

1. From personal benefaction to foundational benefaction

Between the 18th and the 20th centuries, the phenomenon of benefaction flourished in the Greek communities abroad, highlighting its significance in the formation of modern Hellenism. Important diaspora entrepreneurs carried out countless acts of benefaction aimed at enhancing community structures and improving the lives of their compatriots. It is clear that their activities share many common characteristics regardless of differences in time, place, means and purpose.

The state of the world today has necessitated further deeds of benefaction. Nevertheless, the manner in which benefaction is carried out in the 21st century society displays certain unique historical and operational features. In the past, benefactors personally undertook to deliver socially beneficial projects in the place of the collectivity, their main underlying aim being the establishment of the socio-cultural sovereignty of the rising bourgeoisie. In the 21st century era of globalisation, in which the bourgeoisie is decisively dominant and the trend is towards the elimination of national borders, a corresponding decline in social cohesion and a deep crisis of the welfare state have emerged.

Moreover, the scale of both social needs and the practice of benefaction have changed. Foundations which modify the modus operandi of benefaction have been established, while endowing it with an additional role that focuses on the investment and production of new social capital. These historical shifts have given rise to the emergence of the ideology and practice of foundational benefaction, which has

quickly developed into a global phenomenon. This new form of benefaction on a global scale is implemented through the work of foundations. These include the foundations established by Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Pierre Omidyar, Jeff Skoll, Larry Page, and Sergey Brin in the United States, and those established by the Indians Anji Reddy and J. R. D. Tata, and the Taiwanese Chang Yung-Fa.

The benefaction function is now mainly mediated and carried out by collective bodies in the form of foundations. This type of benefaction function, which emerged on a global level during the early 20th century, is characterised by the scale and dimension of the granting capacity. As a result, there is a distinction between foundations and mega-Foundations, the latter being organisations worth more than one billion dollars. For instance, in 2015 Bill Gates Foundation had more than 37 billion dollars in available funds. Both forms of foundations have as their declared purpose interventions aiming the well-being of society. In this sense, they do not constitute a negation but rather a historical evolution of the essence of benefaction.

In touch with their times, wealthy Greeks of today continue to maintain an active presence as benefactors, regardless of the change in the way their beneficent function is realised. In other words, their work as benefactors is not accomplished through personal initiative, but rather through a new tool, the activity of the foundations they have established. Foundations bearing names such as Onassis, Niarchos, Bodossakis, Latsis, Vardinoyannis, Goulandris, Leventis, Laskaridis, and Costopoulos continue to bring the ideology of benefaction to life, functioning as *sui generis* collective money-bearing subjects, which contribute to social development and cohesion, while in parallel securing their founder's posthumous reputation. There are today a number of eloquent illustrations of the *modus operandi* of foundational benefaction.

The Onassis Foundation was established in 1975. It supports Greek studies in universities, research centres, elementary and high schools in countries such as the United States, Australia, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, Egypt, Turkey etc. It provides schol-

arships to Greek postgraduate students and PhD candidates, as well as to foreign university professors and researchers. At the same time, it supports the academic and cultural activities of its branch in New York. In the health sector, it covers the costs of the Onassis Cardiac Surgery Centre in Athens. In 2010, the Onassis Cultural Centre was inaugurated in Athens. It is a cultural centre which hosts and supports artists and cultural activities.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation was established in 1996. It supports education, health, sports, arts and culture, as well as social welfare. In 2016, the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre has been inaugurated. It includes the National Library, the National Opera, while it hosts artistic, educational and entertaining activities.

The Bodossakis Foundation was established in 1972. It supports educational endeavours, the protection of the natural environment and health care for the underprivileged. It provides scholarships for postgraduate studies in various fields at Greek or foreign universities.

The Fondation Latsis Internationale, established in Geneva in 1975, has since 1983 awarded the Latsis Prize to four academics, one Greek and one European researcher for their contributions to European science and technology. The Fondation Latsis Internationale is associated with the Ioannis S. Latsis Foundation, which was established in Athens in 2005. It finances projects related to education (the Latseio School, Psychiko College), public health care (a wing in the Thriassio Hospital of Eleusis), social welfare, the environment and culture. In 2007 the foundation established the “Neraida” floating museum for the promotion of the maritime commercial history of Greece.

The Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation was established in 1997. It supports education and provides scholarships to Greek students for studies abroad, as well as to foreign students for continuing their studies at Greek universities. It supports public health and cultural heritage. In collaboration with UNESCO, the foundation undertakes initiatives on a national and European level, implementing the “We care” project. In addition, Marianna Vardinoyannis is the soul of the Association of the Friends of Children with Cancer “Elpida”

(Hope), which has funded hospitalisation and palliative care units for sick children.

The Basil & Elise Goulandris Foundation was established in 1979. Its main aim is to support the arts. In 1979, it founded the Museum of Modern Art on the island of Andros. It also provides scholarships for artistic studies. It has also established the “Athens Home,” a model residence for the aged, and contributed to the support of the Athens Old People’s Home.

The A. G. Leventis Foundation was established in 1979. It supports educational, cultural and charity initiatives in Cyprus, Greece and worldwide. It is also involved in projects relating to the environment, scientific and medical research, the preservation of the archaeological monuments, and the exhibition of Cypriot antiquities collections in museums all over the world.

The Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation was established in 2007 for the promotion of Greek literature, Greek culture and historical and maritime research on a Greek and global level, e.g. China, Holland etc.

The Ioannis F. Costopoulos Foundation was established in 1979. It supports cultural events, educational programmes and research projects for the promotion of the Greek culture, literature and arts in Greece and other countries.

In the era of globalisation, foundations embody the benefaction ideology functioning as “collective organic intellectuals,” on both the national and the global level.¹ Through their foundations, contemporary Greek benefactors support health, education, research, social care, innovation, the natural environment, and encourage the cultivation of knowledge and arts. In other words, they function as organisers of culture and society on a national and ecumenical scale. For instance, besides its contribution to Greek projects and initiatives, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation has also supported international causes aimed at child welfare, education, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and many other cultural and education organisations such as the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania etc.²

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From this point of view, foundational benefaction is a significant subject for future research in two ways. First, as a sponsor of cultural activities, since the financing and orientation of knowledge and the arts are determined to a large extent by the choices and acts of foundations. Secondly, as a subject of the future of the social bond, which is under great stress and constantly being redefined in the era of globalisation, as epitomised by the conditions arising from the Greek crisis which erupted in 2009.