

Editorial

A critical approach to the work of Dionyssis Kladis

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Usually, when you want to create a special edition on someone, it's a fairly easy task, in the sense that it's something tried and tested. Even its difficult aspects, the synchronization of different individuals with a multitude of obligations, and hence the expected delays or departures, are part and parcel of such an undertaking.

The special edition on Kladis however constitutes the classic exception to the general rule. For a start, you agree that it should remain a secret, so it can be a 'surprise present'. But as is well-known in Greece this, something remaining a secret that is, is well-nigh impossible. So, one day your phone rings and you have a furious Dionyssis on the other end of the line. In cases like this the only solution is counterattack and hence the special edition begins with a huge row and exchange of 'compliments' full of philosophical digs on the nature of individual freedom, and its limits.

Therefore, we need to set the record straight from the outset. We are not mourning the deceased nor musing nostalgically on the past in these texts. We are however meditating on the formation of aspects of university reality today, the reasons for its formation and sometimes its perspectives. We are doing all this first of all because these issues are of interest to us as researchers. They are also of interest to Dionyssi, who as a contemporary and active expert, participates in the developments. The difference is that since the 1960s he has participated in various ways and with varying force in the formation of university reality. As a social actor, then, he also functions as a piece of walking, talking history. Attention however! The historicity of the actor is not the same as historical reality, if this exists. He does however comprise an integral part of the historical puzzle and expresses his own view of history. So, as one can see, these texts ‘gifted’ to someone who (co) shaped the current developments are more of an analysis, and indeed a critical analysis, of a common object of interest, rather than the portrait of an icon, which is what special editions often end up as. If, then, the readers expect beautifying, they are not going to find it. In any case, one of Dionyssi’s interesting characteristics is that he clearly and explicitly makes a distinction between what he knows and what he doesn’t know. This is something, which makes him stand out in the Greek context from the all-knowing ‘gods’ in our midst, who tire us. Even the fact that he doesn’t get on all that well with the mass media seems to us to be part and parcel of a healthy view of reality. On the other hand, when it comes to what he does know, he can drive you insane! He will defend what he knows to the end (of his opponent). The truth is that he is one of the few Greeks who claim to know a subject and do actually know what they are talking about. Consequently, discussion and argument with him is a productive process in the sense that you test out your ideas and

improve them. What is interesting is that in the long term you realize that he also readjusts his, in an attempt to render them indestructible. Hence the disagreement is fruitful.

If one now asks oneself which are those issues in which you can find Kladis' active participation, they are perhaps three or four.

First of all, framework law 1268/82 for the universities. The objective of this law was the realization of the social demand of the time for the 'democratization of the University' in its organizational and operational dimension. Of course, with the benefit of hindsight, it's worth noting a contradiction concerning its implementation. On the one hand this law shaped, without doubt, the university reality of today. On the other, the thus formed university reality is actually a version (see deformation) of 1268 and it is not at all certain that it represents the intentions of its creators. Indeed, on the one hand, the State, for reasons which touch on the politics of the time, that is to say, the party political reality, didn't activate all those parallel institutions-counter-weights to the institution's unchecked course, a course which ultimately led to the upsetting of the university's relationship with society. On the other hand, a series of appeals on the part of the universities themselves, transformed the framework law into a dark labyrinth of procedural mini-provisions the only objective of which was to serve the interests of important actors within the university. Kladis, as an important part of the puzzle, is found caught up in all this institutional and socio-political activity, with all its contradictions, culprit and victim at the same time. We will mention two examples. The first example concerns the students. On the one hand, he is one of the few, even today, of their supporters, on all levels, and from one point and on, in Europe too, and on the other he is a partisan guiding light in the student branch of his party. The second

example concerns teaching and research staff. On the one hand, 1268 breaks up a closed small circle for the reproduction of the body of university professors, opening this space up to individuals who otherwise wouldn't have the slightest chance of access. On the other hand, his personal relationship with this new body is governed by doubt, if not tension, and in any case could never be described as easy. This new body should have worked collectively for the implementation of 1268/82. This however did not happen. On the contrary, what took place was whatever was necessary for the reproduction of the traditional model of relationships within the institution, expressed in a new linguistic morphology which invested public discourse. Moreover, party intervention in the formation of the new body is significant, even somewhat dark.

Secondly, we have the broadening of the network of higher education. This essentially concerns the social dimension of the demand for the 'democratization of the University' which acts supplementary to Law 1268. Indeed, at the end of the 1970s, only 10-11% of candidates entered the university and approximately another 12-13% entered the then KATEE (Centres for Higher Technical Professional Education). In total, that means not even 1 in 4 candidates. In 2004, 80% of candidates have access to one or another Department of higher education (Institutions of Higher Education-Technological Educational Institutions). Kladis is an active member of the social framework that produced him and acts for the fulfilment of 'democratic' demands. Today, the situation is different. The economic crisis has shown that the founding of an extended network of higher education can be possible through Community funding, but its maintenance is not feasible in the present economic conditions. Greece reached the Community average for the diffusion and development of the network of higher education, but even before the crisis, funded its higher education at about 40% of the Community average.

In this way however the network became unsustainable. The crisis also revealed the limits of the model of regional development that was adopted during the post-war period. In a country where 60% of the student population is concentrated in the area around Athens, Thessaloniki and Patras, regional development, which is promoted through the expansion of the network of higher education is that of the bedsit (student accommodation) and the cafeteria (student entertainment). In this way however the cost of studies for the parents grows. Empty places in a series of regional Departments create panic and easy populist criticism which leads to the violation of common sense where a candidate with an average performance of 3/20 in the panhellenic university entrance examinations is transformed into one of the ‘successful’ and enters higher education. We are talking about obviously inadequate preparation of the young for university study, something which leads to an increase in the postponement and/or abandonment of studies. The ‘happy’ successful candidates who are thus lost constitute proof of a huge waste of human and economic resources. This major problem however is not acknowledged in a country that prefers to fight windmills rather than solve actual problems. In this particular case, this happens with the transfer of the discussion to the ‘eternal students’ who are imagined of as the socially and economically weak who achieved the ‘miracle’ of getting into university but for ‘objective’ reasons, delay completing their degrees. The existence of ministers and even Rectors and vice-rectors who are ‘eternal students’ themselves does not justify this obsession of ‘eternal students’.

The ‘eternals’ reveal another failure in planning. While in Europe we are trying to widen higher education, seeing it as a mechanism of life long learning, and creating multiple means of entrance for different ages and different student needs, in Greece, we

are not following this. We insist on a dead-end view of access exclusively through the panhellenic examinations which have ‘suddenly’ been transformed into a major social challenge. However, in this way, we are reproducing the traditional view of higher education as a closed, elitist system. Except that it no longer is. What is impressive here is that in the mass media, even in Kladis’ ex party, the perception remains that the broadening took place without planning, and shoddily. Untrue! Broadening took place with long term planning and was the result of consultations, with particular rules, in which all the institutions of higher education in the country took part. Even more impressive is that individuals who played a significant role in the planning process appear in the media claiming that such planning never existed!

Finally, thirdly, the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and in particular quality assurance. The latter could be examined separately as a fourth point. However we prefer to consider it as part of the EHEA. Kladis was lucky enough to be in the right post at the right time. Hence he participated actively in the first team of experts who enthusiastically worked on the vision of a European Higher Education Area. The creation of ESIB (the National Unions of Students in Europe), now ESU, the European Students’ Union, and its role in the protection of the public character of the university (also) bears Dionyssi’s stamp. There is a tragic irony here: Greek students are the only ones in the whole of Europe (with wide geographical borders and including states, petty states and entities) who do not participate...the addition of an insignificant little phrase, ‘at least’, during the first study cycle, which modified the inflexible first text of Bologna (and Sorbonne) which provided for 3 years, is also (and) his contribution and it allowed the negotiation and enlistment of all those who had four years of study in the first cycle of studies (bachelor). In this way the Greek universities

are integrated easily and without any great disturbance. The how and the why Greece, from being at the epicentre of European developments found itself on the edges or even entirely absent is a topic for discussion. This discussion obviously concerns how much harm was done to the country by the communicative form of the political conflicts, the inexistent administrative continuity and the poor quality of the country's political representation.

The most important point for us however is the presence of Kladis in the issue of quality assurance and evaluation in Greece and in Europe. We often forget that the evaluations of Departments and Institutions in Greece began very early in the 1990s and Greece participated in the first related European programme. Kladis played a significant role in Greece's participation, not only in pushing for participation, but also pushing for the financial support that was a prerequisite of participation in some cases. Hence a first familiarization of Greek higher education (IHE and TEI) with the idea of evaluation takes place. How we then came to be on the verge of civil war in the middle of the first decade of the new century over evaluation and the establishment of HQA is another class of problem, directly related to the quality of the politicians handling the situation. Kladis participated at the same time in the development of the EUA programme for institutional evaluation. Today he is one of the rare Greeks with a significant presence in European institutional evaluations. With 35 institution evaluations for the EUA and 5 evaluations of national Agencies for the ENQA he is perhaps by now one of the most experienced evaluators. And here again, a paradox should be noted. Kladis has been evaluating European universities for 20 years, but only in recent months has he participated in evaluations of Greek universities, on the recommendation of...the EUA! For Kladis, evaluation is a long term and central occupation. Perhaps that is why this is

the best subject matter if one wants to argue with him. To decide to do that however requires strong foundations and a good structure...

This special edition is made up of seven (7) texts in total. More specifically:

Aggelos Kavasakalis' text focusses on the issue of 'enlargement'. Its title is 'Development and enlargement of Greek higher education, 1998-2004: An analysis of strategic and regional planning. Myths and realities'. In this text Kavasakalis presents and analyses the texts on the strategic planning of enlargement, thus demolishing the view that such planning never existed! He then critically approaches particular elements of the planning and raises questions concerning some of the choices that were made.

Ioannis Kamarianos gives his text the title 'Greek higher education facing change and deregulation'. The theme of his texts refers first and foremost to law 1268/82, which is linked critically to the latest law in effect for higher education, 4009/11. At the centre of the issue is the university professor and his confrontation with the two pieces of legislation.

Pantelis Kiprianos entitles his article "'Active learners, passive managers": Governance and student participation in European universities'. It focusses on three issues which are important for Kladis; european politics, university administration and student participation. The text claims that since 1980 administration bodies haven't changed dramatically, what has however changed a lot is the internal correlations in their composition, with students being the main victims of the change.

Panagiotis Kimourtzis and Vicky Sigountou's text concerns the gradual integration of women into university professions. Its title is 'The era that protons were gendered. Women in the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Athens'. The text attempts to recreate the climate of a time gone by, and the painful and long drawn out period of time needed for women to arrive at and enter the university as teachers. It should be noted that it is the School (specifically the Department of Physics) where Kladis studied and first worked.

The text by Stathis Balias and Georgios Bestias touches on 'educational leadership' in the case of universities. In essence it focusses on the central dilemma which can be summed up as: 'efficiency' or 'democracy'? In other words whether in the name of efficiency it is acceptable to limit democratic procedures or conversely in the name of democracy whether one can marginalise the importance of efficiency. This issue is present in the international dialogue with its rich literature and is an issue to which Kladis has contributed as much with English as with greek texts.

The text 'Student Engagement in Higher Education: Participation in Greek Student Elections' was written by Yiouli Papadiamantaki, George Fragoulis and Elena Soroliou. Its subject matter concerns administration, the discussion on excellence and international rankings. It places it within the context of European policies and their priorities, which exercise, according to the authors, powerful pressure for changes in the institution of the university. Within this context they then endeavour to register the greek university, examining its divergences from the model promoted in Europe.

Finally, George Stamelos and George Aggelopoulos' text is entitled 'Challenges and stakes arising from the incorporation of interdisciplinarity into the Master's programmes in greek universities'. The subject matter of the paper is integrated, on the one hand, into the European policies for the promotion of interdisciplinarity, and, on the other, the development of second cycle study programmes (postgraduate programmes), and so a kind of enlargement of higher education. The writers claim that the universities used Community funding as emergency funding and during its application tried not to disturb the existing relationships and structures of power within the institution.

Finally, we would like to note that within the context of this special edition, we have tried to mobilise colleagues from a variety of specializations. The response was large and thus texts were gathered and placed in three categories: texts on the university, texts on education generally and experientially texts which reveal aspects of each writer's relationship with Kladis. The texts in the first grouping are those which are included in this special edition of the journal *ACADEMIA*. Immediately following this, all the texts will be presented in a unified collected volume.

We hope you enjoy reading this special edition!