

Diffusion and evolution of the co-operational organizations perception in Greece during the 19th century

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In my speech I am going to refer to the traditional forms of economic cooperation and to the traditional ideological basis of Modern Greek society, which formed the necessary basis of approval of co-operations in the 19th century. The process of integration of new ideas is going to be examined as well. Apart from that, we are going to examine the conditions of the creation of the first modern co-operations. In order for this research to be realized, widely unknown and unused material has been used.

The co-operation has been a form of economical action integrated into the bourgeois economy and society, in spite of the intense ideological aspects which accompanied its appearance and diffusion. Its bureaucratic structure and management based on representation are in accordance with its above stated bourgeois character. One of the objectives of the appearance of the co-operation was the adjustment of minor producers and consumers to the new economic data of a growing production and consumption. The differentiation in production was concerning capital needed and number of employees. On the other hand, the differentiation in consumption was linked to the gathering of large numbers of people to the cities and to the gradual breaking of those people's bonds to the countryside. The actual diffusion of co-operations in the countryside integrated more efficiently minor agricultural production into the new industrial environment.

Traditional forms of economic cooperation in Modern Greek Society

The forms of cooperation in the agricultural sector developed together with the necessities and priorities of agricultural activities and with the necessities of the transition of knowledge (from the previous generation to the next one), so we could say that those forms were based on a long-term and actually stable basis.

The lack of resources, which presented itself in the agricultural economies either as lack of capital or as lack of labor, resulted in the growth of forms of collaboration based on reciprocation. The collaboration in agricultural activities was widely extended. It included activities that were performed in the fields or in the house, as well as agricultural or shepherding activities. Collaboration was a mechanism of mutual help in the process of business growth and a mechanism of social solidarity when it was focused on the support of the impoverished and unable ones.

Apart from that, forms of collaboration developed in the land- and sea-transport sectors, such as caravans and the sea-companies of the so-called “syntrofonafes” (companions-sailors). In the 18th century, the “syntrofies” developed as well, which were based around the network of manufacture and merchandise of fabrics in central and northern Greece.

Although the above stated forms of collaboration integrated certain characteristics, which were later observed in co-operations as well, they were not actual co-operations themselves in terms of what “co-operation” means nowadays. What differentiates those forms is their integration in different types of communal forms of economical organization.

However, they were the historical precedent needed. Especially the “Koini Syntrofia” (Common Company) of Ampelakia was the ideal model against certain views which supported that Greek mentality does not favor co-operational activities. What was most important, was that there was no answer to the argument that Greeks were the world's avant-garde in co-operations, as the “Koini Syntrofia” of Ampelakia indicated, which actually canceled all opposing arguments regarding unfavorable Greek mentality and concluded to the denial of participation in that new form of business. This way, the “Koini Syntrofia” of Ampelakia played an important role in the foundation and development of co-operations during the third quarter of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

Social organization and the traditional ideological basis of Modern Greek society

During the Ottoman rule communal life developed widely and solidarity appeared, according to the variables of locality and national culture. The universal perception imposed by the community as a cultural factor remained deeply rooted in the collective consciousness of Greeks. The solidarity networks which developed in the communities played also a supporting role against Ottoman oppression.

Leadership in the community was based on social recognition, experience and general economical and social status. In spite of that, broader forms of organization, such as assemblies were called for in times of need and played their own role.

The system of adjustment of social relations inside the community was based on productive solidarity. It depends on the collective regulation of the relations between land-cultivators and cattle- breeders, on the participation of individuals at structural work and on the necessity of storing the surplus of production, for the purpose of meeting the necessities that may occur, when short-harvest years may later come, and so on. In agricultural communities, under the auspice of Christian ideology, as well as with the organizing support or encouragement of the Church, co-operational reciprocal aid habits were developed. Communities also developed institutions of social re-distribution of the economical surplus, such as grants for the impoverished ones and scholarships for hard-working young people.

The highlight of the developed bonds inside a community or of a wider cultural unity is the festival day. It is on these occasions that one can witness a compound expression of multiple elements, such as enjoyment of food and drink, as well as the projection of all their social and cultural attainments, together with popular magical religious belief. The participation of large numbers of Christians in religious ceremonies, such as religious festivals, demanded the participation and collaboration of relatives and friends of the locals in the preparation of food and cleaning activities of the places where the ceremonies would happen.

The functioning of Christian communities created suitable conditions for the development of Christian fraternities which in turn attracted other social groups and brought them closer to the achievement of their religious, educational or philanthropical aims.

Forms of collaboration were developed in unions as well. Among the members of unions there was a form of solidarity. The ways of collaborating inside these unions aimed at making better living conditions certain for their members, as well as for the whole town or city where they were conducting their business. The unions defined not only the terms of labor, the salaries and the prices of products but the profits as well.

The popular perception on collaborations was expressed also through oral literature, which help

passing from one generation to another and to wider social layers attitudes against the law-violating attitudes of partners.

The necessary ideological basis of approval of wider and more complex forms of collaboration such as co-operations were defined by the surstructure of collaboration which were created by the economical organization forms functioning in communities or towns. Christian universal perception was an important ideological basis of positive attitude towards co-operational ideas.

The integration of new tendencies during the 19th century

The theories of social organization were developed during the 18th and more particularly during the 19th century. In the first years of King Otto's reign, G. Eichthal, influenced by his Saint-Simonian perceptions, planned to establish co-operational organizations in Greece within the framework of a colonisation plan for the country. In 1854 Demetrius Mavrokordatos delivered a speech, in the presence of King Otto, trying to bring the idea of co-operation into the consideration of a wide audience.

The first extensive accounts, written by intellectuals, on co-operational societies of the time, appeared in the 1860s. King Otto's fall and the constitutional change which followed the change of dynasty in the throne of Greece brought about the constitutional establishment of the rights of gathering and co-operating. In March 1864, Anastasios Goudas wrote articles in favour of co-operational societies in the review *Melissa[Bee] of Athens* [Melissa ton Athinon]; At the same time, the Greek review of Trieste named "*Kleio*" published an article dealing with the same subject.

Toward the end of 1864, Alexander Soutsos wrote a series of articles on co-operations in the magazine "*Pandora*". These articles described the historical evolution of the co-operation phenomenon in Western Europe. The author suggested the creation of co-operational associations for the purpose of combating poverty and moral degradation. He proposed and analysed two types of co-operational associations for the elimination of poverty, the "co-operational associations of mutual help" and the "Popular Banks". Alexander Soutsos claimed that the State must not interfere in any way in the function of these associations. He also exposed his own views about the shortcomings of the socialist perceptions of the time. The above stated author later returned with a new article on the consuming and producing co-operations of workmen. He examined their course in the advanced Western European countries and suggested the adoption of such organizations in Greece as well. Though Alexander Soutsos did not agree with the views of the socialists and furthermore criticized their ideological deficiencies, especially their theoretical partialities and their utopian objectives, he however, accepted the realization of the co-operational idea.

In 1869, Demetrius Mavrokordatos, published six letters, among of which "About Popular Credit Banks", "For the Social Matter of Co-operations" and others. The same year, Aristides Oikonomos, publisher of the review *Oikonomiki Epitheorisis* [Economic Review] returned to Greece after a five-months-long journey abroad, and among other activities he played an active part in the establishment of "consuming societies" and shareholding business. Through the columns of his review, he disseminated the idea of co-operation and informed the public about the age-long evolution of the institution and about the different kinds of cooperative societies. Other articles in the magazine demanded the creation of consuming societies of clerks and of a women prisoners' association while quoting examples of progress in this matter in other countries. Oikonomos' articles surpassed the form of expressing one's ideas in an article and tended to promote the idea of co-operation in a systematic way.

In 1872, Anastasios Goudas promoted the idea of co-operation using examples out of the European reality and Greek history. In 1873, an anonymous writer in an article in “Omios” (Homer) Magazine, who seemed to live permanently abroad, described in a tragic way the clash of interests and stock-market frauds on the country's minerals. As a solution to the mineral extraction problem, he suggested the co-operational idea.

In 1882, Konstantinos Vamvas gave a lecture on co-operations in the philological association “Parnassos”, which was considered to be of high status. In 1883, his lecture was published in the magazine of the association and in 1887, in “Estia” he wrote an article in favor of the establishment of co-operations in Europe as the only way for the economical rise of the popular layers of European society. His series of articles constituted a systematic promotion of co-operational ideas and not just a simple expression of views, as he suggested that he preferred writing in “Estia” because it was read by families and his articles aided in the direction of removing obstacles in the way for the wide establishment of co-operations.

It is made obvious by the articles of the time that the development of co-operations in Western Europe was the actual ideal and ideological mechanism in favor of the establishment of the co-operational idea in Greece. The approval of the co-operational idea by the intellectuals of the time and its systematic promotion through the press played an important role in the development of the institution in Greece. Through all those articles we can see the effort of the authors to link their arguments to invariables of Modern Greek cultural reality, such as Christian and ancient Greek tradition and ideologies of the time. They also try to promote the compatibility and efficiency of that modern institution, which was hesitatingly being accepted by Modern Greek society. It is also obvious that the status of business activities is decreasing, especially after the stock-market crisis of the time and the following extended money losses. This decrease in business status must have made things more favorable for the first co-operations to develop during the last twenty years of the 19th century and may have probably led the co-operations to develop bonds with the trade-unions movement as well.

During the first decades of the 20th century the increasing problems of modernizing the Greek economy contribute to the turning of lots of progressive intellectuals towards the co-operational idea. Many among them gather in the “Koinoniologiki Etairia” (Sociologic Association), in which Alexandros Papanastasiou's co-operational views play a dominant role.

The first modern co-operations

The late appearance of the co-operational movement in Greece, in spite of the multidimensional information on what was happening in Western Europe and of the important presence of complex forms of collaboration in traditional economy and society, is linked to the delayed Greek economy and the lack of established institutions supporting productive activity.

In 1859 in Patra, the first company with a wide popular base is founded, with the participation of an extremely large number of shareholders from Peloponnisos, intending to insure against sea dangers.

Athens had always been a big melting-pot for domestic cultures, beliefs and ways of life, but never stopped turning an eye to Western European societies and introducing institutions and other forms of organization in order to replace traditional associations which were abandoned. In 1860, following similar activities in Western Europe, an association of solidarity of Greek doctors, following similar European examples. On the first sheet of the founding contract there was the word "Co-operation". The aim of this association was to aid the sick, old or incapable of working doctors and their families.

The association was financed by partners, donations, heirlooms etc, but also by the interest of its own capital. It was an association of reciprocal aid, leading member of which was the doctor Bernard Roezer, and had a limited approval by the doctors of the time.

In 1870, in Ermoupoli of Syros the "Greek Donating Bank Pandora" was founded. Its foundation came as a result of the influence of co-operational ideas. In its founding contract the influence of the co-operational ideas on the founders is quite obvious. It is underlined that: "We keep in mind the results produced by co-operations, through which nations grow and individuals prosper. (We keep in mind) that through co-operational companies the civilized world has reached the top of its wealth and magnificence and through them its days are prosperous and powerful". The founders' will for the appliance of this system in Greece as well is made clear, as well as the belief that "the magnificence and prosperity of the Homeland" will come by the development of co-operations.

One of the first co-operations was a consuming one named "association of the working people, Self-aid". It was founded in Athens in 1870 and its quick development during the first two to three years soon ceased and was finally led to dissolution.

During the period 1880-1910 the Greek trade-unions movement appeared and developed, showing some similarity to the trade-unions movements of the developed countries of the time. The trade-unions movement was a way of promotion and diffusion for the co-operational ideas. During the same period, co-operational activity is closely bonded to and affected by the trade-unions movement.

Co-operational ideas linked to the workers' movement were developed firstly in Ermoupoli. The first strike in Greek territory, which happened in Syros shipyard, was organized by the shipbuilders union which was not only a union but also a co-operation. In 1891, in the founding contracts of Athens unions, among other objectives, there is also the development of co-operational activities.

Since 1879 there was a union in Kymi of Euvoia named "Worker", which aimed at raising funds for loans and insurance of suffering members. Loans could also be given to non-members, so the union seemed to involve co-operational and non-co-operational functions.

Extended co-operational activity, however, started after 1900, when co-operations take their modern form and the co-operational movement grows. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the co-operational movement in Greek territory appeared and evolved especially in rural areas, due to those areas economical and social evolution. Among the factors that affect the development of the movement are the level of development of agricultural economy, merchandise and industry, in combination with population size and social composition.

The first agricultural co-operation, founded in Almyros of Thessaly on November 12,1900,

was named “Shareholding Agricultural Fund of Reciprocal Aid”. The Almyros co-operation was focused on the support of individual farms in capital, on the support of cultivators in order for them to buy cheaper supplies and tools and on the support of mechanization of agricultural activities.

In Thessaly, big land-owners lead the cultivators to organize themselves, due to characteristic oppression. The communal spirit was the first basis of reactions, as it was still active, which is made obvious by a number of representation contracts of the beginning of the 20th century.

In such a contract we can read that “in order for them to defend their rights of property, which are violated by the owner of their village Zoulefkari, they name representatives”. The above stated conditions led in 1908 the village-men of Koskina of Karditsa to form a co-operation, whose ideological values were deeply affected by Christian tradition.

The existence of forms of wide traditional collaboration favored the introduction of co-operations in Modern Greek economy and society. The tradition of collaboration inside the communities and the Christian perception of reality aided towards the integration of those new ideas. Intellectuals of the time contributed to the diffusion of co-operational perceptions. The decrease of the status of businesses due to stock-market and wide economical crisis favored the growth of co-operations but also bound their activities to the trade-unions movement.