Epistemic Communities and Digital Governance in Greece

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1. Introduction

Civil society, which includes organisations, informal networks and pressure groups, has the potential to act as a bridge between citizens and public authorities. Through their participation, it can enhance transparency, accountability and the democratic process in policy-making, including cybersecurity policy. In particular, these organisations can contribute to raising public awareness, promoting best security practices and creating a collaborative network that responds to the multi-layered challenges in digital governance (P. K. Jagalur et al., 2018).

In turn, cybersecurity is one of the most important challenges of the modern era, as digital infrastructures play a central role in economic, social and political activities. The growing reliance on technology is accompanied by a corresponding increase in threats, and cyber-attacks, which target data breaches and cybercrime (K. Charlet & H. King, 2020). In this context, the formulation of effective cybersecurity policies requires the involvement not only of state institutions but also of other actors, such as international organisations, civil society and especially the epistemic communities, as predominantly specialised in influencing the formulation of a public policy (Palladino, 2021, p. 2).

This paper aims to examine the contribution of civil society to cybersecurity policy, focusing on the Greek reality. It studies the ways in which civil society organisations can actively participate in digital governance, while analysing the challenges that limit their role. Finally, it makes suggestions and poses questions for strengthening cooperation between civil society and government institutions, with the aim of developing a more effective and participatory cybersecurity policy. More specifically, it examines the contribution of civil society organisations (CSOs) and epistemic communities (ECs) in shaping digital governance policies, focusing on the specificities of the Greek case. ECs play a crucial role in the constitution of social reality, as they are involved in the formation of knowledge and the imposition of 'truth regimes', which determine the social constructs and dominant ideas on which social reality is based. In the context of digital governance, ECs seek to reconfigure the structures, identities and social facts that constitute intersubjective knowledge, influencing political and social agendas.

The paper is based on the view that the reality of global politics is composed of social facts and structures that are grounded in shared ideas and intersubjective knowledge. An interesting field of research is the evaluation of the dynamics of the ECs within the Greek territory in shaping the Greek and European digital governance policy. In particular, how CSOs relate to epistemic advocacy, with digital policies as a key example, is analysed, as well as their interaction with the political, cultural and economic context of Greece.

The focus on specific ECs starts from the assumption that they are specialised Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and therefore can guide and encourage the relevant ones to be proactive in the field of digital governance. The qualitative research will strictly follow Haas's theory on epistemic criteria centrally placed in the literature review. The research questions, for example, are: Do these organisations consider themselves to be ECs?

If so, what do they promote themselves as their own success story? If their advocacy is influential, what's the implication on the national and the EU level of policy-making? These are some indicative questions that will be pre-selected in future interviews to explore their potential for influencing cybersecurity policy at the national and European levels.

The methodology includes data analysis from the literature, mapping organisations, and statistical data gained through third-party diagrams. Special emphasis is placed on the relationship between the ECs and the European policy framework, examining how their ideas and proposals are fed into European decision-making processes. The purpose of the questionnaire is to challenge the ideal reality that ECs have established for their identity and purpose as a self-assessment of how they relate their reality to their theoretical purpose. This functions as a reality check for their ideals into pragmatic challenges.

It is expected that the research will highlight ways in which CSOs and ECs can work together with institutionalized public structures to improve digital governance. At the same time, it will examine their potential effectiveness in shaping public policy through the popularisation of knowledge and the creation of new dynamics that enhance transparency, inclusiveness and accountability in digital governance. The paper aims to identify practices and strategies that will make CSOs more active players in the field of digital governance while contributing to the development of a collaborative framework for strengthening social cohesion and democracy in general and specifically for digital governance in Greece.

2. Epistemic Communities and Theoretical Background

"An epistemic community is a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular field and with a valid claim to policy-relevant knowledge in that field or issue area. Although an epistemic community may be composed of professionals from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, they have (a) a common set of normative beliefs and principles that provide a value rationale for social action by community members; (b) shared causal beliefs, which are derived from analysis of practices that lead to or contribute to a central set of problems in their field and which then serve as a basis for elucidating the multiple connections between potential policy actions and desirable results, (c) common notions of validity, i.e. intersubjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in their area of expertise, and (d) a common policy project, i.e. a set of common practices linked to a set of problems on which their professional competence is directed, apparently out of the belief that human well-being will consequently be enhanced" (Haas, 1992, p. 3).

Epistemic communities can therefore also be approached as a specialised subset of civil society, consisting of experts with deep knowledge and experience in specific areas, such as cybersecurity. These communities are characterised by their purpose and their ability to shape the policy agenda through technical training, research and advisory support to public and private actors (Cross, 2013, p. 157).

The link between ECs and CSOs is highlighted through their convergence of goals and cooperation on common issues, such as cybersecurity. CSOs, as knowledge networks providing epistemic and technological data for policymaking, are interdependent with (or may even be identical as entities) the CSOs. In this case, policymaking is mobilised through social movements and organisations to protect the public interest. The NGOs play a bridging role, ensuring that the epistemic proposals and standards of the EC are understood and implemented by the general public. A key difference is that CSOs are more homogeneous and limited in size, while CSOs are more heterogeneous, with fuzzy boundaries and greater external pressure. At the same time, ECs form the epistemic basis for the policy agenda, while CSOs mobilise society to support it. In the case of the Creative Commons, for example, it promotes the common cause - through transnational cooperation - of changing copyright regulation at the global level (Dobusch & Quack, 2008, p. 32).

Epistemic communities in that sense provide diplomacy knowledge for the facilitation of decision-making procedures enriching the effectiveness of foreign policy (Μικέλης & Μποζίνης Αθανάσιος, 2022, p. 57). The effectiveness of such influence is solely dependent on how politicians value epistemic knowledge and how this meets their political agendas in order for that knowledge to be transferred to bureaucrats in decision-making centres and finally be incorporated into a policy (Zito, 2001, p. 600). The advantage that epistemic communities pose is the fact that they appear as experts and are acknowledged as such by society in regard to problem-solving in the area of their expertise (Cross, 2015, p. 91). After that politicians might want to listen to them but also be pressured to listen to the experts due to the academic/expert prestige they inherently possess.

Simultaneously, epistemic communities get access -through diplomacy networks- to promote their agendas and discourse between the same expertise and evolve their epistemology internationally by creating purely epistemic fond networks or double-symbiotic nature networks, where diplomacy and epistemology create new bridges of communication for the common evolvement of those two realms (Μικέλης & Μποζίνης Αθανάσιος, 2022, p. 58). This exchange of information and more specifically knowledge might be initially incentivized by the personal interests of scientists and bureaucrats but ends up promoting the institutional values of the EU due to structural pressures and the dictation of those structures to use this discourse platform for further development of the purposes of institutionalization (Suvarierol, 2007, pp. 29–30).

The influence of epistemic communities cannot be absolute. Same as other entities their influence is based upon their capabilities. For states, their international influence is calculated by the variables of state and regulatory capacity. The epistemic community's capabilities/capacity due to its lack of institutionalized advocacy (in some cases) is dependent on its own resources, and political understanding and ability to hold political positions (Dunlop, 2017, p. 227). Therefore, their influence on a multilevel governance system -not to mention its potential international influence- is highly contested in reality. That does not entail a non-existent influence but rather that their influence is less systematic and more occasional depending on the interest area in each case. The ability of epistemic communities

to influence state policy and institutional order is highly dependent on situational conditions (Μικέλης & Μποζίνης Αθανάσιος, 2022, pp. 55–56).

Counterarguments claim that there is an overemphasising support for the influence ECs pose. Political power, economic interests, and even public opinion can resist epistemic advocacy, suggesting that scientific advocacy is not necessarily decisive in policymaking (Dunlop, 2017, p. 229). Moreover, other overseen conditions within epistemic communities indicate elitism, democratic deficiency, politicisation of EC and the irony of epistemic learning. Usually, ECs consist of highly intellectual experts only, who usually come from specific social classes and therefore, act as technocrats stemming away from the social reality. Simultaneously, the participation within them is not democratic along with the fact that their advocacy was not asked for the formation of public policy. And therefore, non-democratic also (Hannon, 2020, pp. 594–595). The members of ECs have their own political views and ambitions, which leads them often away from their technocratic nature of neutral advocacy but rather they are also political actors (Biermann & Koops, 2017, p. 682). Finally, many also see an irony in the advocated epistemic knowledge. While phenomenically ECs pose the truth, this kind of obsolete truth, may motivate other actors to challenge their advocacy without any scientific foundations but likely with political motives (Hannon, 2020, p. 607).

All of the aforementioned facts of the theory consist of elements of the truth. All may be true to a certain extent within the different epistemic communities or regions where those advocate for a 'better' public policy. Therefore, the criteria and condemnations of ECs are specifically examined within the Greek case and for the ECs that identify as "cybersecurity/digital governance epistemic communities". The conclusion is intended specifically for those who meet the criteria of nationality and specific expertise.

3. The Case of Greek Civil Society

Before moving on to specificities origin and expertise some chartography is necessary for understanding the situation of the Greek civil society, which provides a general understanding of the Greek case allowing conclusions that can be general and then specified.

As the existing research shows, civil society in Greece faces many pathologies, such as a lack of organisational cohesion, fragmented action and limited capacity to participate in the policy-making process. Sometimes, the increase in civic initiatives is linked to EU funding and does not follow social needs but other political motives (Huliaras, 2014, pp. 4, 12). This weakens its voice and reduces its contribution to addressing critical issues, as in the case of cybersecurity. Despite these obstacles, recent developments in digital governance and European policies to strengthen the resilience of digital systems provide opportunities to enhance its participation (Gherghin, 2024, pp. 6–7; Golob, Rek, & Makarovič, 2024, pp. 5–6). Civil society could therefore be a factor in strengthening democratic governance and developing resilient societies, especially in areas such as cybersecurity.

If anything, in Greece, civil society in general, although characterised by limited organisational development, has taken steps towards institutional strengthening through legislation and European programmes that provide opportunities for funding and cooperation (Huliaras, 2014, p. 17). Indeed, the adoption of Law 4873/2021 has reformed the legislative framework governing civil society's relations with the state. This law has increased transparency and oversight of organisations, providing the basis for their better integration into public administration and decision-making, although challenges remain, such as the absence of systematic funding and bureaucracy. (Ίδρυμα Μποδοσάκη, 2021, pp. 11–12). The active participation of civil society in digital governance policy-making potentially enhances the effectiveness and the democratic nature of the initiatives.

More specifically, these characteristics and the fact that the public sphere in Greece is quite vibrant, with strong trade unions and political action developed in workplaces and in educational institutions. On the contrary, CS is characterized as weaker compared to the rest of Europe and even to other Southern EU countries, based on a number of indicators such as citizens' participation in voluntary actions, donations and the level of trust in these organizations. At the same time, the role of the church and informal groups remains strong, whose activities have been significantly strengthened during and in the aftermath of the financial crisis of the last decade (Sotiropoulos, 2001, pp. 16–17). The absence of a collective body representing civil society at the secondary or tertiary level limits the power of the NGOs in shaping positions and public policies in Greece. On the contrary, the country's comparative advantages include its wealthy expatriate Greeks, who could be active under the right conditions in supporting the development of NGOs in the country, as they have done from time to time in the past (Ίδρυμα Μποδοσάκη, 2021, pp. 14–27).

The present research takes as a starting point the mapping of the NGOs, which was attempted in the framework of the Action Plan of Bodossakis Foundation under the auspices of the the President of Hellenic Republic. The papers accept this mapping as the most valid and thorough one attempted so far in Greece.

The percentages and categories of action presented for CSOs in Greece offer an important insight into the structure and functioning of the organisations. The data indicate the priorities, the needs of society and the dynamics of the organisations. It is therefore clear that local associations, which represent the largest category (22%), show the importance of community action and local mobilisation, especially in times of crisis such as the economic recession. These unions often operate in direct contact with the needs of the local community, making them effective in providing immediate solutions. The financial crisis made visible many newborn CSOs and simultaneously made clear their inadequacies (Sotiropoulos, 2014, p. 32). Together, the high presence of arts and culture-related organisations (20%) indicates that these two areas remain central areas of action in the Greek CSOs. This may be linked to the country's cultural heritage and the need to promote cultural identity, especially in times of social unrest.

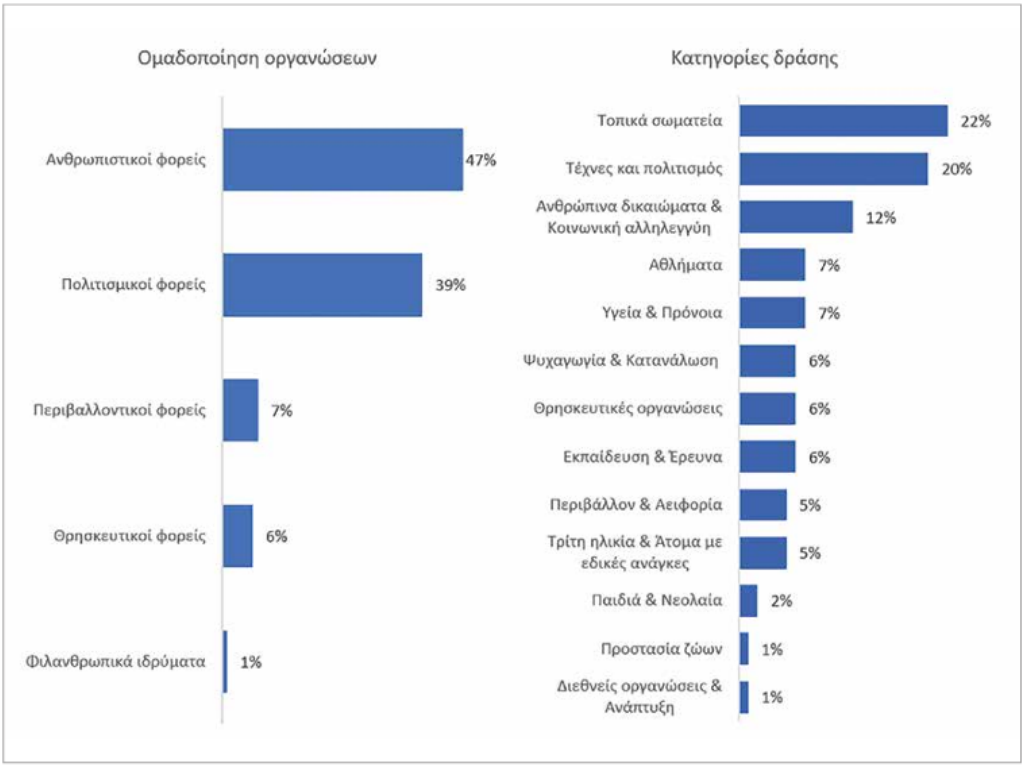

Diagram 1. Categorization of NGOs and their Activities (Ίδρυμα Μποδοσάκη, 2021)

Consequently, the case of NGOs relevant to our work seems to be quite limited in terms of the type of action, as those with the purpose of international cooperation and development constitute about 1%. Their groupings also cannot help in any way to conclude, as they do not seem to fit into a framework concerning their correlation with the effort to formulate public policy in general, but also specifically with cybersecurity policy.

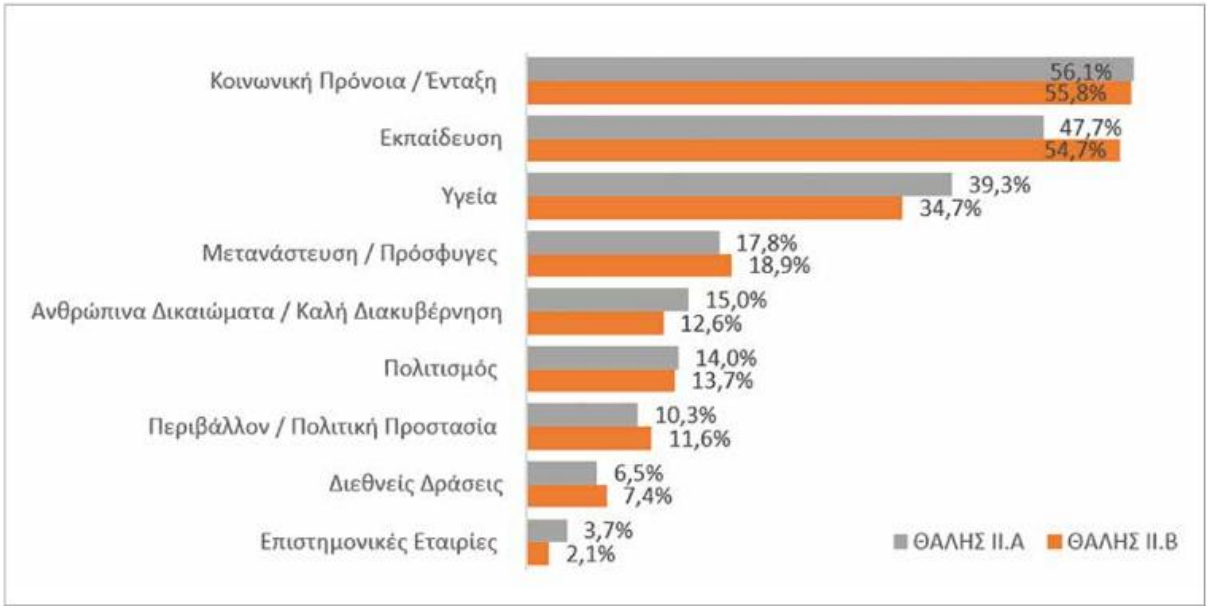

Diagram 2. Domains of Occupation of NGOs (Ίδρυμα Μποδοσάκη, 2021)

The differences between the sources (e.g., University of Peloponnese HIGGS, Bodossaki Foundation and IOBE) can be attributed to the different methods of data collection and the degree of representativeness. However, they do provide useful indications of where the focus of Greek civil society is, irrespective of the discrepancy in the percentages in terms of exact figures.

In this graph, it is observed that the NGOs, identifying themselves as scientific companies, appear in Greece in the range of 2.1% to 3.7%. In absolute numbers, these translate into 14 to 28. It is possible that the figure includes scientific communities that do not aim to influence public policy, let alone related organisations specialising in cybersecurity. Therefore, before identifying the specific NGOs that are relevant to the work, it is necessary to define the communities that are considered to be specialised but at the same time have specific purposes towards public policy. These should be identified as epistemic communities initially and then specialised in cybersecurity issues.

4. Greek Epistemic Communities related to Digital Governance

4.1 Conceptualisation of definitions

Taking into account the above statistical data the potential epistemic communities, which relate to digital governance are very limited. The research till today has identified two different epistemic communities, Rythmisis and Digital World Summit Greece (DWS Greece). Both relate to national digital governance and have a scope of analysis towards digital international relations. That is verified through their constitutional charter and vision as defined by themselves. Their purpose as quoted on their websites:

"Rythmisis is a National Law Institute founded in 2022 aiming to contribute to the dialogue between law and technology, through guidance and innovative partnerships with institutions and experts. Rythmisis consists of legal professionals, public officials and experts who are actively involved either through legal practice or their academic work with the regulation of artificial intelligence systems and digital space. The management of the non-profit civil partnership Rythmisis is defined by the provisions of its Charter" (Rythmisis, 2025a).

"Digital World Summit Greece is a pioneering and dynamic initiative that aims at the democratic governance of new technologies. As a platform for dialogue, it brings together different actors and groups, shaping from the bottom-up policies related to artificial intelligence, platforms, the Internet of Things, and more broadly everything related to the technology sector." (Translated from Greek) (DWS Greece, 2025a).

Initially from the very first sentences, both organisations perceive themselves as platforms of communication and dialogue for the issues concerning them. They have the motivation to engage in multidisciplinary scientific sectors and create partnerships internationally. A key difference between them is the fact that DWS Greece does not provide a visible section on their website that would have translated their page into English. Raising questions about their scope, which might be centred mostly at the Greek national level. Taking into account that their activities are under the aegis of United Nations (UN), they should have an international outreach. This fact, might be the case that its purpose focuses more on the Greek national level as part of a specified agenda for Greece (DWS Greece, 2025a).

Their approach to digital governance is multidisciplinary and looks at different actors of influence on public policy. As quoted, they both merge academic, policy and scientific knowledge within their platforms. Both point out the emerging AI technology as a primary interest for the formation of digital governance, and acknowledge the multifaceted constructed digital world the same but with different wording. (digital space/technology sector). These statements raise the importance of different approaches in order to fully understand the emerging digital world under different sectoral understandings. A key difference between the different organisations is the legalistic approach of Rythmisis (Rythmisis, 2025a), while DWS Greece seems to have a more governance and political science approach on the matter. That does not entail different goals or different utilized means but rather a slightly different focus (DWS Greece, 2025a). The differentiation is proven also through the interviews and is examined whether the organisations have a prioritization on the subsections of their public advocacy on digital governance (more legalistic or governance).

Furthermore, beyond the definitions, it is visible that both organisations focus on raising awareness among the public about new policy developments on digital governance. Rythmisis is fonded more on the Greek reality. There are numerous journalistic articles in regard to Greek public governance, from which many are of general interest and they stem from an RSS feed (Rythmisis, 2025b). It is also covering a wider spectrum of interest in digital governance in all policies (from agriculture to education). This likely pushes the outreach of the organisation to wider audiences with some practical information for its readers. Both organisations focus on strategic policies of digital governance taking into account that both publish policy briefs and proposals. The latest proposals for Rythmisis are fonded increasingly on AI-powered technology and its legal implications, while DWS Greece acknowledges technology by its wider utilization of the term (DWS Greece, 2025b).

By their definitions so far, the research understands that whether wider or narrowed the interests of the two organisations, are clearly defined. Concluding, that they meet the 4th criterium of Haas, which requires “a common policy project, i.e. a set of common practices linked to a set of problems on which their professional competence is directed, apparently out of the belief that human well-being will consequently be enhanced”. The focus is digital governance, there is a common practice (raise awareness and policy briefs) and apparently, their purpose by definition is to promote good governance practices and public advocacy.

4.2 Community members and scope of Epistemology

Rythmisis consists of legal professionals, public officials, and experts in AI regulation and digital governance. The organisation consists of the board, consultants and the research team. There is clearly a legal perspective on the board and consultants pertaining to Rythmisis, judging from the academic backgrounds of the members. The founder herself comes also from a legal background. Rythmisis therefore is moved into the spectrum of legal epistemology. Nevertheless, there are at all levels experts that can support the scope of the organisation's focal points of advocacy, AI regulation, personal data protection and digital governance. More specifically, the board consists of 9 members. Six of them are purely lawyers, one of them has an informatics background and two of them have a philology or philosophy background. The consultants consist of 20 members out of which only 5 are not possessing a law degree. The five of them all come out of different disciplines. Physics, informatics, history and mathematics (Rythmisis, 2025c).

This way it is clear from which starting point Rythmisis initiates its multidisciplinary dialogue. The expertise of the majority of its organogram stems from legal studies and their strategic planning focuses more on the legal perspectives of AI, data privacy and digital governance, which are the main three scopes of the organisation as per its definition (Rythmisis, 2025a). The rest of the members who pertain to the researchers' group have no public data on their backgrounds. They are just named on the relevant page as supporting members of the functions of the organisation (Rythmisis, 2025c). No further research is needed on them due to the fact that the research focuses more on the strategic levels of management, which is more comprehensive for the identity of the organisation and can answer the question if Rythmisis is an epistemic community or not.

While Rythmisis primarily focuses on legal and then technological aspects, its work indirectly involves epistemological considerations. The allotment of the three different focal points is specified into multiple different realms of social life that regulate and are regulated by the wider spectrum of digital politics. In total, there are identified sixteen different realms. To name some those are sports, infrastructure, health and education. The identification and acknowledgement of the multivariable influence of digital politics highlights the approach of the organisation. Their voice evades any eco-chamber among experts of the same expertise but rather incorporates a multidisciplinary approach to effectively address general directives of digital policy regulation. Finally, as quoted on the page of the different realms of interest "The goal is to cover all sectors which have an effect on the daily life of the citizen and on the scientific/academic, social, intellectual and economic advancement of the country". The specific statement involves the important element of the belief that they are working for the greater good that is step by step planned (Rythmisis, 2025a).

The conclusion at that point for Rythmisis is that the first criterium of Hass is identified by the analysis. (i.e. a common set of normative beliefs and principles that provide a value rationale for social action by community members). This has been judged from a bottom-up perspective. The community members stemming from the same academic background have agreed and institutionalised their action with the creation of the

organisation, Rythmisis. Their beliefs and principles are clearly stated so they constitute the general directives of actions of the organisation. The fourth criterion is also revalidated due to the fact that the different sectoral divisions point out the aim of the greater good of the country (i.e. Greece).

On the same perspective, DWS Greece consists of members with diverse expertise. On its website, it is not visible the exact background of each member. But from the specialisations of each member to the function of the organisation the diversity of expertise is assumed to be diverse. Unlike Rythmisis, DWS Greece seems to cover a wider spectrum of expertise, rather than a legalistic perspective. Of course, there are lawyers but the members seem to pertain to people from the discipline of political sciences in general. This applies to the 21 permanent members of the executive committee of the organisation. The multistakeholder committee provides no specific data or names of the participants. Probably, there is no reason because this is a renewable membership committee which consists of multiple stakeholders that are "responsible for formatting the digital policy at national and international level" (DWS Greece, 2025c). 'Forming' in that sense. It is understood in its wider sense of public advocacy, rather than decisive power to form this policy.

The multidisciplinary approach for DWS Greece comes from the fact that there is a stakeholder committee, which indicates the understanding of the organisation that its approach to digital governance at national and international levels needs to combine different perspectives for effective advocacy. This is evidence, despite the absence of members' CV summaries, that there is a clear set goal for the creation of intersubjective knowledge within the organisation (DWS Greece, 2025c). Their prioritization is to facilitate "as a dialogue platform for democratic governance of new technological developments". In that case, the organisation is the NGO with the self-describing brand name 'Digital Dialogues'. Therefore, DWS is one initiative of the organisation with the Greek case centred on all its initiatives but with international recognition and engagement through the aegis of the UN (DWS Greece, 2025a). That supports their scope of epistemic advocacy by design, when we recall the fact that DWS Greece, strives for "effective and democratic governance of new technological developments and the consequent creation of policy proposals on technological issues.

Likewise, the conclusions for DWS Greece as a platform of dialogue that also characterises the funding NGO, Digital Dialogues, recognise the same principles. For example, they strive for public advocacy in order to regulate more democratically and more effectively the new technological developments. The fact that they gather young professionals at the executive committee and there is a recognised stakeholder committee proves the coherence with the first criterium of Haas. Finally, their public advocacy focuses on the country's 'greater good', rendering this way DWS Greece closer to identification of it as an epistemic community.

4.3 Evaluation of activities

There are yet two more Haas' criteria that have to be cumulatively valid for the organisations in question to be identified as epistemic communities. The second and third

criteria, which refer to shared casual beliefs and common notions of validity are examined through the output work of Rythmisis and DWS Greece. For this section, the analysis focuses on content analysis and more specifically on the published policy briefs of each organisation and in general the work they promote on their websites as their added value contribution to their epistemological focus. More specifically, Rythmisis as a recently founded organisation has to provide one policy brief, which is titled: Fundamental Rights Impact Assessment Template for Use by Public and Private Entities (GR) or FRIA Proposal (Κοτλίδας, Κουτσιούμπα, Κουτσιούμπας, Μησιρλής, & Παυλίδου, 2025). DWS Greece has an annual report which is considered also a policy recommendation because it consists of observations and proposals from the participating members. The content analysis for it is focused on the latest report of their annual conference and published articles of the last year (both in 2024) from their news page, which first try to raise awareness and resemble policy briefs in terms of policy recommendations (DWS Greece, 2025b; Rythmisis, 2025b).

The FRIA proposal is designed to offer a framework of evaluation to organisations for the impact of AI impact that might be inherited within fundamental rights. The framework follows the general directives of the AI Act. It specifically addresses the need for public and private entities to use AI systems, particularly in domains of high risk as defined by the AI Act. The proposal provides a thorough plan for assessment in all stages of AI utilization. The focus of the report is always keen on safeguarding human rights, a fundamental European value. If a risk is identified while the AI system is utilized then the entity has to go through a detailed evaluation of the situation, which is described step by step (Κοτλίδας et al., 2025, p. 3). This procedure ensures compliance with the required transparency and the human-centric approach to AI utilization and development as an established EU's value in the AI Act.

The proposal identifies the risks posed by AI systems, which are explicitly linked to specific practices, such as profiling individuals or using biometric data. Those are often linked with decision-making biases and privacy violations, which are just two examples of identified high risks from the AI Act and international standards. The proposal, therefore, has a structured approach with specific methodological tools (ex. Questionnaires) and addresses the risks with specific policy actions, like compliance assessments for transparency, fairness which are adhered to EU's legislation beyond the AI act (Κοτλίδας et al., 2025, pp. 7–43). This shared understanding among the authors of the report, who are also members of the organisation highlights the common causal framework that Rythmisis adheres to. Their actions are linked to specific results that are logical and common creation of all the participants in the policy proposal, Consequently, Rythmisis fulfils the criterion, as outlined by Haas, for shared causal beliefs within an epistemic community.

Furthermore, the common notion of validity is visible through the participation of the organisation in international fora. Its participation, for example, in 'AI4Gov' promotes a pan-European understanding with like-minded organisations, which seek to reinforce the fundamental European values (Rythmisis, 2025d). Usually, in such fora, all participants recognise the same values and are there to reinforce those with their role as think tanks. Their validity is tested among peers. These fermentations usually validate each other's points of

view. They get readjusted if necessary and reach enhanced common conclusions to the issue area of concern. This international and external validation of an organisation is one part. The internal one is visible through the announcements that Rythmisis publishes from time to time on their newsfeed. There is a clear focus on commenting on AI applications for public governance. There is consistency in publications on that specific subject and a continuous RSS feed with the latest developments in digital governance (Rythmisis, 2025b). These facts, cumulatively with the launch of the 1st conference "AI regulation and applications in Greece: Challenge accepted", which was organised by Rythmisis reinforce the criterium of common validity practices (Soulia, 2023), because it builds upon a common epistemic understanding internally and externally for the organisation.

In regards to DWS Greece as forementioned their 2024 report and news articles also constitute shared casual beliefs and common notions of validity. More specifically, the report emphasises multistakeholder discussions among academia, policymakers, politicians and technology experts at the annual conference organised by DWS Greece. As part of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the aegis of the UN (DWS Greece, 2025a), this offers a globally recognised foundation for digital governance assessment into a globally recognised framework. The agenda is structured through the "call for issues" sections, which enforces a bottom-up approach to address more effectively the priorities of the Greek case (DWS Greece, 2025d). DWS Greece is itself a platform of collaborative policy development. The annual conference report is acknowledged as a policy proposal formed by multiple expert opinions and finally into a conclusion of a broad validated consensus and an intersubjective validation of knowledge. Leading this way, potentially, to more effective and legitimate digital governance policy outcomes.

Furthermore, the platform serves as a hub of policy discussions on AI, IoT and the latest EU policies on digital governance. Exactly, like Rythmisis, DWS Greece aligns with global benchmarks to promote its epistemological validation. For example, their annual conference is promoted on the Greek government's websites (Digital Skills & Jobs Platform, 2024). The reliance on authoritative sources fosters consistency and credibility, through its opinion articles, which are supported and written by the community members. Their 'blog' webpage has a plethora of opinion articles, comments on the newest developments in digital governance and announcements of their actions. There is a consistency in the narrative that DWS Greece tries to build about the democratization of the digital world. There are mostly one-author publications but also collaborative ones (DWS Greece, 2025b), indicating this way a multidisciplinary consensus.

DWS Greece demonstrates alignment with Haas' criteria and its structured approach to meet shared casual beliefs and common notions of validity. This is built upon the engagement of stakeholders who address and identify critical issues in digital governance and through the establishment of a common understanding of the problems in that realm. The consistency of the proposed solutions bridges policy actions with societal outcomes in a specific context. The validation comes through the adherence to intersubjective validation frameworks, such as leveraging EU regulatory standards and integrating multiple expert perspectives. The dual commitment to collaborative problem-solving and action validation

through the constitutional engagement of the organisation renders DWS Greece compliant with Haas' criteria and capable of advancing actionable insights for its public advocacy goals.

5. Conclusions and Further Considerations

The paper has demonstrated the links between civil society to epistemic communities. The Greek case of the NGOs has been presented to the extent that this is relevant to the main focus of Greek epistemic communities on digital governance. The relevant cases of examination are two and have been examined thoroughly based on their demonstrated activities. Their activities are linked to the criteria of Haas as a conceptual categorization one by one in order to determine if the two organisations are also epistemic communities and strive to influence the public policy of digital governance. The two cases of Rythmisis and DWS Greece are enough. Those are based on the numbers that the initial cartography for the civil society in Greece provides. If this changes in the future or not one has been identified yet the paper is subject to enhancement and revision. Keeping the above statements in mind the conclusions are:

Both organisations analysed in this paper meet cumulatively all the Haas' criteria. The paper has demonstrated through the sections of: a) conceptualisation of definitions, b) community members and scope of epistemology, and c) the evaluation of activities that the criteria of: a) a common set of normative beliefs and principles, b) shared causal beliefs, c) common notions of validity, d) a common policy project are fulfilled. The narrative that was built does not follow the criteria in the numerical order of Haas but tries to build a comprehensive conceptualisation of the functions of those organisations from a generic perspective (definitions) to specificities (activities). That has led to a step-by-step evaluation of what renders those organisations, epistemic communities. Despite those which do not recognize themselves under this identity, but rather under more generic like 'platforms of 'dialogue' or 'group of experts', they are epistemic communities by design based on their constitutional goals.

So far, the two epistemic communities. Rythmisis and DWS Greece, have little output to demonstrate. They are newly born epistemic communities and they have not embraced yet the characteristics of such identification. What the analysis notices, is in regards to their produced knowledge capital, which for the time being is limited. As limited their resources seem to be. The production of one or two policy proposals is a first step towards something greater but not yet influential to public policy. The organisation and vision are there and visible. The augmentation of their initiatives is subject to members' motivation convergence and time. It is likely to witness greater influence out of the two epistemic communities as they start to build up their knowledge capital and their members have the motivation to actively promote it. Their engagement, so far, is noteworthy but their actual power to advocate their epistemic knowledge is rather hovering and is better to be examined again in detail based on their output in the near future.

Their success stories are some policy briefs and the organisation of an annual conference for DWS Greece. Rythmisis is more focused on knowledge production through its

policy briefs and DWS Greece's primary focus is the organisation of the annual conference. The gathering of the majority of national experts every year alongside the publication of proposals from both epistemic communities is a solid base for further development. If it is taken into account that their funding year is quite recent and therefore they have been in a developing stage. The examination could not find a visible result on the influence of public advocacy on a national level or European. The current dynamic of the epistemic communities for the time being is perceived as soft power due to awareness campaigns and dialogue facilitation.

At this stage, those epistemic communities should enhance their membership base while they simultaneously strive to maximize their financial funding. Their members are expanding but for the time being it seems to be limited. In order to expand their epistemic knowledge they should allow the participation of the citizens as members of the organisation or participants in their open and democratic processes. This can create awareness through the personal networks' of each participant for what the role of the epistemic communities is. Furthermore, they should also augment their funding in order to institutionalize their position into the formal structures of the state and establish a position that will allow some of its members to be fully occupied with the work of the organisation. There should be a shift from pure voluntarism to something more professional. That would allow them to fully embrace conceptually their identity as epistemic communities as they reinforce their organisational capacity.

Future research on the dynamics of Greek epistemic communities should focus more on the deficiencies and insistencies that the Greek civil society inherits from them. At this point, the epistemic communities seem that they cannot evade the generic situation that civil society faces, that being the sporadic activities, insufficient funding and often relations with political parties. Additionally, the political culture might play a role in showing less trust in Greek epistemic communities due to dependent expertise which serves political agendas and even creates elitist communities without democratic legitimization. The accessibility of those organisations and the byproduct of civic engagement is another variable to be taken into account. If those observations are recognised positively or negatively as facts, they can give further qualitative characteristics for the Greek epistemic communities in examination. Interviews with the representatives of Rythmisis and DWS Greece are catalytical for future research to have a clearer picture of the forthcoming future and its development.

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