

STAGE (Science, Technology and Governance in Europe)
Discussion Paper 17
June 2004

Introduction to the Greek Case Studies

- **Iosif A. Botetzagias & Moses A. Boudourides**
 - **University of Patras**

STAGE is a Thematic Network under the Fifth Framework Programme (HPSE-CT2001-50003). STAGE gratefully acknowledges the support of the European Commission

The three Greek case studies undertaken within the framework of the Science, Technology and Governance in Europe (STAGE) thematic network deal with Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGOS), Biotechnology and ICTs, the second among them being the Greek anchoring case.

They had developed over the last thirty years, the life-span of the Third Hellenic Republic (1974 to the present), yet, all these issues had not appeared at the same time: the seventies mark the emergence of the environmental debate, the eighties the biotechnologies' one, while in late nineties greeted the ICTs' issue.

Accordingly, for each case study, our research team had to depend and make use of different and unequal resources, a fact depicted in the breadth and depth of the level of analysis for each respective case. Accordingly, for the ENGOS' case which has evolved for a longer period of time, more academic resources were available, while we have been able to make extensive use of a recently submitted Ph.D. thesis on the Greek environmental movement [Botetzagias 2001]. Thus, on the one hand, our analysis on this specific case is broader, our insights are better informed and our assertions are significantly bolder. On the other hand, the Biotechnology and ICTs case-studies represent but emerging cases of scientific governance within the Greek context. Accordingly, the 'data-set' we had to depend upon was of a limited and primordial character, simply because of the novelty of these issues. Nevertheless, we have tried to mitigate this shortcoming by focusing on the ongoing, underlying and 'undetected' (by other researchers) debate at the societal level, as it was reported in the national newspapers: a substantial data-set of relevant articles was, first, compiled and, then, analysed with Social Networks Analysis' (SNA) techniques. This allowed us to effectively map the emerging networks of public deliberation and governance and to theorise on the future developments within each domain.

The analysis of three Greek case studies seems to suggest that a discretionary model of scientific governance has prevailed to date in Greece. Issues of science and technology have, by large, been framed as 'experts' issues – to be tackled and discussed mainly by scientists and bureaucrats. A 'design and command' ethos stirs the various committees, in a never ending struggle to meet deadlines, absorb EU funding or incorporate into national law long overdue EU Directives. A late rejoinder on issues that have tantalised Western Europe for quite a few decades, the archaic

Greek bureaucracy have dealt with these new issues in the good-old legalistic, selective and/or corporatist method.

However, such an attitude was challenged at various times, especially by concerned non-governmental organisations, which, being *de facto* excluded from the officially-sanctioned debate, took the matter to the people. And the people occasionally did react, albeit with varying determination and commitment.

These challenges to the existing mode of governance did not go unnoticed, yet the overall response was quite different from what one might have expected: thus, in the environmental debate, the Greek ENGOs, enjoying a low public support, by late nineties came to over-depend on state-regulated subsidies, casting serious doubts on their ability (or, one should say willingness?) to challenge the State authorities. On the biotechnologies' front, a tactical retreat by the government in the mid-nineties, at the high point of the Greek 'anti-GM' feeling, was followed up by the continuation of the same old discretionary model of government, spiced with a certain educational flavour. This has also been the favoured approach in the latest of our case-studies, the ICTs' one.

In other words, despite at times being seriously challenged, the discretionary model of governance did not yield, nor was it necessary for the Greek administration to overhaul its preferential strategy. The typical 'top-down' political inclusion of social interests and demands that has characterised the modern Greek state, seems to have repeated itself even in these new policy domains.

Are we, then, suggesting an 'end-of-history' appraisal for the Greek Science & Technology Governance? Certainly not. Ever since the turn of the century, the social challenges to state hegemony have been increasing, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, while the State is losing its traditional grip on the national economy. The last three years have witnessed massive demonstrations - although for syndical and anti-war/anti-globalisation issues - suggesting an awakening or a reassertion of the Greek civil society. Environmental degradation, genetic engineering and ICTs technologies are here to stay - thus they will continue to exercise considerable influence on people's perceptions and everyday lives. Taking an optimistic, yet not unfounded, guess, we argue that in the mid-term it will become

increasingly difficult for the Greek State not to open up the policy arena to more participatory forms of public engagement.