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**\*\*\*Draft\*\*\***

## Prospects for Capacity-building for environmental policy under austerity

### A comparative study of Greece and the UK

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The global economic crisis caused an immense blow to the countries of the former European Union (EU) periphery, the countries of the European south and the Republic of Ireland, with immense repercussions to the living standards of their populations. Although, particular attention was paid to the problems of these countries, the severity of the crisis was also felt in the core countries of the global economy, G8 countries like the USA and the UK. In times of financial instability and uncertainty, the environmental concern is likely to be downgraded among the issue priorities of the general citizenry. By extension, that concern appears to enter into an interdependent relationship to many environmental policy and governance parameters. By employing this rationale, this paper uses environmental concern as a centrifugal separator and embarks upon a comparative investigation of capacity-building for environmental policy in Greece and the UK. To aid this investigation, we identify key landmarks where the environmental issue entered the capacity-building debate in each country and then proceed to examine how that fared in relation to certain environmental sustainability indicators under the austerity context. We conclude by suggesting that, irrespective of their different pre-austerity status, both countries have entered a downward spiral where economic growth has been completely disengaged from environmental parameters.

Key words: Capacity-building; environmental sustainability; austerity; Big society; Greece; UK

#### *Introduction*

This is a comparative paper that seeks to account for the prospects for capacity-building for environmental policy in the context of austerity in two radically different countries, The UK and Greece. Both countries are members of the EU and have political actors that question the benefits of that membership. Their populations are experiencing austerity measures which are justified by different actors as a way out of the adverse financial position that they have found themselves to be. Nevertheless, and leaving momentarily aside the numerous differences that exist within these broad similarities, when it comes to the environmental dimension in general and environmental policies in particular they stand in two diametrically opposed poles. The UK was seen in some accounts during the new labour administration as the quintessentially ecological modernisation (EM) polity that was even surpassing in some respects the environmental pace setters of Holland and Germany (see Schreurs et al., 2007). In 2010 the coalition government that was formed between the Conservatives and the liberal democrats appeared to continue complementing the EM capacity of the UK with both coalition partners having elevated climate change as a central issue in their pre-electoral campaign.

In contrast, at the time that the UK was demonstrating many positives in its environmental capacity, Greece was taking significant steps in the opposite direction. Indeed, during the five year tenure (2004-2009) of the conservative New Democracy government, not only the country's notorious non-compliance with EU environmental directives continued unabated but the then minister of YPEHODE (The Ministry for Environment, Planning and Public Works), George Souflias, demonstrated complete disregard for the environment. The advent of PASOK in power in October 2009 was heralded as the first serious sign that the country was moving towards fully embracing ecological modernisation (Karamichas, 2012). Characteristically, the following rationale was promoted in PASOK's programmatic declaration:

Green development serves the need for a new growth model for a green economy that has relied far too heavily in the past on domestic consumption financed by bank credit, leading to vast volumes of imports and constant growth of the sheltered sector of the economy at the expense of the export sector (Pagoulatos, 2010: 3).

In January 2010, the PASOK government submitted to Brussels an ambitious Stability and Growth programme aiming to bring the general deficit down marking in that way the onset of austerity in Greece and a seemingly unending process of uncertainty and decline in the financial standing of the average Greek. Yet, at the time, Pagoulatos (2010:6) argued that,

Green growth and development occupy pride of place in the Papandreou government's Stability and Growth Programme, [...]. The green economy agenda in the first among the main policies aimed at enhancing economic growth and employment. The programme reiterates the commitment to green growth and development as a "major priority for the country", given the need to address the challenges to climate change and the country's unexplored potential in renewable energy development.

To sum up the above discussion, in 2010 both countries had parties with leaderships having a clear commitment to green growth and development in government. In the UK that was a continuation of or complement to the positive EM outlook of the preceding New Labour administration whilst in the Greek case, the adoption of EM policies by the Papandreou government was a radical break from an environmentally indifferent performance that characterised the preceding administration. Whereas the UK had been experiencing the fall out of the global economic crisis for two years, the announcement in 2010 of Stability Growth Programme by the relatively newly elected government in Greece was a "sudden shock" whose seismic tremors can still be felt five years later. We assert, that's exactly where the main differences in the prospects for environmental capacity building in the two countries are situated. We are going to proceed towards discussing the prospects for capacity-building for environmental policy in both countries by examining performance over 6 identified EM indicators by organising the discussion along the following phases: 2010 government acquisition; 'Big Society'/second memorandum of understanding; 2015 government acquisition.

It's important to take into account that in the Greek case, we are dealing with 5 different cabinets (see table 1), 3 national elections, 1 referendum on the acceptance/rejection of a proposed bailout agreement and 3 bailout agreements. At the time of writing these lines

(21/8/2015) the prime-minister, Alexis Tsipras, has resigned and a new electoral round is going to take place in September 2015. In contrast, in the UK case we are dealing with two elections and two different cabinets with the party dominating both. There is a clear imbalance between the two cases. Greece is in a messy situation and one would expect that any chances of environmental capacity in the policy arena would be severely tarnished. However, still it's worth pursuing this endeavour because it would allow us to weight the UK experience and capacity prospects under the current administration.

Table 1

## Greek Governments since October 2009

Year	Government	Parties
October 2009	One party Government	PASOK PM: George Papandreou
November 2011	Interim Coalition Government	PASOK, ND, LAOS PM: Lukas Papademos
May 2012	Non -party caretaker Government	Ministries headed by prominent personalities PM: Panagiotis Pikrammenos
June 2012	Coalition Government	ND, PASOK, DIMAR PM: Antonis Samaras
January 2015	Coalition Government	SYRIZA, ANEL, Ecologists Greens PM: Alexis Tsipras

*Indicators of capacity for EM*

The 6 identified EM indicators were selected by examining a range of key works on EM (see Buttel, 2003; Mol & Sonnefeld, 2000; Jänicke & Weidner, 1997; Weidner, 2002) and the green legacy aspirations of the IOC, six indicators were identified and put to the test and have been also used in a selection of works by Karamichas (2012; 2013 among other) in his examination of the environmental sustainability legacy bequeathed by sport mega-events. The six indicators are as follows:

1. Average annual level of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

In this indicator we use data measuring CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at a given host nation since 1990, the baseline year of the Kyoto Protocol. A range of socio-political factors is put under the microscope to assess failures to implement policies aiming to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## 2. Level of environmental consciousness

This indicator examines data from relevant Eurobarometer surveys to gauge the extent to which the general public exhibits environmental awareness and concern. The general idea is that the highest concern is the more likely for the state government to adopt relevant policies. It is expected job losses and politics of severe austerity may have a significant impact.

## 3. Ratification of international agreements

This indicator assesses the willingness of a given polity to undertake an international commitment over what is a quintessentially global problem. The ratification of an international treaty, like the Kyoto protocol, can be a major point of political contention that revolves around the issues of economic growth and job creation.

## 4. Designation of sites for protection

This indicator is assessed by counting the percentage of land acreage with this designated status and is also reliant upon the aforementioned issues.

## 5. Implementation of environmental Assessment (EIA) procedures

The implementation of EIA procedures is an essential requirement for all projects related to Olympic Games hosting. As a former Olympics host nations, it is expected that both countries would be competent in applying these procedures. However, this is a highly ambiguous indicator that is malleable by the prevailing socio-economic situation.

## 6. Environmental Non-governmental Organizations (ENGOS) participation in public decision-making processes

This indicator is in direct connection to the degree of environmental consciousness exhibited by the host nation. The underlying rationale in this case is that high rates of environmental consciousness tend to encourage support for ENGOS pushing for environmental reforms.

In this investigation, we have selected one of the indicators, environmental concern, as a centrifugal separator with an immense potential to impact upon the remaining five. That was justified as follows:

[...] increased levels of environmental concern exhibited by the general public are likely to lead the state government to adopt relevant policies, ratify relevant agreements (Kyoto protocol), and designate nature protection sites. In addition, it may lead to increased citizen support and participation in ENGOS that in turn can

monitor more effectively, due to added support by the general public/voters the environmental policy actions by the general administration (Karamichas, 2015: 26).

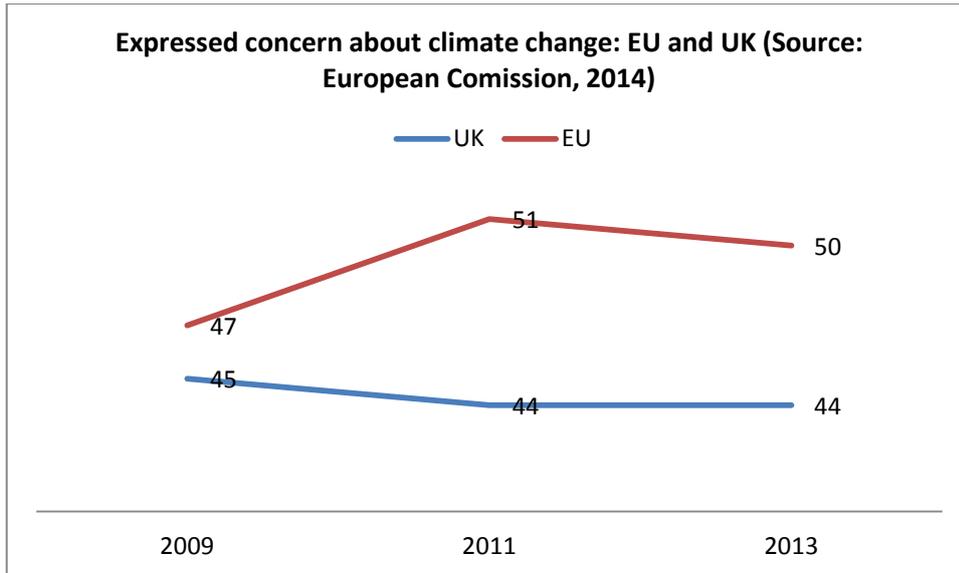
The following section discusses concern about climate change as that was exhibited by the British and Greek publics in successive special Eurobarometers since 2009 (European Commission, 2014).

#### *Level of Environmental Consciousness*

As we can see in figure 1, concern about climate change in the UK has remained steady since 2009, below the EU average at around 44-45 per cent. Interestingly enough, in 2009 the majority, 55 per cent had picked 'a major global economic downturn' as the 'most serious issue currently facing the world as a whole'. As the global economic crisis spread in 2010 and 2011 there were some interesting changes. For instance, in 2011 there was an overall increase on the concern exhibited about climate change across EU's 27 states with 51 per cent considering climate change as 'the most serious problem facing the world as a whole'. The UK public exhibited a slight decrease with 44 per cent concerned about the climate and a significant decrease on the 'economic situation' as that item scored only 39 per cent. In 2013, the climate change issue had the same score (44 per cent), there was a slight increase to 40 per cent for the 'economic situation item and a substantial increase to 70 per cent from 51 per cent in 2011 for the 'poverty, lack of food and drinking water' item.

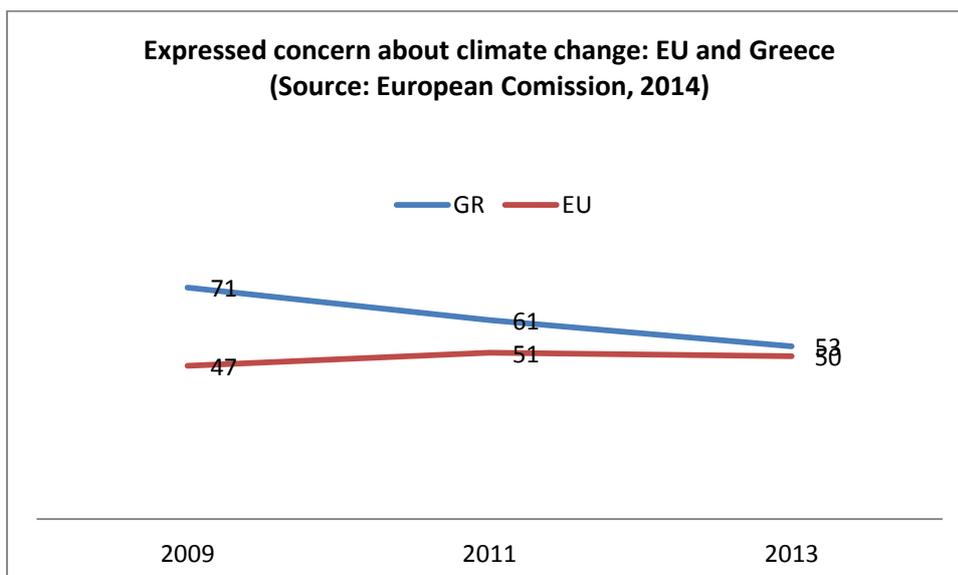
Although, according to the available Eurobarometer data presented here, concern about climate change has remained steady since 2009, the Ipsos MORI data compiled by Carter and Clements (2015: 210) demonstrate that the 'tiny proportion of those voting for three main parties rated the environment as the most important issue facing the country at the present time' experienced a decline in 2010 that perhaps can partly account for the decline of support for climate change policies in conservative party ranks. The conservative campaign in 2015 did not raise the banner of climate change in the same intensity as in 2010 and that accompanied by the fact that Cameron doesn't share the pro green Liberal Democrats may lead to support for disengaged from environmental concerns, economic growth strategies.

#### **Figure 1**



As we can see in figure 2, in 2009, 71 per cent of the Greek public considered climate change to be the 'most serious issue currently facing the world as a whole'. However that was after after 'poverty, lack of food and drinking water' (72 per cent) and slightly above 'a major global economic downturn' (68 per cent). In 2011, the concern on the climate change item was significantly reduced to 61 per cent whilst 'poverty, lack of food and drinking water' was substantially increased to 80 per cent and the 'economic situation' to 78 per cent. In 2013 there was another substantial reduction to the expressed concern about climate change by the Greek public, down to 53 per cent and much closer to the European average, 50 per cent. In addition, 'poverty, lack of food and drinking water' had the highest European score with 91 per cent and the 'economic situation' was further increased to 87 per cent.

Figure 2



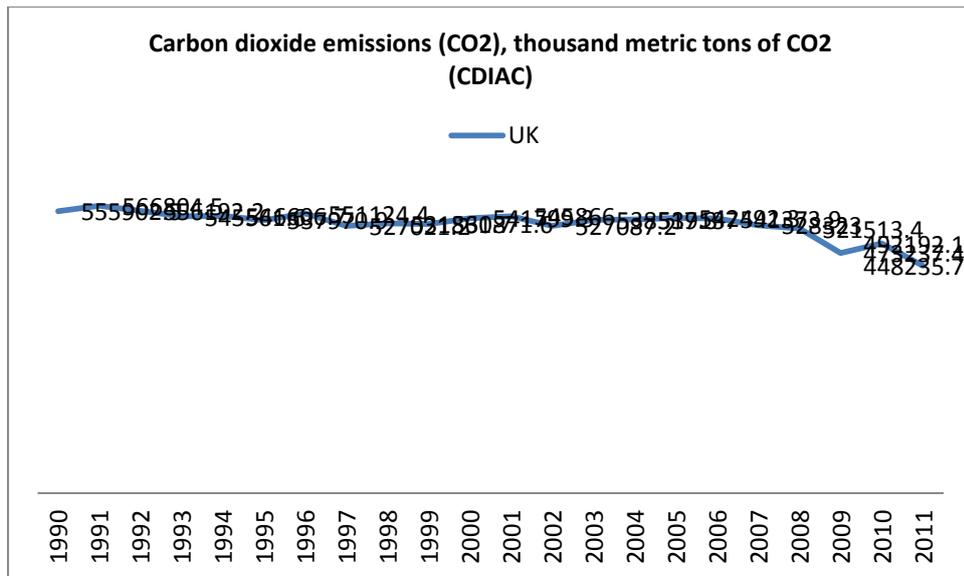
By comparing the two countries in relation to the environmental concern indicator, it is evident that the UK had a steady score from the pre-austerity period. When I contrasted that score with the much higher Greek score, 71%, in 2009, I qualified it by pointing out to fact that this concern has been accompanied by high levels of environmental knowledge and increased support for green party formations as opposed to an even higher score by the Greek public during the late 1990s which was marked by limited knowledge on the contributing factors to climate change (see Karamichas, 2007). In 2013, both countries had a really high score, 70 per cent (UK) and 91 per cent (GR) on the 'poverty, lack of food and drinking water' item, when the 'economic situation' had only a slight increase to 40 per cent for the 'economic situation' item in the UK and a substantial increase to 87 per cent for the same item in Greece. Subject to these and by employing our original rationale, we are likely to see a negative score in all 6 of the indicators in the Greek case and some ambiguity or outright decline on some of the indicators in the British case in the discussion that follows.

#### *Average annual level of CO2 emissions*

On an assessment that was written on the emissions reduction record of the previous Labour administration, Carter (2009: 112) argued that 'whilst emissions cuts achieved in the 1990s will ensure that the Kyoto target will be met, it had long been obvious that the UK would miss its tougher domestic goal of a 20% reduction of CO2 emissions by 2010'.

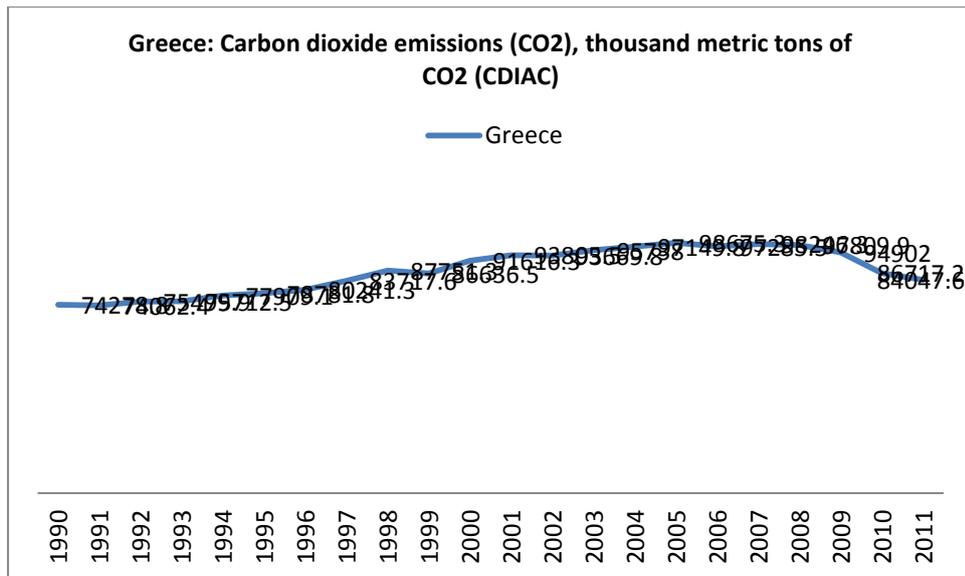
In a report to Friends of the Earth (FoE), one year after the formation of the coalition government, Jonathan Porritt (2011: 14) highlighted that 'the committee on Climate Change has indicated that Treasury hardliners are opposing the recommended indicative emissions target (of 60 per cent by 2030) based on the difficulties of the current economic situation'. Nevertheless, as we can see in figure 3, although there was a 4.6% increase in 2010 from the 2009 emissions in thousand metric tons of CO2, in 2011 there was an 8.9% decrease. Compared to the 1990 Kyoto baseline there was a 19.4% decrease. Moreover, according to government statistics, the UK greenhouse gas emissions were further reduced in 2014 by 8.4%, the biggest fall in emissions since 1990. That was attributed to reduced household energy consumption; fall in the use of coal for electricity generation and policies on climate change taking effect. For green campaigners that was a welcoming development but also pointed out that the big drop in household energy consumption was mostly down to record high temperatures across the UK in 2014 but Ed Davey, secretary of state for energy and climate change, pointed out that the overall 'plan to decarbonise the economy while it grows is working' (Harvey, 2015).

Figure 3



According to UNSD data, in 2007 Greece's per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions stood at 10.2 t, with overall emissions having increased by 34.9 per cent on 1990 levels (UNSD 2010). Furthermore, '[a]ccording to European Environment Agency data, Greece recorded one of the largest absolute increases in GHG emissions between 1990 and 2006 in EU15 of 24.4 per cent, set against both an overall emissions decrease of 2.7 per cent by EU15 over this period, and an overall EU-27 target of a 20 per cent reduction in GHG emissions by 2020 on 1990 levels set by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and an aspiration to reduce emissions by 30 per cent on 1990 levels. Per capita emissions (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) increased by 15.8 per cent over the same period (as against an EU15 performance of -8.4 per cent). Clearly, this is long term data, with emissions fuelled by increased transport activity and energy demand, more recently partly counterbalanced by the use of natural gas and hydropower, and is furthermore within Greece's Kyoto allowance of a 25 per cent increase in emissions (EEA 2008: 134-5)' (Karamichas 2012: 160-1). In 2006, there was a rather unexpected 1.19 per cent decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (see UNSD 2009). However, this decrease was seen as 'too small to draw any conclusions, especially given the continued dominance of the main contributors to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Greece. Moreover, Greece was suspended from the UN's carbon trading scheme for three months in April 2008 as punishment for the inaccurate reporting of carbon emissions. Characteristically, the body responsible for atmospheric measurements, at the time, "overestimated the emissions for 2004 by 37,000 tonnes" (Psaropoulos 2008)' (Karamichas *ibid*). As we can see in figure 4, there was a 3.1% decrease in 2011 from the 2010 emissions in thousand metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. That was a 13.6 increase from the 1990 Kyoto baseline but far below the 25 per cent Kyoto allowance. As far as the impact of the global crisis is concerned, Lekakis and Kousis (2013: 8) highlight that 'the global recession did lead to substantial Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reductions in 2008 and 2009, the 2010 picture was different'. Although GHG emissions increased 'for the EU15, mainly due to the recovery from the economic crisis [...], GHG emissions from Greece, Ireland and Spain decreased [...]'.

Figure 4



### *Ratification of international agreements*

According to Dryzek and colleagues (2003: 181), with the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the UK endorsed sustainable development and produced several White Papers in the 1990s, 'but little of substance'. As we have already argued, that has substantially changed in the first decade of the noughties, with Schreurs and Tiberghien (2007: 25) arguing that 'the Germans and the British have quite consistently taken on climate change leadership roles within Europe when they have held the council presidency. According to the CIA World Factbook<sup>1</sup>, the UK has signed and ratified the majority of international environmental agreements (see also Wurzel et. al., 2013: 120). Nevertheless, the ratification of international agreements doesn't necessarily correspond with relevant actions. The tendency across the EU, with Germany and The Netherlands leading the way, is for a move away from command and control approaches towards voluntary action and in the UK, 'the Environment Ministry has continued, since 2000, its active exploration of voluntary instruments to address certain types of environmental problems. This occurred particularly in those sectors where industry flatly opposed the introduction of more intrusive instruments such as market-based instruments and regulation' (ibid: 121). With that fact in mind and austerity policies that have been accompanied by resistance to any environmental measure that is perceived to operate against the economic growth of the country, in the post-2015 national election context with the Conservative Party in government without pro-Green Liberals in coalition, there might be a strong inclination to ditch all the 'green crap' which is probably seen as European encroachment by a growing Eurosceptic sector.

Greece was slow to ratify the Kyoto Protocol but there was no outright justification based on arguments pertaining to the national interest at that stage. Greece was the last EU 15 member state to ratify the protocol in 2002, within 24 hours of a 31 May deadline. Elafros (2007) has noted that 'the agreement allowed Greece to reduce its continuous increase of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 25 per cent of the 1990 baseline for the period 2008-2012. That was formulated in order for the country to make a fair contribution to the common EU objective of 8 per cent reduction for that period. Even though Kyoto sought a 12 per cent reduction by 2010, Greece secured an increase because it was seen as a developing country and as such the country's capacity to meet its targets has been heavily

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.indexmundi.com/united\\_kingdom/environment\\_international\\_agreements.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/united_kingdom/environment_international_agreements.html)

circumscribed by a vigorous developmental process with many polluting emissions' (Karamichas, 2013: 133).

#### *Designation of sites for protection*

According to UKELA (2008), the UK was boasting 356 National Nature Reserves in 2006. In October 2010, Vidal (2010) wrote that the government 'confirmed plans to sell off as much as 150,000 hectares of forest and woodland in England in the biggest sale of public land for nearly 60 years'. The plan attracted fierce public opposition and some Conservative and Liberal Democrat voted against the government in a forestry debate leading to the withdrawal of the plan on 17 February 2011 (Karamichas, 2013: 192; Carter and Clements, 2015: 213).

Turning to the Greek case, a study by Dimopoulos and his colleagues (Dimopoulos et al., 2006: 175) points out that Greece has 359 sites incorporated in the Natura 2000 European Ecological Network, and as a signatory to the EU Habitats directive, it holds a number of obligations in relation to the conservation of the habitats and species that occupy these sites. Moreover, other studies added that 'Greece has one of the richest and varied fauna and flora of the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The variation of plants and trees in Greece is exceptional with over 6,000 species, mostly indigenous. Marine life is also exceptionally varied with endemic species. Greece constitutes a priceless biological reserve in a European scale with more than 300 bird species, reptiles and mammals, while hundreds of other birds are passing over Greece as migrants (Valavanidis and Vlachogianni, 2012: 8).

The immediate question that confronts us is how that wealth of ecosystems has been preserved and protected since 2010 and what the prospects are under the third bailout agreement that the country negotiated in the summer of 2015. In this exploration, it's important to bring some aspects of how the protection of natural sites fared prior to the onset of the crisis.

A good case to consider the 2007 devastating forest fires which caused immense destruction in both acreage and death toll. Karamichas (2007) pointed out that Greece lacked an official forest and land register, and this issue has sustained the practice of converting to building land the forest lands that are affected by fires. These lands were supposed to be protected for their rejuvenation. This lack of implementation of the existing legal framework was attributed to an intentional ambiguity as 'a standard institutional practice that limits culpability and essentially doesn't identify guilty parties and that way creates substantial obstacles in the application of nature protection laws. [...] these problems are worsened by changes of managers alongside changes of government or even ministers – something that leads to a piecemeal and partisan policy process' (Apostolopoulou, 2009: 126).

Evidently, that was the prevailing situation at YPEHODE and what was more or less what was described by Fernández and colleagues (2010). Nevertheless, 'one of the first initiatives put in action by the new ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (YPEKA) in December 2009 was a new legal framework for the rejuvenation of the burned forest lands of the Greater Athens area that prohibits any building in these areas before the composition and validation of a forest land register, finally passed by parliament in January 2010' (Karamichas,

2012: 166). That was a development that was meeting a perennial demand of the Greek environmental movement. Nevertheless, after the replacement of T. Birbili it appears that the forest and land register has been substantially altered and a range of other policies that she initiated completely scrapped.

#### *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)*

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures have been used in the UK since 1985 (Weston. 2002). Under the Conservative – Liberal Democrats and Cameron’s ‘Big Society’, ‘the white paper on the natural environment that was presented to the House of Commons by [the then] Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Caroline Spelman in June 2011 made a strong case for making the environmental factor a key component of the ‘Big Society’ by assessing its impact in all planning procedures and arrangements’ (Karamichas, 2013: 193-4).

These pledges appeared to fully subscribe to Cameron’s own green ambitions as complements to existing EIA policies. ‘However, since EIAs are very much the responsibility of local authorities and these authorities have been the [...] recipients of significant budget cuts, there are doubts about the current efficacy of EIA’ (Karamichas, *ibid.*). Moreover, the decision to dispense with the audit commission ‘has had a big impact on the readiness and ability of Local Authorities to deliver sustainable outcomes at the local level. The Comprehensive Area Assessment has been swept away, together with all the National Indicators that previously helped define the relationship between national and local government. Many of these indicators have a strong sustainability element’ (Porritt, 2011: 48). One of the first acts of the new Conservative administration was to issue new planning guidance under which ‘councils will be strongly encouraged to meet the existing deadline of 16 weeks to approve or reject fracking applications. Greg Clark, the secretary of state for communities, will now systematically to “call in” applications and decide himself’ (Vaughan, 2015).

Although EIAs had to be performed in all Olympic related projects when Athens undertook to host the 2004 Games that appears to have had little post-Olympics impact. In fact, inherent problems in EIAs were amplified by the absence of attempts to overhaul existing poor administrative practices. The importance that was given to the exploitation of Renewable Energy sources as part of the ‘green growth and development’ agenda and ‘the need to address the country’s unexplored potential in renewable energy development’ (Pagoulatos 2010: 6) by the Papandreou government was bound to attract the investment interests of key corporate actors. The location of certain renewable energy facilities, such as wind farms, has been contentious with challengers citing the complete absence or violation of EIA procedures and findings. Thus, we have a case where environmentally contentious projects are simultaneously connected to green benefits and growth. That way, EIAs are performed in a swift way that is favourable to corporate interests. In effect, in the context of the severe crisis that Greece has been facing, we are confronted with the same problem areas that have been characterizing EIA processes, inherent ambiguity and pressures for project completion, but with the twist of the necessity for dressing LULUs under the guise of green development.

On another front, certain environmentally harmful projects were licensed by employing the economic growth and employability rationale, such as the goldmine exploration and exploitation at Chalkidiki in Northern Greece by the Canadian company Eldorado Gold. There is local opposition and support to the project by groups with different concerns and interests on that development that oppose each other. In February 2015, P. Lafazanis, the minister for Production Restructuring Environment and Energy decided to recall the architectural and technological studies for the project citing concerns about their adequacy in relation to planning and environmental guidelines. The veteran left-wing politician received the wrath of the miners' trade unions but was in tune with the Greek Green Party, the Ecologists-Greens occupying the Department for the environment.

### *ENGO participation*

The prevailing situation in the final days of the New Labour administration was an overwhelming acceptance of the seriousness of climate change by politicians of all colours. Nevertheless, Rootes (2009: 27) was arguing that 'opportunities of access to lobby and potentially to influence policy formation have never been greater, but, especially when viewed from the perspective of the enormity of the environmental challenges confronting us, the yield in terms of policy output and effective government action has so far been disappointing. Democratically elected governments worry that effective action on climate change will incur costs for which the public is unprepared, and government ministers now urge ENGOs to mobilise the public to demand the policies the government know they must implement. Yet governments balk at providing ENGOs with resources necessary to undertake any such mass mobilization.

That couldn't be a more accurate description for what was to lay ahead for the conundrums that were to confront ENGOs under the subsequent Conservative-Liberal Democrats coalition government (2009-2015) and the current conservative government. Porritt (2011: commented that David Cameron's 'Big Society' discourse with its given emphasis on increased civil society participation in decision-making processes was 'entirely compatible with the type of progressive, radical emphasis on decentralisation and civic empowerment that the Green movement has been advocating for many decades'. In relation to that Karamichas (2013: 196) wrote that 'criticisms have been raised about the capacity of the 'Big Society' to fulfil its aspirations in the context of austerity cuts to public services' and added that 'the closing of the UK's oldest ENGO, Environmental Protection UK (EPUK), which was due to cuts to local authorities (Webb, 2011), is perhaps illustrative of what is to come for many other civil society groups and organizations in the UK' (ibid.).

### **ADD Porritt 2015**

As argued before, the environment in Greece was notoriously downgraded during the period under the notorious Souflias's running of YPEHODE. The ambitious green plans of the Papandreou government gave the impression that there was a de facto openness of the environment ministry to form active collaborative arrangements with ENGOs. Indeed, ten ENGOs were proclaiming that the establishment of a Green fund under Birbili 'was a positive development for environmental policy in Greece, as it raised hopes that the

environment would finally receive what has been collected for its protection. It also raised hopes that the distribution of funds to projects like urban and suburban restoration [...], energy upgrades of the building reserve and the re-establishment of downgraded biotopes would had given the essential impulse to “green” economic activities that are still very limited in Greece’. Nevertheless, with changes brought in by Papaconstantinou, ‘95% of the funds collected for the Green Fund for the regulations of semi-open spaces and the legalization of buildings lacking planning permission, through emissions trading and income from fines for environmental crimes, were to be incorporated to the general government budget’ (Odysseas 2011; my translation from Greek).

### *Discussion*

We had stipulated from the outset that in some respects the investigation undertaken here is a fait accompli. The comparison was between a G8 country that used to exhibit one of the most positive outlooks in its capacity for environmental sustainability and a country with a negative outlook in most, if not all, indicators. 2010 found both countries with governments advocating ambitious environmental capacity plans, which were seen positively by their respective ENGOs. However as things progressed and Greece started its

Table 2

Country	CO2	Env Concern	Ratific.	Nature Prot.	EIA Implem.	Particip.	SUM
UK	+ 2	0	0	-1	-1	-2	-2
Greece	+ 1	-2	0	-1	0	-2	-4

### *Concluding remarks*

#### **ADD UK and blessing in disguise metaphor for Greece and that all reforms were progressively abandoned or scraped after Papandreou**

In the Greek case the conclusion should be fairly obvious. All the environmental reforms were more or less progressively abandon or scraped after the demise of the Papandreou government be in the name of a conventionally defined economic growth with the absence of the environment (see Lekakis and Kousis, 2013: 21) or with a call on social justice that is marked dominated by old left perceptions that downplays environmental concern as a middle-class privilege. Characteristically, as SYRIZA was growing globally in popularity with its anti-austerity message, in May 2013, Naomi Klein ‘was surprised to discover that [SYRIZA ...] did not oppose the governing coalition’s embrace of new oil and gas exploration. Instead it argued that any funds raised by the effort should be spent on pensions, not used to pay back creditors. In other words: they were not providing an alternative to extractivism but simply had better plans for distributing the spoils’ (see Klein, 2014).

Both the British and Greek governments currently appear to be guided by an anti-environment belief system that perceives ecological goals as unnecessary interferences with the market and are against the interests of the people.

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