municipality was awarded the second DOSTA Award! of the Council of Europe for its actions and structures in the field of human rights protection, in particular on actions and structures concerning Roma. Specifically, the actions of the municipality concerned the Roma and Vulnerable Support Center, which has been located in Bodrum since 2006, providing social, primary care, education and employment support for Roma; a series of actions (“I am a Roma” Programme) organized, focusing on raising public awareness of Roma rights and culture through the media and education system; and networks on Roma issues with the aim of analyzing good practices and exchanging ideas.

(e) Employment policies for young people

The municipality of Thessaloniki participated in the “MyGen @ Work” city network (URBACT II) with the participation of 11 European cities (Rotterdam, Antwerp, Riga, Glasgow, Gdansk, Warsaw, Tampere, Maribor, Turin, Thessaloniki). A key concern of the network was to promote employment for young people in a changing labor market, focusing on business talents and mindsets. In the framework of this network, different city agencies (TEI, farmers, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Chamber of Commerce, Young Entrepreneurs, Ergon, etc.) collaborated within the Local Support Group, developing synergies to acquire know-how and promote youth employment. Actions were presented, workshops were held and good practices were disseminated among young people in Thessaloniki.

(f) Inclusive City

The municipality of Haidari participated in the “NeT-TOPIC” medium-sized European city network (Sesto San Giovanni-Italy, Haidari-Greece, Sacele-Romania, Kladno-Czech Republic, Salford-United Kingdom, Nanterre-France, Barakaldo-Spain), in the framework of the European programme URBACT II. The aim of the network was to highlight solutions for major issues in urban and suburban areas. Through this network, the main project of the municipality entitled “Haidari for all - Haidari

for all" matured to a great extent, initially set by the municipal authority and based on the following axes - areas of application: Culture - cultural heritage , education, environment, accessibility and equal opportunities. As part of the project, an Urban Local Support Group was created and prepared actions for the above policy domains, with the objective of making these actions in accordance with the needs of the citizens but also the specificities of the municipality (Barreiro 2015, p. 15).

(g) Rural employment policies

As a crowning point of long-standing cooperation and twinning with the German municipality of Detmold, the municipality of Oreokastro participated in the City Network for the Financial Crisis (C.E.P) in the framework of the Europe for Citizens, 2007-2013. The project entitled "Customized employment project for cities; opportunities for growth-C.E.P." was a network of cities from seven (7) EU Member States (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, United Kingdom, Lithuania, Portugal) aiming to exchange experiences and strategies to enhance employment and create opportunities in the various partner cities. All in all, cities already faced the economic downturn and its immediate impacts on unemployment, migration, especially on the young and aging populations. By participating in this network, the municipality gained significant benefits in boosting employment, especially in its rural areas, transferring good practices (Municipality of Oreokastro 2015, p. 48).

(h) Intercultural policies against exclusion

The Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities (CoE) programme was the result of a political debate process that led the organization to issue the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe 2008). The European Commission's preparations for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) also contributed to the design of the programme. The launch of the programme took place in Liverpool in May 2008 with a two-year pilot project. The purpose of the programme was to inspire cities to challenge the conventional negative view of migration and diversity and to provide them with the tools to design their policies and practices. The programme was based on the principle that diversity can bring a multifunctional advantage of economic, social and cultural innovation to urban communities. But this can only happen when different cultural traditions have the opportunity to meet, interact and collaborate locally. In addition to that, cities were called upon to get rid of the overriding reason that equated diversity with crisis, terrorist threat, illegal immigration and to focus on things that affected people's quality of life on a daily basis, such as public services. .

The programme, as a peer-to-peer learning and assessment network, operates at two levels: it allows policy makers from different cities to share their experiences, successes and failures internationally in a mutually supportive environment. The results of cities' participation in the network were the formulation of strategies, the expansion of the partnership and the emergence of innovations.

In this context, the municipality of Patras has been involved in the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Network since 2008, addressing the multicultural character of modern cities and highlighting actions in individual policy domains, including services for citizens, education, volunteering, and culture. In this case, the benefits of the municipal authority were limited to sharing good practices and experiences with other network partners and participating in transnational projects. Patras has been for the last 25 years a living city for many people coming from Europe, mainly Albania, Romania, Bulgaria and Russia, as well as people from Nigeria, Syria, China, and India. Planning actions for vulnerable social groups, such as immigrants, women and young

people, are areas of action that include services for citizens, education and culture. In particular, a key role in this effort was played by the Patras Inclusion Council, a valuable tool for the participation, representation and promotion of migrants' views locally (Municipality of Patreon 2013).

On this basis, the anti-rumor model launched by Barcelona has been adopted by the municipality due to its flexibility and adaptability, in education, communication and awareness-raising activities, culture and sport. The result of the city networking was the improvement of the services of the social structures and the creation of an initial strategic framework for interculturalism in Patras, which acts as an "umbrella" for any related action.

5. The limits of the paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities in European City networks

At the same time, however, the positive aspects of the paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities were filtered by the particular circumstances that impeded the longevity of these results and which, to a great extent, identified the reform potential of these networks and their members.

The problems that arose in the European city networking of Greek municipalities were related to political choices, the inability of their personnel to voice a technocratic discourse in the organizational units of municipalities, organizational and staffing organizational deficits, bureaucratic constraints, and a cultural context that was not tolerable for change. For instance, what emerged from meetings with the staff of the Thessaloniki Municipality's Operational Planning & ICT Directorate was that, despite the opportunities and prospects that existed for Greek cities from the European city networking, particular difficulties and problems arose in the procedures for the procurement of goods and services; in expenditure control (Court of Auditors); in the recruitment process; and in the certification of expenditure (Co-funded Projects Certification and Verification Authority). What is more, the city of Heraklion faced "inadequate staffing of the European Programmes Office" and a "lack of culture for inter-municipal co-operation" (Municipality of Heraklion 2013, p.44). At the same wavelength, the municipality of Xanthi met major difficulties in disseminating knowledge and information among its executive officers, in promoting the benefits of introducing and practicing a new management model aimed at optimizing the efficiency and productivity of municipal services, and in the adaptation of executives to the implementation of modern management and operation systems (Municipality of Xanthi 2014, pp. 263, 264, 265, 267, 271). The same conclusion came up in the case of the municipality of Egaleo where there was a "lack of an organized unit" to exploit trans-European networks, although the need for "networking and developing partnerships at European level" was still considered important in the field of social policy (Municipality Egaleo 2015, p.107).

Similarly, despite the benefits of implementing a quality assurance system in the municipality of Nea Ionia Volos, difficulties of change and resistance to the "new" have been identified, as there has been intense criticism from employees as to whether such a system from technocratic point of view could adapt to the specificities of a social service. In this context, the municipality of Kastoria has also been unable to assimilate, at the operational level, the openness of multi-lateral partnerships by providing for similar administrative support structures and enhancing the internal development of the municipality as an organization. The lack of a qualified staff and the

fragmentation of sectoral items have limited the opportunities for participation and exploitation of those partnerships and programmes. Furthermore, despite the efforts made by the municipality of Komotini, through the URBACT II programme, to improve the living conditions of Alan Koyu, a Roma Muslim slum, the attempts to relocate it have failed. Lack of trust on the part of the public, lack of an informed public and an active civil society all result in weakening and undermining these initiatives.

To these factors we may add the economic crisis that led to the municipalities of Athens, Maroussi, and Ag. Paraskevi to leave or cut off cooperation with European city networks due to their inability to meet their financial obligations.

6. Conclusion

The present article focused on the results of the city networking of the Greek local authorities at European level during the programming period 2007-2013. Therefore, the problems encountered at the municipal level in relation to the relationship between municipalities and the EU and its networks were not a matter of choice for or against Europe and its multilateral partnerships. Actually, the city networking paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities exhibited the local authorities' willingness to defend structures, attitudes and in general a culture that undermined the results of their, paradoxically, expressed willingness to participate in the process of European integration through these international partnerships. It was mainly those 'systemic' problems, structural deficiencies and cultural norms that inhibited or mitigated the potential of the paradiplomatic multilateral initiatives and their reform opportunities at local level.

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Biographical Note

Antonios Karvounis, Ph.D., is working at the Hellenic Ministry of Interior & Administrative Reconstruction and is competent for the international partnerships and European programmes of local authorities. Since 2006, he has been national contact point of the Europe for Citizens Programme. He is teaching at Panteion University (Athens), at Hellenic Open University as well as at the National Centre of Public Administration and Self-Government. He has written several books and articles on public administration and local government's international affairs and European Programmes. E-mail: antonioskarvounis@gmail.com.