

# CITIZEN SATISFACTION FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AFTER THE ADMINISTRATION REFORM OF 1997 IN GREECE: THE CASE OF THE GREEK ISLAND THERA (SANTORINI)

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## Abstract

*Aims:* In 1997, Greece underwent a great reform in its public administration system, hugely reducing the number of local government organizations. The purpose of the present paper is to estimate citizen satisfaction from the local government in the Greek island Thera, after the enforcement of the law 2539/1997 "Ioannis Kapodistrias" and to discover possible associations with this satisfaction. Additionally, we intend to use citizen satisfaction as a measure of local administration performance (Kelly & Swindell, 2002). To our knowledge, this is the first study concerning citizen satisfaction in Greece.

*Methods:* Our sample consisted of 140 citizens from the Greek island Thera, belonging either to the Community of Oia or to the Municipality of Thera. Mean age: 40 years old and male/ female proportion was 47% / 63%. Our sample completed a questionnaire containing questions on demographics, knowledge of local government system and satisfaction from local government (standardized Cronbach's alpha = 0.758).

*Results:* Twenty four percent (24%) of the citizens claimed to be satisfied from local government. This was significantly correlated with the place of voting ( $p < 0.01$ ). The possibility somebody from Thera would be satisfied from the local government was significantly less than the same possibility from Oia (OR=0.24, 95% CI 0.09-0.64). Sixty one percent (61%) of the citizens knew what was the state of public administration in Thera and this knowledge was associated significantly with level of education ( $\chi^2 = 9.621$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.047$ ). The main complaint of the citizens from public administration concerned the low quality of health services (62%).

*Conclusions:* Citizens from Oia and Thera could be more satisfied from government than they are today. Generally, they must be informed about state of affairs by local councillors and this effort must be applied more strenuously in the greater municipality of Thera.

## Περίληψη

**Σκοπός:** Το 1997 ψηφίστηκε ο νόμος 2539/1997 «Ι. Καποδίστριας», μειώνοντας δραματικά τον αριθμό των ΟΤΑ σε όλη την ελληνική επικράτεια. Σκοπός της παρούσας εργασίας είναι να εκτιμήσουμε την ικανοποίηση των πολιτών από την τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση στη νήσο Θήρα (Σαντορίνη), μετά τον νόμο «Ι. Καποδίστρια» και να χρησιμοποιήσουμε την ικανοποίηση ως μέτρο αποδοτικότητας της τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης (Kelly & Swindell, 2002).

**Μέθοδοι:** Το δείγμα μας αποτελείται από 140 κατοίκους από τη Θήρα, που ανοίκουν είτε στην Κοινότητα Οίας είτε στο Δήμο Θήρας. Μέση ηλικία δείγματος: 40 ετών και οι άντρες και οι γυναίκες συμμετείχαν σε περίπου ίσο ποσοστό στο δείγμα. Συμπληρώθηκε ερωτηματολόγιο με ερωτήσεις που αφορούσαν τα δημογραφικά, τη γνώση της τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης και της ικανοποίησης από την τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση (συντελεστής εσωτερικής αξιοπιστίας Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.758$ ).

**Αποτελέσματα:** Το 24% των πολιτών ανέφερε ότι ήταν ικανοποιημένο από τη διοίκηση. Η ικανοποίηση από τη διοίκηση ήταν συσχετισμένο σε στατιστικά σημαντικό βαθμό με την τοποθεσία των εκλογικών δικαιωμάτων των πολιτών. ( $p < 0.01$ ). Η πιθανότητα κάποιος πολίτης από το Δήμο Θήρας να ήταν ικανοποιημένος από τη διοίκηση ήταν σημαντικά μικρότερη από την ίδια πιθανότητα για κάποιον κάτοικο από την Κοινότητα Οίας (OR=0.24, 95% CI 0.09-0.64). Το 61% των πολιτών γνώριζε ποια ήταν η πρωτοβάθμια τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση (ΟΤΑ) στη Σαντορίνη και αυτό παρουσίαζε στατιστικώς σημαντική συσχέτιση με το επίπεδο της εκπαίδευσης

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( $\chi^2 = 9.621$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.047$ ). Το κύριο παράπονο από τη την τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση αφορούσε τη χαμηλή ποιότητα των ιατρικών υπηρεσιών (62%).

*Συμπεράσματα:* Οι πολίτες της Κοινότητας Οίας και του Δήμου Θήρας θα μπορούσαν να ήταν περισσότερο ικανοποιημένοι από την τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση. Γενικά, οι δημοτικοί σύμβουλοι πρέπει να ενημερώνουν τους κατοίκους και τα θέματα διοίκησης, και αυτή η προσπάθεια πρέπει να εφαρμοσθεί περισσότερο έντονα σε όλη την έκταση της νήσου Θήρας.

## 1. Introduction

Thera (Santorini) is the southest island of the Cyclades and is situated north of Crete. Santorini, Therasia and Aspronisi form a circle containing a caldera in the middle, which was shaped after the sinking of the island by the big volcanic eruption around 1500 BC. In the caldera, two new islands, Nea Kameni and Palaia Kameni, were shaped from underwater eruptions of the volcano of Santorini. Today 13.500 persons live permanently on the island and are divided in 16 smaller and bigger villages. The population of the island earns its living mainly from tourist occupations and less from traditional activities such as viniculture, tomatoculture, wineries and fishing (Kontaratos, 2007).

In 1997 the law 2539/1997 “Ioannis Kapodistrias” was voted and proposed decrease in the number of Communities and Municipalities (from 6000 to 1000) allover Greece by means of uniting the old Local governments (Spanou, 2008). In Thera, the law was enforced and applied in 1998 and created two local governments: Municipality of Thera and the Community of Oia.

The aims of the law “Ioannis Kapodistrias” were: a) the modernization of the administration system (because local governments are the base of public administration), b) the creation of first degree local governments with a statutory structure of contemporary open cities (in which, there will be oecistical units that are interindependent), the improvement of the local political system (since the administration of local transactions to the new local governments will form an important risking of power for the local societies), c) a managerial and economical state of being self-contained for local governments and the co-ordination of local public investments (with the creation of a “powerful administrative center acting at an extensive local scale” and the application of EAPTA) and, finally, d) to ensure satisfactory degree of legitimacy, transparency and social control of local authority.<sup>1</sup>

Today, ten years after the enforcement of the programme “Ioannis Kapodistrias”, a new reform is in progress called “Ioannis Kapodistrias II”, which discusses the decrease of local government even more: from 1033 to approximately 1/3 (that is about 400 new local governments). Those 400 local governments will become part of 16 prefectures and 6 bigger administrative regions. Recent newspaper articles discuss the “immobilization” of “Ioannis Kapodistrias II” indefinitely and possibly the abolition of this new reform attempt.

Possible reasons leading to the postponement of this new reform are suggested to be the world economic crisis and the contemporary social crisis in Greece (Chatziioanidou, 2008; Aegean Times, 2008).

In Thera, the creation of two local governments (the Municipality of Thera and the Community of Oia), appears to have brought forth a displeasure among citizens (Argyrou & Pelekis, 2002; ILG, 2008), mainly because citizens feel that they have been driven away from access to local government. This tendency of citizens is understandable and specifically in a small and peripheral local government, like Thera, where the personification of relationships play an important role in everyday activities.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, a basic principle of public administration is that “the citizen wants the municipal authority close to him because this is the real essence of first degree local government” (ILG, 2008). So far, however, there has not been a study on citizens of Santorini examining the degree of knowledge and satisfaction by this legislative reform, as well as the knowledge of the aims of this reform. Research on this issue is in accordance with international bibliography (Kelly & Swindell, 2002; Sotirakou & Zeppou, 2006). Thus, the purpose of the present paper is to examine these issues, through a systematic attempt.

<sup>1</sup> See Chrysanthaki (1998), p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> In bigger cities, the phenomenon of personification of authority is not so intense. One reason is the bigger population of cities and the less interpersonal relationships of extensive scale.

## 2. Methods

In order to estimate the satisfaction of citizens from the local government in the island of Thera (Santorini)

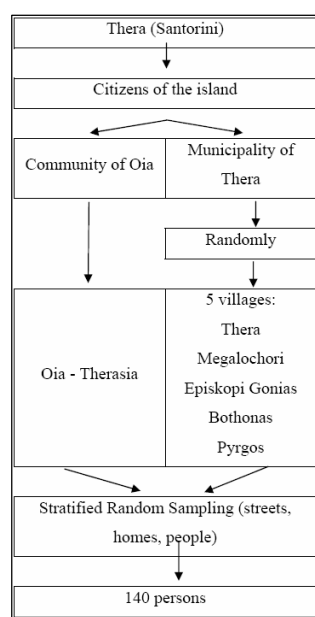


Figure 1. Sampling method in our survey

after the law “Ioanni Kapodistrias”, we used a structured questionnaire. Our sampling method was stratified random sampling (Figure 1) and the population of our research (sample) consisted of 140 citizens from Thera, belonging either to the Community of Oia or to the Municipality of Thera. The mean age of our sample was  $40 \pm 14,5$  (SD) years and the male / female proportion was 47% / 53%, meaning that the two sexes participated more or less equally in the sample. The questionnaire contained 13 questions and was divided into 4 sections: a) demographics, b) questions about the knowledge and the application of the law “I. Kapodistrias”, c) questions on the satisfaction of citizens the local government either from Municipality of Thera or the Community of Oia and d) questions on the general conception on behalf of citizens for the effectiveness of administration as well as suggestions for its improvement. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of reliability was 0.758 and Spearman-Brown coefficient of split-half reliability was 0.765. Both coefficients show satisfactory internal reliability of the questionnaire.

Statistical techniques used were Pearson’s correlation coefficient for analysis of our data correlation analysis and hypothesis testing with  $\chi^2$ . The statistical processing of data was conducted the statistical package Social Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 15.0 (SPSS Inc., 2006) (Frangos, 2004).

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Descriptives

The educational level consisted of persons who were graduates from primary school to graduates of a university school, with the bigger percentage being graduates of senior high school (36%). The 58% of sample had its voting rights in the Municipality of Thera and the 19% in the Community of Oia. It is worth underlining that although the majority of (61%) citizens knows that Santorini is formed of one Municipality and one Community and the 46% knows that “I. Kapodistrias” refers to the unification of communities for developmental reasons, it appears that the application of the law hasn’t become noticeable to the citizens. Answering the question whether the application of the reform helped, the 58% of citizens believes that it didn’t help at the least. We note also, that the 76% of citizens mention that they aren’t satisfied from the administration (Figure 2) and the main reason of displeasure was the combination of the political leader with the unsuccessful management of administration (33%) (Figure 3). Finally, we observe that the 62% of citizens believe that the administration after the law “I. Kapodistrias” (reform law) doesn’t contribute to the maintenance of the good fame of island. The main reason is the scarcity of medical assistance (29%) and the second reason are the ineffectual facilities of everyday life (e.g. pavements, parking) (15%). As a solution to these problems, citizens consider (38%) that there should be a change in the people who lead public administration as well as in the mentality of administration; with dominance though in the perception that these should be a change in mentality.

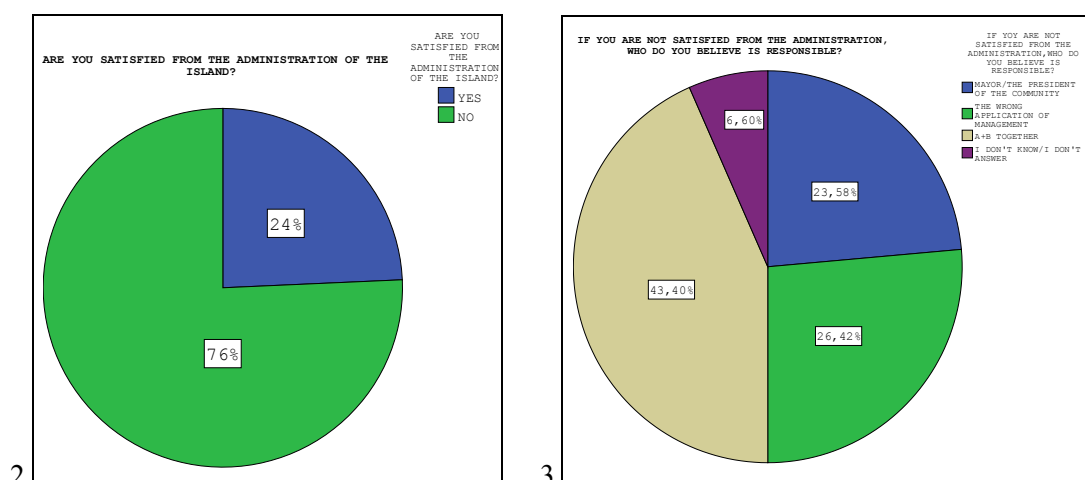


Figure 2. Presentation of the degree of satisfaction of citizens of the island Thera from the administration either of the Municipality or the Community. The 76% of citizens aren't satisfied from the administration, but the 24% are.  
Figure 3. Presentation of the percentages of responsibility according to the not satisfied citizens.

### 3.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficients between the questions are shown in Table 1. A comment deserved being mentioned concerns the satisfaction of citizens from the Local government: where someone believed that he was satisfied from the way of administration of the island, he also believed that the party with the majority of votes was interested to face the problems of citizens (+0.383,  $p < 0.01$ ). The correlations between other positive perceptions relating to the administration are shown the Table 1, from where we briefly understand that one positive emotion to the administration is accompanied from another, such as the perception that the Kapodistrian Municipality contributes to the good fame of the island or that the legislation of the law "I. Kapodistrias" has had a positive impact.

Table 1. Pearson's correlation coefficients between questions from the citizens' questionnaire. The questions have been encoded from Q1 to Q17. The clarifications of Q1-Q17 are shown in Table 2.

|     | Q1         | Q2         | Q3        | Q4         | Q5         | Q6     | Q7         | Q8        | Q9     | Q10    | Q11       | Q12       | Q13       | Q14    | Q15    | Q16   | Q17 |
|-----|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|--------|------------|-----------|--------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|--------|-------|-----|
| Q2  | -0,196(*)  |            |           |            |            |        |            |           |        |        |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q3  | 0,163      | -0,374(**) |           |            |            |        |            |           |        |        |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q4  | 0,024      | -0,083     | 0,321(**) |            |            |        |            |           |        |        |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q5  | 0,095      | 0,049      | 0,145     | 0,079      |            |        |            |           |        |        |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q6  | -0,012     | 0,164      | -0,212(*) | -0,005     | 0,065      |        |            |           |        |        |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q7  | 0,257(**)  | -0,144     | -0,154    | 0,041      | -0,233(**) | 0,090  |            |           |        |        |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q8  | 0,138      | -0,023     | 0,091     | 0,152      | 0,069      | 0,022  | 0,370(**)  |           |        |        |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q9  | 0,015      | -0,121     | 0,213(*)  | 0,389(**)  | -0,078     | 0,111  | 0,115      | 0,145     |        |        |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q10 | 0,008      | -0,054     | 0,000     | -0,627(**) | 0,055      | -0,150 | -0,181     | 0,194     | .(a)   |        |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q11 | 0,056      | -0,204(*)  | 0,104     | -0,177(*)  | 0,089      | 0,013  | 0,143      | 0,344(**) | 0,027  | 0,100  |           |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q12 | -0,015     | 0,185      | 0,068     | -0,090     | -0,037     | -0,126 | 0,011      | 0,158     | -0,015 | 0,113  | .(a)      |           |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q13 | -0,001     | -0,213(*)  | 0,074     | -0,113     | 0,096      | 0,008  | 0,031      | 0,221(**) | -0,076 | 0,134  | 0,383(**) | 0,070     |           |        |        |       |     |
| Q14 | 0,094      | 0,017      | -0,011    | 0,109      | -0,028     | -0,033 | 0,027      | -0,063    | 0,121  | 0,294  | -0,167    | -0,087    | .(a)      |        |        |       |     |
| Q15 | 0,030      | -0,124     | -0,032    | 0,032      | -0,058     | 0,122  | 0,240(**)  | 0,406(**) | 0,013  | 0,311  | 0,302(**) | 0,182     | 0,348(**) | -0,002 |        |       |     |
| Q16 | -0,295(**) | -0,097     | 0,124     | -0,003     | 0,010      | -0,061 | -0,309(**) | -0,179    | 0,003  | -0,275 | -0,157    | -0,273(*) | -0,137    | -0,018 | .(a)   |       |     |
| Q17 | 0,157      | 0,031      | -0,088    | 0,085      | -0,085     | 0,022  | -0,041     | -0,103    | 0,038  | 0,262  | -0,137    | -0,059    | -0,139    | 0,181  | -0,004 | 0,017 |     |

\* Significant correlation at level 0.05

\*\* Significant correlation at level 0.01

a The correlation coefficient can not be estimated, because at least one variable is constant.

Table 2. Explanations to the questions Q1-Q17 of the citizen's questionnaire.

|                                                               |    |                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------------------------|
| S1: DEMOGRAPHICS                                              | Q1 | GENDER                                                     |
|                                                               | Q2 | AGE                                                        |
|                                                               | Q3 | LEVEL OF EDUCATION                                         |
|                                                               | Q4 | WHERE DO YOU HAVE YOUR VOTING RIGHTS?                      |
| S2: KNOWLEDGE OF THE APPLICATION OF THE LAW "I. KAPODISTRIAS" | Q5 | WHAT DOES THE ISLAND OF SANTORINI CONSIST OF?              |
|                                                               | Q6 | WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE LAW "I. KAPODISTRIAS"?          |
|                                                               | Q7 | HAVE YOU REALISED THE LEGISLATION OF THE KAPODISTRIAN LAW? |

|                                               |     |                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                               | Q8  | WHERE DO YOU BELIEVE THE APPLICATION OF KAPODISTRIAN LAW HAS HELPED?                                                                      |
| S3: SATISFACTION                              | Q9  | DO YOU VOTE AT YOUR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS?                                                                                                  |
|                                               | Q10 | WHY DON'T YOU VOTE AT YOUR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS?                                                                                           |
|                                               | Q11 | IS THE MUNICIPAL OR COMMUNITY PARTY WHO WON THE ELECTIONS INTERESTED IN ASSISTING YOU TO SOLVE PUBLIC ISSUES, DURING THEIR 4-YEAR TENURE? |
|                                               | Q12 | WHY ISN'T THE PARTY INTERESTED IN POSSIBLE PROBLEMS?                                                                                      |
|                                               | Q13 | ARE YOU SATISFIED FROM THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ISLAND?                                                                                  |
|                                               | Q14 | IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED FROM THE ADMINISTRATION, WHO DO YOU BELIEVE IS RESPONSIBLE?                                                      |
| S4: GENERAL EFFICIENCY AS WELL AS SUGGESTIONS | Q15 | DOES THE MUNICIPALITY / COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTE TO THE MAINTENANCE OF THE GOOD FAME OF ISLAND?                                               |
|                                               | Q16 | WHERE DOES THE KAPODISTRIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT LACK, IF IT DOESN'T CONTRIBUTE TO THE GOOD FAME OF THE ISLAND?                               |
|                                               | Q17 | WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION, IF THERE ARE BAD POINTS?                                                   |

### 3.3 Hypothesis Testing

We examined the significance of the dependence between questions of the citizens' questionnaire. The most important result was the large percentage of the island's people who were not satisfied from the administration (76%). Additionally, we observed a statistically significant association between the satisfaction from administration and the location of voting rights ( $\chi^2 = 8,922$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ,  $OR=0.24$ ,  $95\% CI 0.09-0.64$ ) (Figure 4), the level of education ( $\chi^2 = 9.621$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.047$ ) (Figure 5), the interest of the political party who had won the elections in solving public issues [ $\chi^2 = 20.515$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.0001$  Odds Ratio = 7.7 (95% CI 2.9 – 20.216)], as well as the perception that the Kapodistrian local government contributes to the maintenance of the good fame of the island [ $\chi^2 = 16.940$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.0001$  Odds ratio = 5.3 (95% CI 2.3 – 12.2)].

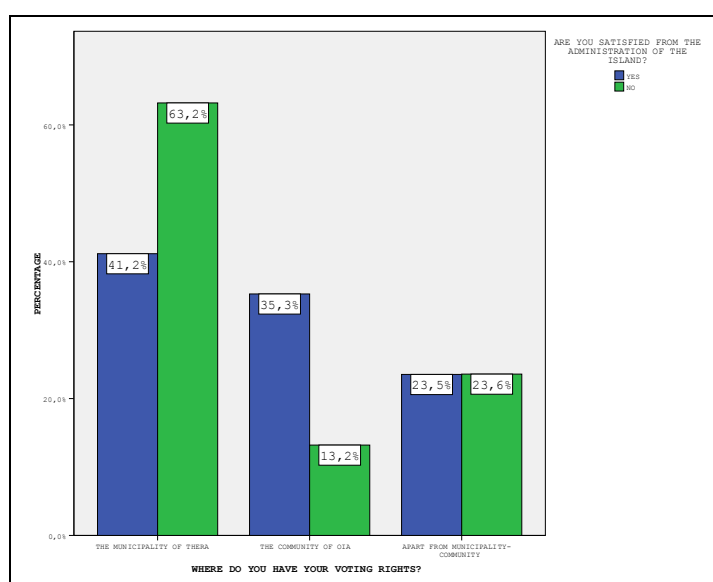


Figure 4. Statistically significant relation between satisfaction from administration and the place of voting rights. We observe that in Municipality of Thera, the satisfied citizens are less than the unsatisfied citizens in contrast to the Community of Oia.

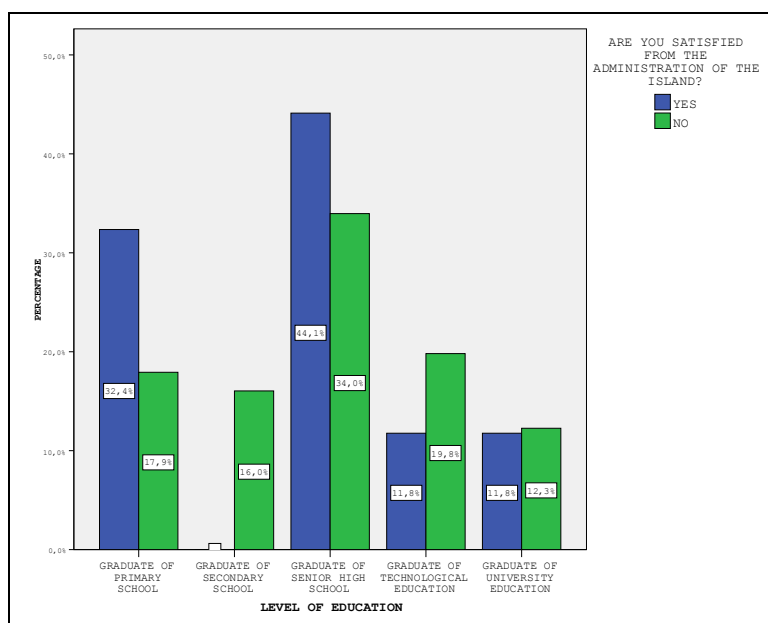


Figure 5. The statistically significant association between satisfaction from administration and the level of education. The figure shows the satisfaction from administration according to the level of education.

#### 4. Discussion

We conducted a sampling survey among the citizens of the Greek island Thera during October 2008 and we examined the satisfaction of citizens from the local government. Additionally, we examined the main factors associated with the satisfaction from administration. Our sample consisted of 140 citizens from the island of Thera and was selected randomly. To the best of our knowledge, there has not been a study examining local self-government's performance according to citizen's satisfaction in scientific literature. Spanou (1996) assessed the administrative reforms in Greece until 1996 and concluded that the two largest political parties had done redundant reforms and had lead to the re-emergence of clientelistic practices. The same author, studying this time the reforms in public administration until 2006 (Spanou, 2008), notes that these reforms consisted of actions aiming at solving burning issues: decentralization of economy at a local has been achieved, but citizens' rights and service delivery have been conceived rather as forms of democratisation and modernisation than as managerial reforms. Ongaro (2008) agrees with Spnaou's (2008) views. The observation by Spanou (2008), that economical management of local government has been decentralized is in contrast with our observation that decision making at a local level still maintains a central approval (Valvi et al, 2009). Chondroleou et al. (2005) also mention that decentralization of central governance does not stop Ministries from intervening at a local level, when something occurs that may not be desired.

The main results of our study are: first, although the 46% of citizens knows that the law "I. Kapodistrias" refers to the unification of communities for developmental reasons, yet its legislation hasn't become noticeable until today; on the contrary, many citizens claim things were better when there were only communities. Secondly, the law "I. Kapodistrias" helped carrying out important and large-scheme public constructions (e.g. waterworks, "Help at Home") in Thera, which in a different occasion, the existence of communities would be a setback in their completion. Despite this fact, 58% of citizens mentions that the application of the law "I. Kapodistrias" did not help at all. Moreover, 76% of citizens claim that they are not satisfied from the administration of the island, and they consider most responsible the Mayor/President of the Community and the wrong application of management. This is in accordance with the ILG (2008) and Chondroleou et al. (2005) which mentions that "the unification of local governments has brought a better economical management in them, but most of these local governments do not have the ability to supply their citizens with satisfactory services and are not able to benefit from National and European Schemes". Sixty two percent (62%) of citizens believes that the Kapodistrian local government does not contribute to the good fame of the island; the most important reasons for this belief are the inadequacy of health services (29%) and the lack of facilities in everyday life (e.g. sidewalks, parking slots) (15%). To these issues, the 38% of citizens suggests that a concurrent change in the people who are leaders and their notion of public administration is necessary.

Finally, we observed an association between the satisfaction from the administration and the place of voting rights: the possibility somebody from Thera would be satisfied from the local government was significantly

less than the same possibility from Oia (OR=0.24, 95% CI 0.09-0.64). This difference most possibly is due to the large number of persons and villages under its jurisdiction, which creates the feeling of dissatisfaction from a certain portion of citizens. In Oia though, citizens feel more satisfied, because under the jurisdiction of the Community of Oia are only two villages: Oia and Therasia; as a result, citizens feel that there is a more immediate confrontation of their problems. For this reason, it is understandable that the people of Oia prefer remaining an independent Community, which will not unite with the Municipality of Thera – as suggested by the law “I. Kapodistrias II”. This will lead to a less immediate dealing with their personal problems and to the better services provided. These observations agree with the basic principle of public administration which claims that the citizen wants its municipal authority close to him, because this is the real essence of 1<sup>st</sup> degree local governance. (ILG, 2008; Kelly & Swindell, 2002). We do not observe a correlation between satisfaction from administration and age or gender, as noted by Dimitriades & Maroudas (2007), but only with the level of education.

Thus, from our survey we point out several points that citizens consider could be improved in their public administration. We suggest that citizens should be more informed about the happenings in local governance. This can be achieved by informing citizens through bi-monthly speeches or seminars on behalf of the public councilors. Additionally, the internet can be utilized through blogs, special web pages etc., as well as informing notices in the streets and other public places, in order to inform citizens on the public administration and its works. Lastly, it is worth noting that a more humanized approach should be applied by the local governors, because citizens mentioned more than once that they wanted their local government close to them and their problems. Kelly & Swindell (2002) claim that if local leadership would listen more to what citizens said through satisfaction surveys, instead of fearing the fact that their actions are disapproved by them as inefficient, it is very likely that they would become more effective and they could achieve a greater satisfaction from their voters.

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