

**Environmental Policies  
And Environmental Politics in Greece  
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*(Speaking Notes)*

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1. The purpose of my short intervention is to highlight the origins of a possible systemic critique on the current state of environmental politics and vis a vis environmental policies in Greece.
  - By environmental politics I refer to processes of power management and institutional maneuvering that are legitimized by the operation of the political system.
  - By environmental policies I refer to deliberate or simply spontaneous actions or avoidance of possible actions by authorities that have direct or indirect impact on qualities of the environment.
2. Politics have actors – policies have descriptors
3. The main actors in Greek environmental politics are
  - The European Union
  - The Greek Government
  - The Greek political parties and groups
  - The Local authorities
  - Pressure groups
  - Academics
  - NGOs
4. Policy descriptors are more difficult to define. A fairly comprehensive selection could be the following.
  - Command and control instruments, such as laws, decrees, rules and procedures issued by authorities

- Incentives and macro-manipulations distributed by authorities such as financial incentives, plans and projects.
  - Cultural interventions, such as education, publicity and communication techniques.
5. O common grievance concerning the operation of actors is that they do not render expected results. The problem here is to define expected results. Different people, different factors under different assumptions and different circumstances may expect different results out of the same environmental policy.
- The most accepted approach to this problem is to identify expected results with officially declared purposes, goals or targets.
  - This approach more than often leads to logical impasses: The output of political interactions (i.e. the operation of political actors as a systemic whole) is assumed to be the result of some policies. But how can we be sure that these results are determinately related to the declared purposes of competent authorities? By definition, Policies are things that happen or done; not things that are said of declared. Therefore expectations referring to policies should be deduced from the operational analysis of policies as systems of activities and not from simple oral and/or written declarations.
  - This pragmatic approach is very seldom taken into account in political analysis in this country.
6. A second important grievance is that actors do not coordinate effectively towards well-defined goals and therefore they bring poor results because the lack synergy.
- The observation is relevant. If we assume that the ‘political system’ is the self-coordinating mechanism, this means that we are confronted with a malfunction of the Greek political system.
  - This indeed is a dainty hypothesis for further scientific investigation. Unfortunately few if any have picked the bait.
  - We (in the Lab of Environmental Policy and Management – University of the Aegean) have picked the glove and are working on

it for the last three years. More specifically we are elaborating on the metaphor put in the form of the assumption that we may consider

➤ *Environmental Policy as a “viable system”*

7. The most common critique – although not clearly and analytically expressed – referring to descriptors is that they usually they are not effectively combined in optimized collections. Rather they are simply summed up as linear collections of optimized factors.
  - Indeed, the most common practical or actual expression of policies is in the form of formal legislature. Fortunately, European Union practices have introduced ‘project methodologies’. This should be considered as an important breakthrough. Nevertheless, even these methodologies are poorly applied because their ‘parts’ are distributed among different public agencies that cannot systemically coordinate their roles focused on a well defined common purpose:
  - Let us take two examples:
  - *The case of land-use planning and ekistics. (A very strict legislature for controlling unauthorized construction is coupled with a very permissive fiscal policy that favors super-normal capital gains for violators!)*
  - *The case of water pricing for agricultural use. (Pricing of community water supply does not discriminate between effective and wasteful irrigation methods. In reality it penalizes the use of effective technologies by not allowing margins for the amortization of relevant investment)*
8. The gravest sin of the Greek policy producing and enacting system is legalistic formalism.
  - The way policies are explicitly expressed make total evaluation and monitoring practically impossible. Therefore rational discussion, both ex ante and post mortem is very difficult.
  - As a means to understand the need of describing policies in the form of the Viable System we (the Lab.) propose the illustration of the ‘Greek coffee-shop paradox’ According to this paradox, to

political discussion typical to the everyday operation of the coffee-shop in Greece will ever end to clear conclusion. The reason is that for the average Greek, for every policy there must always be specified two *ex definitio* opposing parts: The agent of the policy (usually identified with the 'state') and those subjected to the specific policy. A policy will be accepted in the discussion as successful if and only if the discussants agree that there is no fault neither for the agent nor for the subjects. The possibility that the fault might be the result of faulty relation between the dynamics that relate the behavior of the two parties is excluded as an answer to the policy evaluation. This third mode of evaluation leads directly to the need of integrating policy in the form of structure of a viable system that is defined by its intrinsic purpose.

9. Good governance means good coordination of actors and effective combination of policy descriptors.
  - Coordination of the described set of actors cannot be achieved with hierarchical schemes of command – Therefore we may alternatively envisage the situation as a potential self regulated viable system.
  - Effective combination of descriptors also leads to a systems approach.
  - Therefore we may say that we are in search of viable political system to manage a viable system of policy instruments of such complexity that may address a very complex policy such as environmental. The specific form or architecture for such a viable system we propose St. Beer's Viable System model, relevantly modified.