
By Foteini Kalantzi

I. General Framework

The developing and increasing immigrants’ influx to Greece, part of the increased immigration movement towards the Western world and especially Europe, has created a new map for exploration, analysis and debate in academia and in political circles, but most importantly it has created the need for new initiatives and formation of laws. The EU realisation for the rise of immigration in the European continent created the need for a common migration policy. An approach on a common migration policy was set out at the October 1999 European Council in Tampere, Finland and was confirmed in 2004 with the adoption of the Hague programme, which sets the objectives for strengthening freedom, security and justice in the EU for the period 2005-2010.

No matter how Greek governments’ policies are set out regarding immigration issues, the fact remains the same; Greece is transforming from a mono-cultural to a multi-cultural society. Also, beyond the ever-changing situation of immigration and the mass waves of immigrants from Central Europe, Asia, Africa and the Balkans, there is already a solid situation formed by settled immigrants and of course second-generation immigrants.

Therefore multiculturalism is a reality within the Helladic state. Greek society is going through a typical phase of fears and steps that a society goes through when facing the immigration and cultural diversity issues. Other European countries, like for example Germany, France and the U.K have been through similar phases in the 1950s and 1960s. In Greece, multiculturalism is a relatively new phenomenon and the Greek society is still trying to find its balance on the particular matter. The numbers manifest the importance of the matter. 10% of the population residing in Greece are immigrants; which means not Greek nationals and not Greek orthodox. We can describe this as demographic renewal and a new social reality, as Greece has been transformed from a labour exporting country to a labour importing country.

II. The 90s change & the EU

The geo-political changes at the end of the 80s have played a massive role to the dynamics of European societies. Greek society has been affected as well. The collapse of the iron curtain
transformed immigration to an uncontrollable phenomenon. As a result, although Greece was at that time still one of the less-developed EU states, in the 1990s it received the highest percentage of immigrants in relation to its labour force. Actually, the 1990s is an important chronological point, as first steps are taken towards formal management of diversity in the Greek state. There is a transition towards new management policies on diversity and there is an adoption of differentiated wording in the public sphere regarding diversity and of practices regarding multiculturalism. The role of the EU in this respect is very significant and Greece’s necessity to coordinate its policies with the rest of Europe is apparent. Funding from the EU, bilateral and multilateral cooperation on projects, as well as initiatives co-ordinated with EU’s policies for tackling illegal immigration highlight the twist in Greek strategy and mentality on the particular issue and of course the transnational character of the problem.

The sudden influx of immigrants in the beginning of the 90s hit the reflex of the Greeks; fear and anxiety was created. More so, these feelings were strengthened by Greek governments’ inability or difficulty to control undocumented immigrants and media’s negative depiction of immigrants. There are several estimations on the numbers of undocumented and therefore illegal immigrants. People have started demonising immigrants for all the evils of the Greek society, like unemployment and criminality. Immigrants have become the ‘Other’.

The nationals have been put in front of social, moral and cultural dilemmas. Unquestionable certainties and principles before, have been doubted and questioned. National and hence cultural identity has been put under the microscope. Greekness has been heavily discussed in the framework of multiculturalism. In addition, nationalistic and extreme right-wing movements and parties gained public support. The new givens create a new era of internal conflict and questions arise regarding the relation between multiculturalism and Greek identity. Certainly there is a diversity of opinions, representing different social and political groups.

III. **Research Goal & Outcome**

The goal of the particular research is to examine what has been written in the selected newspapers on the wider subject of the immigration in Greece and immigration policies
applied by the Greek government. The newspapers that have been analysed are the following: TA NEA, TO VIMA, KATHIMERINI and ELEFTHEROTYPIA.

The research has been carried out through the websites of the newspapers, using the following words: Immigrant, immigration, immigration policy, illegal immigrants, national identity, refugee, foreigner, multiculturalism.

The immigration topic and related ones are often present in the Greek press, in an increasing mode. The way Greek newspapers depict the particular topics is closely related with the newspapers’ ideological profile and the journalistic level.

The general impression in Greece is that crimes have increased dramatically since 1990 due to the presence of illegal immigrants. The public opinion has been influenced mainly by TV (which magnified the crimes’ significance, when immigrants were involved), and partly by newspapers.

IV. Methodology

The particular paper following the path of constructivist theory will lay emphasis on the crucial mediating role of social agents in the construction of social reality. The view and hence the role of the media and in particular the Greek press in the period 2000-10, as an effective social and political mechanism will be analysed. The paper will examine the stance of the Greek press towards immigration and multiculturalism issues.

This analysis will give a notion of the press’s stance in a homogenous, mono-ethnic and mono-religious country, like Greece towards the particular socio-economic and cultural change. It will also provide an insight about media’s influence on Greek public opinion and social and cultural identity.

The analysis takes into account the fact that newspapers do not only report facts, but they report facts on certain issues (depending on the profile of the newspaper, intensity of the issue) and not on others, constructing a certain view of the public on the particular subject matter.
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