

Greece - Turkey Cross Border Cooperation and the role of Civil Society: Towards a new pragmatism

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Abstract

The formation of contemporary borders between the two countries is the outcome of successive conflicts, wars, agreements and treaties ever since the period of the Greek uprising against the Ottoman Empire. Even nowadays, several political and military issues associated with border space remain unsolved whilst both countries provide their own interpretation for every respective issue. The perspective of Turkey's EU accession had been the factor that gave a new dimension in both interstate and cross border relationships at a society level. The present paper aims in scrutinizing the role of civil society organizations in the formation of an agenda of cross border cooperation between the two countries in the new geopolitical and geo-economic milieu. More specifically, there is a documentation and evaluation on (a) cross border strategies at a local and national level, (b) the actions and effectiveness of civil societies, (c) the role of the State in cross border cooperation and (d) the prevailing views and stereotypes which exist for the "other" at a civil society level. The empirical analysis is based on the EUDIMENSIONS programme funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme. The research findings contribute in the better understanding of the role of civil society in the formation of cross border socio-political, and economic dynamics.

Keywords: Cross border cooperation, civil society, proximity, Greece, Turkey **Introduction**

The end of the cold war period with the collapse of the Eastern bloc saw the Enlargement of the European Union towards the East. What followed was the political and economic integration which brought to the fore the significance of cross border cooperation at a European and local policy making level as well as at the level of scientific discussion and literature. Within this outline, the involvement of civil society in the actual issues is intensely highlighted in the official EU texts. The EC Communication from 2006 for instance, suggests that the civil society participation should go beyond exchanges and cooperation programmes:

Civil Society representatives in the sense of stakeholders should be reinforced somehow to participate in the reform process by partner governments. This may well include a closer observation of legislation schemes or by either developing both regional and national initiatives which are associated with the ENP. We must encourage partner governments to allow appropriate participation by civil society representatives as stakeholders in the reform process, whether in preparation of legislation, the monitoring of its implementation or in developing national or regional initiatives related to the ENP.' (COM (2006) 726:7)

Furthermore, it is broadly accepted that civil society organizations have been exhibiting some rather important actions that may well be

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supplementary or even contradictory to official State policies. According to the above, the scrutiny of civil society's role in cross border cooperation between Greece and Turkey exhibits something rather interesting due to the much tormented historic background and political differences underlying these two countries which many still seem to be quite evident.

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However, if we are careful enough to examine the course of bilateral relationships we will observe a never ending cycle of "crisis-negotiations-rapproachment-crisis" (Dokos and Tsakonas, 2003). What is more, along this history lane of events the Cyprian issue has always affected all aspects of these bilateral relationships (Kollias and Gunluk-Senesen, 2003). The European factor however, along with Turkey's potential accession has created new dynamics and up to certain extent a new framework embracing the bilateral and cross border relationships in which the role of civil society enters a new dimension.

The present paper aims in scrutinizing the role of civil society organizations in the formation of an agenda of cross border cooperation between the two countries in the new geopolitical and geo-economic environment. The issues placed under discussion involve first of all the documentation and evaluation of dominant cross border cooperation strategies, secondly, the evaluation of the importance of civil society, thirdly, the scrutiny of the role of public policies in the formation of a cross border cooperation agenda and finally, indicating the dominant perceptions for the 'other' at the civil society level. The empirical analysis is based on the EUDIMENSIONS programme funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme. In the section that follows the general framework in which civil society organizations operate will be assessed. Section three will refer to the findings derived from the empirical analysis while the main conclusions will be presented in the final section. **Theoretical background**

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The exact definition of civil society is an area of great debate since it may be totally disorientating to claim that there is in fact a universally accepted term shared by all the EU core countries (O' Dowd and Dimitrovova, 2006),. Views vary significantly as far as what can be contained within the overall civil society rubric is concerned and to what extent its boundary outlines are stretched. There are those who disregard economic activity while others find a correlation between civil society and political or civil rights.

A different approach is the one adopted by those who following the East European Developments view civil society as the source of opposition to the authoritarian state and others perceive it as something which can be greatly influenced and controlled by the state. Supporters argue that civil society can stand against large corporations in the sphere of globalization and dominant states so that counterbalancing effects are achieved in that respect. The important element here lies upon the actual orientation civil society possesses where various disputes and tensions do not necessarily engage a national character. Civil society remains a difficult and highly debated concept and it would be misleading to suggest that there is consensus on its definition even within the core states of the EU. There is considerable disagreement about what might be included under the rubric of civil society and where its boundaries might be drawn (Hamm, 2003; Howard, 2003; Edwards, 2004; Etzioni, 1993). Some have excluded economic activity; others associate civil society with social, political and civil rights. Some observers,

notably of recent East European developments, see civil society as the source of opposition to the authoritarian or totalitarian state; others see it as effectively co-opted, penetrated and manipulated by the state. Advocates of transnational civil society, see it as a necessary democratic counterbalance to globalisation dominated by the large corporations and the most powerful states. The emphasis is on the non-national and universal orientation of civil society where conflicts and contestations are no longer exclusively of national character (Gelner, 1994; Keane, 1998).

The first approach in defining civil society lies on the fact that the recent European experiences saw civil society being drawn away from the state. On the other hand, the state is an essential guardian of civil society. Cohen and Arato (1994) attempted to promote a more correlated perspective between civil society and the state by underlining the positive values of civil society. These included the actual impacts or influences of politics imposed by the actors in civil society not only to itself, but to the political society as well. Therefore civil society mobilization practically refers to not only transforming civil society itself but, also changing the state. Nevertheless, empirical research has revealed that an independent notion of civil society from the state whether this is assured by the state or as a foundation of opposition to it does not adequately appeal in the case of the EU's Neighbourhood where states maintain a strong control. The first meaning is based on recent European experiences of civil society becoming increasingly separated from the state. Accordingly state is as an indispensable and benevolent protector of civil society. In similar way the work of Cohen and Arato (1994) tries to develop a more interactive view of the relationship between the state and civil society highlighting the more active quality of civil society: the politics of influence exercised by actors in civil society both over itself and over political society. Thus, civil society mobilisation is not just about changing the state, it is also about positively transforming civil society itself. However, the empirical research shows that these views of civil society as 'autonomous' or separate from the state, either guaranteed by the state or as a source of opposition to it, are inadequate for the situation in the EU's Neighbourhood where states continue to have a strong influence.

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The other school of thought favours the view of a rather "active" citizenship through community involvement in order to reassure the future of civil society is to develop social partnerships, where state agencies and the community itself could in the long run delegate power to the community. Others seem to view the aspect of communitarian approach to civil society stands far more firmly in the already well established democracies in the West rather than to the Eastern European countries which have undergone political changes. (Mihaylova, 2004). Moreover, tendencies of suspiciousness and low civic participation are far more evident as research has shown, in the Eastern part of the Neighbourhood. The second school of thought promotes an idea of 'active' or responsible citizenship via community involvement. The future of civil society is the creation of social partnerships, involving state agencies, and the community, that will arguably result in the eventual devolution of power to the community. Some argue that communitarian approach to civil society is more significant in established democracies in the West rather than in the Eastern European countries which have experienced political transformations (Mihaylova, 2004). Furthermore, as research shows the low civic participation and mistrust to all forms of organisations are widespread in Eastern part of the Neighbourhood.

Edwards (2004) in his explanation on civil society provides a balanced line between civil society and the public sphere. He claims that in order for civil society to be able to function, whether this is national or global terms, requires the public sphere in which it can relate to. The third perspective on civil society identified by Edwards (2004) is one that equates civil society with the public sphere. Civil society, whether national or global, thus requires a public sphere around which to cohere. Thus in its guise as the public sphere civil society becomes the arena for argument and deliberation as well as for association and institutional collaboration: a "non-legislative, extra-judicial, public space in which societal differences, social problems, public policy, government action and matters of community and cultural identity are developed and debated" (McClain and Fleming, 2000). What is more, the public sphere comprises a major element in democracy and under no circumstances can it be demoted to a function of civil society or that of the state. This type of explanation is one which raises major considerations as it undermines the power inequalities that are dominant in neighbouring countries and can lead to circumstances where the loudest voices prevail. Moreover, the public sphere is a key element of democracy and cannot be reduced to a function of either the state or civil society. This understanding of civil society is equally problematic because it undermines the power inequalities that characterise the neighbouring societies and that can lead to situation where the loudest voices win.

Civil Society within the broader political framework

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The formation of contemporary borders between the two countries is the outcome of successive conflicts, wars, agreements and treaties ever since the period of the Greek uprising against the Ottoman Empire. Even nowadays, several political and military issues associated with border space remain unsolved whilst both countries provide their own interpretation for every respective issue. In the post World War II period we see both countries working side by side as allies after joining the NATO alliance. The Cyprian issue however, affected negatively the path of bilateral relationships between the two countries in the early 1950's, an issue which was directly associated with the fate of the Greek Community in Constantinople. The pogrom against the Greek minority in 1955 in Constantinople led to the mass exit of the Greek population which continued to take place intensively till the early 70's. It is within this intensity of events taking place in 1971 when the Theological School of Chalki closes its doors. This is followed with the Turkish invasion in Cyprus in 1974 which resulted in the occupation of the Northern part of the island. Both countries had come to the brink of war in March 1987 on the account of some Turkish research activities taking place in the Aegean Sea. Eventually, the crisis was relieved following the meeting between the two leaders in Davos in Switzerland; Mr. Papandreou and Mr. Ozal in 1988 marking a new era of rapprochement. In 1996 both countries came once again on the doorstep of a military confrontation as Turkey posed disputes over the islet of Imia. Moreover, Turkey threatens Greece with war (*casus belli*) in the case the latter one decides to extend its territorial water jurisdiction. In 1999, following the capture of the Kurdish leader Mr. Ocalan relationships are becoming even harsher between the two countries. Nevertheless, both Greece and Turkey decide to set up a new rapprochement period. The provision of assistance from both sides in the period of the destructive earthquakes that followed resulted in the formation of rather positive conditions at the level of civil

society. It had been within this outline that the so called "earthquake diplomacy" developed after several official meetings had taken place between Papandreou and Cem. There were also a range of other contacts occurring among representatives from Local Government Associations, journalists, entrepreneurs, non-government representatives, scientists, academics, students, etc. These contacts then generated the need to organize conferences, meetings, twinning, and generally placing the first stone for cooperation at such a large scale (Koukoudakis, 2006). It becomes apparent that the role which civil society organizations played during this period had been indeed a decisive one and one which contributed a great deal to the further awareness for the "other" who exists on either side of the border. As far as the economic cooperation among both countries is concerned, a significant increase is observed in trade exchange and major Greek investments in Turkey over the last few years. Major investments have taken place in areas such as banking, energy, transportation and tourism. Greece is ranked in the 4th position of the countries that mostly visit Turkey while the number of Turkish tourists who visit Greece is very small. Furthermore, the intellectual and cultural relationships between both countries are developing in a satisfactory manner as there are some common actions in the areas of science, culture and education with the use of scholarship grants, establishment of Greek and Turkish Study Centers, as well as in the areas of youth and sports.

On the other hand, Turkey's EU perspective has created in itself a new dynamic which seems to influence not only the bilateral relationships but also the framework in which civil society organizations develop their actions (Onis, 2002). In 2004, Greece stood in favour of Turkey's EU accession as a full member State on the condition that Turkey would comply according to European rules and principles set by the European Union. Such strategy anticipates in the development of a European framework that would relate to sustaining good neighbourhood relationships and settling border differences by peaceful means. It is within these grounds that several chambers of commerce, institutes, associations, unions as well as personalities and citizens are becoming progressively more active and thus extending this notion into a broader European perspective.

In an announcement (SEC 891, 2005), the European Commission determined the framework of the discussion between the European Union's civil societies and the candidate countries from which Turkey is one them. The same announcement also determines the planning and the role of civil societies in respect to social groups such as journalists, minority groups, youth, academics, self employed people, prominent figures of the public and others. According to the text content:

"...civil society would thus include: the labour market actors, i.e. the social partners (trade unions and employer federations chambers of commerce); organizations representing social and economic players at large (consumer organizations for instance),; non governmental organizations (NGO's), and community based organizations, i.e. organizations at grassroots level through which citizens participate in local and municipal life (e.g. youth or family associations); religious communities and Media. All society structures outside of government and public administration, whether based on a voluntary or mandatory membership (this is the case for chambers of Commerce in certain countries, for instance) are encouraged to participate in the

dialogue, while the education, media and culture sectors are also expected to play a key role."

It is apparent from all the above that the dynamic contribution of civil society to the enlargement process and that of European integration is contained within the EU's firm objectives.

Empirical research

Methodology

Having obtained an overall picture from the earlier analysis of the historical, cultural and economic framework of cross border cooperation through which civil society organizations take up their action, the present paper briefly depicts the findings of the EUDIMENSION Research Programme with reference to the Greek -Turkish cross border zone. The actual research was funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme. The programme's main objective was to provide better awareness of the role of civil society in the development of new form of political economy and socio-cultural cooperation within the New Neighbourhood Policy in Europe's external borders.

The empirical research at the Greek-Turkish study area involved: Firstly, conducting 20 in-depth interviews with selected key stakeholders engaged in civil society organizations in Greece, during the period of June 2007-March 2008. The interviewees involved cultural organizations, personnel from NGO's, entrepreneurs, artists, former politicians, journalists, and Local Government Associations. The four thematic fields covered by the interviews revolved around the political, sociocultural, economic and environmental spheres. More specifically, interviewees involved, people from NGOs, Cultural Organizations, artists, entrepreneurs, former politicians, journalists and local governments. The interviews were conducted to cover four thematic areas, political, socio-cultural, economic and environmental.

Second, newspaper screening of three national papers, "To Vima", "Ta Nea", and "Kathimerini", during the period 1996-2006. As an illustration of qualitative criteria to be developed for analysis, newspaper screening will help gather information as to how the specific project relevant issues are framed and reported in printed media.

Third, analyzing documents and official statements from prominent politicians. Findings from the newspaper screening¹ and document analysis are used to frame the more detailed information gained by basic and in-depth interviews.

The main findings

In an attempt to obtain an overall outline of the situation it is found that citizen's society involves a rather new aspect in Greece (Sotiropoulos and Karamagioli, 2006). Of course, the legislative and institutional milieu does not pose any formal obstacles to the action of civil society as the Constitution itself supports fundamental aspects of freedom. Nevertheless, civil society in Greece is manifested rather weakly considering both the number of organizations and the type of actions it undertakes (Afouxenidis, 2004). However,

¹ See the appendix of this report for more detailed elaboration of the newspapers included in the screening.

ever since 1997 the appearance of various non-government organizations (NGO's) is becoming more frequent due to Greece's participation in the UN's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), something which reflects the top down process (Sotiropoulos and Karamagioli, 2006). Even though prevailing values within the society may be positive as for instance in the case of principles of tolerance, or principles of no violence, there still seems to be a broad notion of stoicism spread around as well as an abstinence from public affair issues and voluntarism should we exclude the participation in political parties or non official small group actions (Sotiropoulos, 2004).

Furthermore, the development of several NGO's in the pretext of State and European funding programmes reduced the build up of trust and legalization of civil society organizations from society itself. Concurrently, the incorporation of the social responsibility aspect from such organizations still remains at a very early stage. As a result, the types of institutions that seem to prevail in the Greek society are the State and family. What is more, the presence of civil society organizations is not consistent throughout the country as it exhibits a diversification which comprises geographic characteristics (Lyberaki and Paraskevopoulos, 2002). The role of civil society towards citizens and service delivery is somehow restricted since the state and municipalities followed by the local authorities and the church, seem to exercise a prevailing effect. Only a very small number of CSO's have recently started making their way into areas once dominated by central government officials. Civil society also plays a limited role in empowering citizens and in service delivery, which is dominated by the central state, followed by the municipalities and local authorities and then the church (Makrydemetris 1999, Koliopoulos and Veremis 2002). It is only recently that a few CSOs have begun to take part in what used to be exclusively in the hands of central government officials.

As far as economic and human resources are concerned, the vast majority of civil society organizations seem to rely on its staff voluntarism which do not possess professional skills, and on member contributions. Panagiotopoulou (2003), states that 75% of these organizations have received State funding equivalent to a quarter of their total budget. In spite of this, current evidence shows that most civil society organizations have developed strong relations with respective originations from other countries. In Turkey in particular, many Greek organizations have developed close relations with similar organizations based on unofficial interactions and through a personal contact network. Geographic proximity also plays a major role since notable interactions between several NGO's of Greek islands with similar organizations are observed along the Turkish coastline. On the other side, the network level among NGO's in Greece does not seem to be very satisfactory.

A large segment of the empirical research focused upon the border zone. Results showed that up to a certain degree the priorities and strategies of cross border cooperation at a local and regional level are shaped according to different criteria in respect to the national level. In addition, differences were detected in the way in which cross border cooperation is perceived at the border space in relation to the hinterland. More specifically, borderlanders view the aspect of cooperation with the other side in a more positive and practical way free from negative stereotypes. Mutual understanding, political and economic transactions are issues of a specific context and meaning while at a national level and in the hinterland these aspects are placed at a lower priority level.

The fact that the number of NGO's at the borders is small and weak in either side has entailed the local government to deal with more important initiatives. This enabled the local government to operate as an "umbrella" mobilizing cultural associations and local enterprises along with civil society by favouring the development of networks. Rumelili (2004), claims that within the major categories of actors who shape the dynamics of cross border cooperation involve journalists, artists, former and current politicians, people in administration and in local government who hold executive places as well as business people in both countries. However, the VISA regime, imposed by the Schengen Treaty, creates unbalanced patterns in cross border interaction and impedes the action of civil society organizations in both Greece and Turkey.

A major factor in cross border cooperation is economy, as the areas along the border zone consider the relationship with the Turkish side will enlarge both market size and economic opportunities. Moreover, there are many who view that the enlargement of economic interaction will pave the ground for trust relationships from both sides. It is worth noting the statement made by the Turkish Minister of State Mr. Tuzmen who said: "should the trade volume between the two countries reach 5 billion dollars all political problems will be diminished" (Eleftherotipia, 21/5/2006). It is not circumstantial the fact that many Turkish business people view Greece as a leap in promoting them into Western Europe (To Vima, 3001/2000).

As far as the area of tourism is concerned there has recently been an attempt in cooperation which has made major business people talk of a "full scale tourism integration". Also, on behalf of the Greek side there are attempts being made towards the European Union, to allow the divergence of time consuming procedures in relation to the VISA requirements (Kathimerini, 26/6/2001).

In the banking sector a standing out feature in 2006 is the takeover of Turkey's Finansbank from the National Bank of Greece. What followed soon after was the takeover by 70% of the Turkey's Tekfen Bank from EFG Eurobank. Moreover, the establishment of the Greek-Turkish Bank was set out following the initiative of the Greek-Turkish Chamber and that of the Commercial Chamber of Izmir. Both Greek and Turkish investors involved in this venture will name the new bank as Aegean Business Bank. An account worth pointing out is that of the President of the Chamber of Commerce in Constantinople Mr. Gialtsintas' reference to a quote by Immanuel Kant that both trade and economic cooperation is a notion incompatible with war and that it can only bring peace by itself.

A prominent feature in the field of energy is the agreement between Greece and Turkey in the connection of the natural gas pipeline of both countries which will engulf the implementation of the South Inter-European Gas Pipeline in order to distribute natural gas from the area of Baku to Azerbaitzan via Karacabey to the sea of Marmara in Turkey which will end up in Komotini. The pipeline will continue its route from Greece onto Italy before reaching Northern Europe. On the other hand, the dynamism exhibited on behalf of Turkey in its pursuit for energy (Turkey is the fastest developing OECD country in terms of rising energy consumption) has created an appealing investment environment in Greece as well, since a number of Greek entrepreneurs in collaboration with foreign investors are interested in investing in Turkey.

Nevertheless, negative stereotypes seem to coexist with suspiciousness and notions of insecurity at the border space as much as they do at the national level, as a result of the turbulent past era. Other than that, some have highlighted the attempts being made so that public opinion would be influenced in a negative way in order to serve the interests of certain elite politicians. On the other hand, there is a reproduction of the main political scene from the media which disregards the existing local peculiarities of border space as well as the initiatives that are undertaken. The distorted viewpoints through which the image of one another from either side was perceived had promoted to a rather large extent important military and border issues, where under different conditions these issues would not have had the slightest importance. (To Vima, 01/01/2000).

There is no doubt that national and social stereotypes, obsessions and perceptions for the "the one on the other side" have been twirling along the Aegean from both sides for years. In a research study carried out by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2002 on the perceptions involving young Greek primary school students, Turks were characterized as "warlike and savages", while the mere mentioning of the name Turk constitutes an offensive word itself, a viewpoint that reflects deeply rooted perceptions of rivalry. A young child characteristically wrote: "Turkey is a dark place where the sun never goes there!" To Vima, 09/12/2001.

On the other side of the borders the images and perceptions do not look any more promising either. For example there is no mentioning of the destruction of Izmir in school textbooks despite the fact that there is a frequent reference made of the villages and towns being burnt in Anatolia by the Greeks during the withdrawal of the Greek army. For the first time in 1969, a Senior High school History book states that on 9th September 1922 while the Turkish liberation army closes in, the city of Izmir is in flames:

"the Greeks have set the city on fire in various locations; this is the last evil thing they do as they run and leave".

Moreover, the destruction of Izmir is described as a joyous occasion in school books despite all the damage it caused. In a fictitious letter a student writes the following:

"...there has not been a more festive occasion in a fire. As one house burns one after the other the more the souls rejoice"(To Vima, 01/09/2002).

In a gallop poll conducted in Turkey in 20 provinces by the Centre of European Studies of the University of Bosphorus 34% of those questioned claimed that they viewed Greece as their country's major enemy, while lower percentages (5% to 2%) account for the countries of Syria, Russia, Iran and Iraq. In answering the question which countries are friendly and which are hostile towards Turkey the answers showed that Azerians and Japanese were the friendliest while the most hostile were Greeks and Armenians. Finally, the question of "which country is likely to launch an attack on Turkey" Greece came up as the first choice 37 % (Eleftherotipia, 14/4/2002).

An important initiative is the development of a committee within the scope of the Greek-Turkish training programme in order to examine the way in which historical facts are approached in school textbooks in the sphere of the Greek Turkish dialogue. In turn each country allocated their own historians who would participate in the combined

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committee and names were examined between both sides. After the allocation of the committee, Greece and Turkey exchanged their school textbooks for further study and translation. The Balkan history and in particular the history of Greece and Turkey is characterized by a series of conflicts, events, such as the Greek Revolution, the destruction of Asia Minor, while a large segment of this history is taken by the yet to close Cyprian issue. One of the greatest challenges that requires dealing with in the event a common History textbook comes out will be the way in which such incidents could be approached (To Vima, 16/11/2003). A decisive role in the formation of perceptions was the standpoints undertaken by many important figures and the role they played in the overall shaping of the public opinion. The former French Prime Minister Giscard d'Estaing once stated: "Any one who has visited Turkey will very quickly become aware of the fact that Turks are not Europeans. Nor will they ever be" (To Vima, 25/3/2000). The former West German Chancellor Helmut Smicht expressed his vision for a Europe of citizens claiming that the spiritual and cultural contribution of Turkey to Europe was only a minor one (Kathimerini, 20/8/2001).

Conclusions

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The above analysis examined the importance and the role of civil society organizations in the cross border cooperation between Greece and Turkey. It was found out that despite the fact that civil society is at an early stage it does on the other hand exhibits a significant dynamism in terms of numbers, intensity and as an international feature. This is something which renders the civil society of a discrete entity alongside the official State policies. The historic, cultural and economic framework of the bilateral relationships as well as the "conflict-rapprochement" diptych undoubtedly affects the dynamism and effectiveness of civil society organizations creating every time an either positive or negative background. Turkey's EU perspective, along with the conditions set out by Greece and those of other European countries create a fusion of conditions in combination with the European border policies that open new perspectives in the action of civil society.

Also, negative stereotypes and biased notions have managed to develop for those involved in the national and regional levels an uncertain atmosphere for populist and political rationales. Under these circumstances the external actor is actually the one capable of enhancing means for cross border cooperation which inevitably weaken the sustainability and ownerships of such initiatives. Furthermore, due to the dominant notions of negative stereotypes and preconceptions there are those at the national and regional levels who chose to promote a negative atmosphere for political and populist reasons. In this situation of tense and negative atmosphere, it is the external actor that stimulates cross-border cooperation mechanisms which consequently undermine sustainability and ownerships of these initiatives.

CSO's often respond to a variety of practical issues and concerns which evolve in locations close to state borders or concerns generated by the actual organization at the border. Attempts in achieving adequate levels of cooperation involve time consuming procedures as well as large transaction costs in terms of resources. In most of these cases, CSOs respond to a series of practical issues and problems generated within areas close to state borders and/or generated by the management of the border itself. Any collaborative effort involves considerable transaction costs in terms of resources

and time spent in negotiating and carrying out co-operative activities.

It is a fact that no one can deny the interrelation of cross border interaction with the images and perceptions for the "other". At this point, obsessions and negative suspicions for the "other" seem to be able to coexist alongside with strong sentiments of friendship and solidarity. It is not surprising that the newspaper editor of "Ta Nea" in the 1999 earthquakes in Turkey on behalf of all the Greek society in an act of solidarity towards the Turkish people, had given for one of the related articles the overwhelming title: "We are all Turks!". Similar sentiments were recorded from the Turkish side something which proves that civil society could play a very important role in cross border cooperation between the two countries.

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