

On Diaspora Philanthropy and Volunteerism

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Introduction

I see the diaspora philanthropy and volunteerism in Greece as an issue of mutually reinforcing demand and supply constraints. I will examine some of the main contours of this relationship in three sections.

In the first section I will briefly talk about demand constraints on diaspora volunteerism and philanthropy in Greece which straddle the public / private, left and right divide and there I will give two examples, one from the public sector and one from the private sector.

In the second section I will briefly compare Jewish-American philanthropy in Israel with Greek-American philanthropy in Greece, thus addressing the issue of diaspora philanthropy and volunteerism through the supply constraints perspective.

In the third section, I will mention two examples of diaspora philanthropy and volunteerism that have managed to escape demand and supply constraints and will ask what lessons they can teach in general for diaspora philanthropy and volunteerism in Greece.

Public and Private demand constrains in Greece

Greece in the last six years, from 2011 to the present, demonstrated in the domain of state higher education the compelling force that diaspora volunteerism can be - what the literature calls the 'patriotic discount', which is to say the offering of services at low or zero cost by diaspora experts to the homeland. In 2011 the Diamantopoulou reforms, named after the PASOK minister that introduced them in Parliament, created the institution of the elected by faculty management boards of Greek state universities. These boards brought Greece's scientific Diaspora into positions of great influence in Greece's universities. More than a hundred Greek academics, from Europe and North America, in many cases from institutions of Ivy League and Oxbridge levels of excellence, were elected members and even Presidents of these Boards. Typically most of these scholars were born in Greece, were graduates of Greek State universities, were familiar with the extensive pathologies of the Greek higher education system – in sort politicization, nepotism, violence and corruption – and professed and expressed a desire to give back both to their country of origin and to the cause of the renaissance of Greek higher education.

Commensurately, these reforms undercut the position of Greek faculty which in the past had parlayed alliances with student unions to dominate the leadership ranks of Greece's universities despite, by and large, their lack of a distinguished scholarly record. Thus

resistance by those who stood to lose from the institution of the management boards in state universities, where diaspora volunteerism made its presence so strongly felt, was not slow in coming via the political system. In general, resistance to the diaspora-filled boards can be found from across the political spectrum of state faculty but it is universal among the far left faculty for a combination of ideological and career profile reasons. By contrast, boards, and the diaspora's involvement in them, are strongly supported by a majority, moderate center left, center right cohort. After all diaspora scientists were elected to these boards by state faculty.

A longer run institutional conflict, which has run from the mid late 1990's onwards, in the private sector demonstrates, that the pro and anti-diaspora philanthropy and volunteerism divide straddles the public and private and the left and right, divides. At Athens College, Greece's Eton, which has been since its day of foundation ruled by two boards, one headquartered in New York one in Athens, under a joint management charter, the Athens board of directors initiated an effort to neutralize the influence of the New York Board of Trustees and, if possible lead to its elimination, subsequent to the latter's commissioning of a blue ribbon report, the so called 'Harvard report', critical of the institution's culture and governance. This battle recently reached a landmark point through the decision of the Supreme Court of the State of New York substantially in favour of the New York Board of Trustees of Athens College. On the one side stood a group of socially and politically influential residents of Athens for whom control of Athens College and of its legacy admissions policy was its main source of social capital. On the other side stood a group of Americans and Greek-Americans, the latter comprising of first generation immigrants to the US who also happened to be Athens College graduates, with greater access to wealth, some of them having become leading Wall Street personalities, less or no investment in acquiring Athenian social capital and articulating the desire to reform, along meritocratic and advanced educational practices, Greece's premier private school. Unlike the experience of state universities this conflict originated as I said in a private institution and by an upper class socioeconomic cohort which is usually identified with the center right in Greece.

What are the commonalities between these two cases that straddle the ideological and public and private divides? On both cases we have highly distinguished diaspora cohorts promoting a classic modernization agenda in Greek institutions. These cohorts carry with them three elements: values and knowledge superior, in classic modernization terms, to those in possession of their institutional opponents in Greece and, as a corollary, greater

actual or potential access to monetary resources. In both cases their local opponents fight tenacious and, at least temporarily, successful rearguard actions. In both cases the diaspora cohorts have powerful local allies, faculty in the state universities which elected them after all to these positions of influence, graduates of Athens College who share the normative agenda of the New York Board, and parts of the Greek media which is vested in modernization and which see the diaspora as a potentially key resource from Greece's escape from the crisis. Last but not least resistance to the loss of influence by resident Greeks, due to the inflows of expertise and funding from the diaspora, constitutes an effective demand constraint on such expertise and funding in critical sectors such as education.

What can the Jewish-American with Israel experience tell us about Greek-Americans and Greece

I want to speculate, through a brief comparison between philanthropy and volunteerism to the respective homelands of Jewish-Americans and Greek-Americans, that demand constraints create supply constraints which then mutually reinforce each other. This observation is, in and by itself, banal. It is the lack of sustained speculation and investigation in the Greek case of these demand and supply dynamics that is striking.

Briefly in the example of the American-Jewish community and Israel we have (a) an American tradition of philanthropic giving, facilitated by significant tax exemptions, together with (b) an extensive Israeli Third Sector whereby most hospital, educational institutions and social welfare structures are co-financed by the Israeli state and private donors, as a result of which (c) Jewish-American donations, together with the governance arrangements that are their corollary, have been a major factor in the structure and performance of Israeli collective life.

For example, the research intensity and orientation towards fund raising of Israel's universities, both features shaped by the influence of the Jewish- American community, have been instrumental factors to the success of the economy of Israel. Equally, the ability of the Jewish-American community to thus have an impact on Israeli collective life has meant that the rituals and processes of annual fund raising for Israeli causes have given structure and cohesion to Jewish-Americans and have shaped Jewish-American leadership over time.

This is in contrast with the Greek-American experience where the unwillingness across the public and private and ideological divides, as the cases of state university boards and of the private Athens College attest, to invite the input and participation of the Greek-American Diaspora has meant that Greece has had minimal influence in the evolution of Greek-Americans, i.e. minimal influence in the way Greek-Americans cohere as a community, select their leadership and so on. This vacuum has been filled in the US by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. A very preliminary investigation of Greek-American patterns of philanthropic giving reveals (a) interlocking relationships between involvement with the Archdiocese, the Leadership 100, an elite group of Greek-Americans operating under the aegis of the Archdiocese, and a pattern of donations directed towards church related activities in the US and to the Patriarchate in Constantinople and second (b) a number of Greek-Americans, usually highly educated, involved in such sectors as high technology and entertainment, that have opted out of the traditional Orthodox Church charitable vehicles, a milieu that probably does not agree with their liberal sensibilities and their life style choices, while being generous donors to other causes irrelevant to Greece. Thus in contrast to the case of Israel and Jewish-Americans, the Greek state and Greek civil society have conceded claims to the philanthropic resources of the Greek-American community to the Greek Archdiocese of America or to purely US causes. Wealthy Greek-Americans when they consolidate and enhance their elite status through their philanthropic giving they do so in support of either secular or religious and / or communitarian causes that have little or no relevance to the Greek polity and society.

Two useful proxies: philanthropy from shipping and philanthropy and volunteerism via US institutions

There are two useful proxies which have not suffered from these demand and supply constraints I have discussed. First, philanthropic giving from Greece's shipping community, and / or the foundations set up by distinguished shipowning names, which I would describe as a hybrid, both resident and diasporic at the same time. Second, philanthropy and volunteerism from Greek Americans effected via US institutions long resident in Greece and not established by Greek natives.

Ship-owners combine personal and professional lives lived both in Greece and abroad. They have genuine stakes in Greece due to their constitutionally protected tax amnesty, their sourcing of crews and management teams, the ancillary services to shipping as in finance and law and their investment in non-shipping sectors in Greece, primarily in finance, real

estate and tourism. At the same time they have attained a level of wealth that includes them into the global moneyed elite, they live for long periods of time in places such as London, Geneva, Monaco or New York, they might have been born and raised abroad and they are consumers of advisory services of a global standard, in tax, finance, law, estate planning and so on. While appreciated for their wealth and success abroad they are lionized as much as envied in Greece where they are employers of choice, symbols of business success achieved outside Greece's rent-seeking business environment (which is not to say that they are not beneficiaries of the Greek state's fiscal treatment) and, for the less discrete among their cohort, emblems of a high consumption, glamorous life style.

They thus have the capacity and the motive to be important and capable philanthropists in Greece. They have the money, they and their lieutenants have the knowhow of conducting business in Greece and they have the incentive of legitimation, of validation, of enlightened self-interest and, because this quality also exists, of selfless patriotism to distinguish themselves philanthropically in their homeland. They can also bring to bear to their philanthropic enterprise the kind of operational excellence and best practice – simply put the best that money can buy - to which they are accustomed in a business and a personal capacity. For instance in the case of the Stavris Niarchos Foundation the suspension of demand and supply constraints on diaspora philanthropy has meant that we have in Greece a foundation that has the strategies, methods and resources of a very significant US foundation: we have the ambition to achieve systemic change and a related operational philosophy oriented around capacity building in the Third Sector and pursuit of joint aims with like-minded foundations and grantee organisations whether from Greece or from abroad.

Moving on to US institutions operating in Greece – the most prominent to my knowledge being Deree College, Anatolia College, American Farm School and the American School of Classical Studies – there what we see, from the 1970's onwards, is the increasing involvement of Greek-American trustees which involve a typical mix of the wealthy donors and professionals with the suitable, to the institutions that attract them, skill-set. These individuals are first, second and third generation Greek Americans who have been actively recruited by the boards of trustees of these institutions in an attempt to renew board ranks, infuse the boards with the necessary expertise and expand access to fund raising in the Greek-American community. The institutions themselves offer high quality US governance standards, a long track record of navigating the intricacies of operating in Greece as much as

of making a tangible contribution to Greek society. To Greek-Americans with the ability and inclination to involve themselves with their country of origin they combine a convivial atmosphere and the prospect of results, offsetting the obstacles and frustrations that are attendant to conducting any type of affair in Greece. This type of interaction is inextricably connected to general trends not unique to Greece or to Greek-Americans: the tendency of ethnic minorities in the US to absorb WASP norms of noblesse oblige as much as to build their social profile and advance their business connections through charitable giving, the rise to affluence and prominence of second and third generation hyphenated Americans, the US's generous fiscal regime towards charitable contributions and, last but not least, the ability to run the affairs of a non-profit entity from a huge distance due to the fall of transport costs and the elimination of communication costs.

Synthesizing the wider significance of these two sub groups of Greek diaspora philanthropy and volunteerism we could say that greater business involvement of the Greek-American community in Greece could very well, as in the case of the Greek ship-owners, also lead to philanthropic engagement; while greater emulation by Greek grantee organisations of a US governance structure and professionalism, of the type offered by US institutions operating in Greece, would enlarge the pool of Greek Third Sector as well as state institutions capable of attracting diaspora philanthropy and volunteerism.

Concluding Thoughts

To the extent that the perspective and case studies that I outline to you are both under-investigated as much as promising how do they relate to the aims and philosophy of the Greek Diaspora Project as I understand them? I will offer to you two concluding thoughts:

1. While we all have our normative preferences – for instance I happen to believe that the activity of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation in Greece makes an important contribution to the cause of a more pluralist, competent, extrovert Greece which is dear to me - the research activities of the Greek Diaspora project in diaspora and volunteerism should contribute to an informed and expanded scholarly and public dialogue that mobilises and helps to develop contesting normative understandings. As far as I am concerned by spurring normative contestation we will end up enriching the work of our own project, we will sharpen and expand diaspora scholarship in general and will strengthen democratic deliberation and policy making in Greece on this important public issue.

2. Equally, our work could have, and should aim to have, similar aims in the diaspora communities themselves which are also, in their own way, discrete political communities. Our research can and should spur scholarly as much as public dialogue and investigation, within Greece's diaspora communities, on the way their members and organisations relate to Greece as volunteers and philanthropists. Is suspicion towards Greece's openness to Diaspora volunteerism and philanthropy warranted, does it need to be qualified, are there more and less promising avenues through which such volunteerism and philanthropy can be expressed? We ought to be able to provide the evidence and analysis that such questions demand. And by doing so we can aspire to make our own distinct contribution to the self-conception and motivation of diaspora Greeks in the way they chose to relate – or not – to their homeland.