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Dispatches from Greece:
“We were sleeping as Individuals and
we woke up as Citizens”

*Democracy and Development Revisited: Exploring openings
through the social movement in Skouries, Chalkidiki*

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Abstract

The universalistic understanding of the subject embedded in the Liberal and Marxist traditions together with contrasting accounts of unconstrained agency, fail to explain the contingencies of ground responses that call for social change. The paper makes a case for the opening of the understanding of the human subject when placed in the theoretical terrain of radical political philosophy elaborated by thinkers such as C. Castoriadis, M. Hardt & A. Negri, E. Laclau and C. Mouffe. The conceptualisation of the human subject as both a creative and constrained agent rescues it from deterministic excesses and accounts of unlimited power. Within these confines, the purpose of this paper was to explore the project of autonomy as conceptualised by Castoriadis and relate it to a new articulation of human development. Through a case study of the social movement in Skouries, Chalkidiki, the democratic openings realised by the creative human praxis and the re-politicisation of individuals, were explored. The self-organised communities call for a creation of public spaces where deliberation and self-reflection can take place, resulting in a re-thinking of the developmental paradigm applied during the years of Greek austerity. The question that remains open is how the new social relations manifested in the area can foster principles of social and individual autonomy in all spheres of social life. The paper concludes that processes of uniformity tend to eliminate the multiplicity embedded in social ambiguity resulting in forms of social exclusion.

Key words: *radical democratic politics; development; public/private sphere; autonomy; Castoriadis; Skouries, Chalkidiki; politicisation; Greece; austerity*

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Abbreviations

IMF International Monetary Fund

EC European Commission

ECB European Central Bank

MPTTh Master Plan of Thessaloniki

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*Writing has nothing to do with meaning. It has to do with land surveying
and cartography, including the mapping of countries yet to come.*
— *Gilles Deleuze*

Chapter 1. The Story of Cassandra mines

Story telling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it

- Hannah Arendt

According to the ancient Greek mythology, Cassandra was the daughter of king Priam and a princess of Troy and was considered both beautiful and rich. Struck by such beauty, Apollo gave her the gift of 'prophecy' but after she broke her promise to his romantic demands, he placed a curse on her of never being believed. Until her tragic death, Cassandra was perceived as insane and nobody believed her warnings...

Until recently, before the latest national elections in Greece, in which for the first time in history the left party SYRIZA came to power, Skouries was a story that would rarely appear in mainstream media or in political debates across the country. However, this story accounts for one of the most important struggles during the years of Greek austerity for it carries opportunities for reflection and action on profound societal questions.

Skouries is an ancient forest in the Chalkidiki region in the northern peninsula of Greece where, since 2011, local communities have been protesting against Eldorado Gold S.A. and a development project in the form of a new gold-copper extraction plan of the Cassandra mines. During the last five years, barbed wire, checkpoints, surveillance cameras and private security guards have been filling the picture of the hilltops of Skouries where 400 to 600 year-old oak and beech trees used to stand. The local residents of approximately 16 villages in the peninsula have actively protested the extraction plan. Together with scientists of some of Greece's most prominent institutions, such as the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Technical Chamber of Greece, warn that it will cause permanent environmental damage in the area's delicate ecosystem and loss of locals' livelihoods, which largely depend on fishing, tourism, beekeeping and livestock (Soshalkidiki, 2013).

However, these claims have been treated by the previous government and the mainstream media as 'Cassandr-es' and met by state repression, police brutality, briefs of felony and jailing for some of the youngest members of what has become the biggest civil movement in Greece's years of austerity.

1.1. The 'Problematique': The evolution of an idea

My problematisation starts with the notion of crisis, a word that has been much used and abused after the 2008 financial crisis hit Europe. In Greece, the discourse of crisis has taken a multidimensional hue, manifested in all spheres of social life from economic (associated with the debt crisis), cultural (entailing the societal values and ethics of collective life) and environmental (associated with degradation of ecosystems as part of the privatization strategies).

However, this crisis has mostly been articulated as a debt-crisis which led to an intense structural adjustment programme designed and implemented by the financial institutions (IMF, EC, and ECB)¹ and which was signed by the Greek state in mid-2010 and early 2012. In the name of fiscal discipline and economic growth, this programme imposed austerity measures that have left the country grappling with a humanitarian crisis and almost one million people living below the poverty line (Politaki, 2013; Tsimitakis, 2014). According to Eurostat (2014; 2015) in 2013, 35.7% of the total population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion and in 2014 Greece experienced the highest unemployment rate in Europe (26,0% adult unemployment and 51,2% youth unemployment). The country has witnessed contested legislative procedures, notably relating to the voting on the second Memorandum² in just a single Act of the parliament in February 2012 (Varoufakis, 2011). Since then, similar ‘fast-track’ political decisions have been applied, resulting in a structural framework jeopardising the country’s democracy, making this crisis above all, a political one (ibid).

I believe that the case of Skouries in the Chalkidiki peninsula represents a micrograph of how the imposed austerity policies have influenced Greek society and exposes the country’s democratic deficits. This global, more encompassing aspect does not escape some of the locals. As Aischylos, one of the interview participants, eloquently asserted, “[...] In the birthplace of Aristotle, in the land that gave birth to democracy, democracy has been abolished” (Aischylos, M.Panagia).

However, this study is not concerned with another ‘crisis story’ or ‘a development story that went wrong’ as I believe that such an attempt will not serve the ultimate reflection of exploring alternative responses, even though it takes it as a starting point. A more accurate direction leads us instead to trace the etymological root of the word crisis. The ancient Greek word κρίσις (krisis) means a moment of judgment, from the verb κρίνω (krínō, to decide). Therefore, I see the crisis scenario as a turning point, and an opportunity to reflect on basic questions, such as whose predicament is this? and are we as academics, achieving to properly envision and propose alternatives?

In that sense, I find myself sharing the same concerns as Alain Badiou (2009: 48) when he states that,

What is missing [...] is the confidence that a real alternative solution is possible [...] [W]e are situated in an empty space between two worlds. The former way of action has been condemned and the new way of action is still unclear. We need to make a new beginning, then, by way of local experiments and theoretical efforts.

In this light, my aim is to explore the ‘empty space’ that Badiou identifies and which might not be so empty after all, if we explore the potentialities for socio-political change of the emerging attempts of social movements. Therefore, I will seek to analyse the current conflict in the Chalkidiki peninsula by exploring the responses of the local communities to changes and the strategies of resistance that they employ. By exploring a societal change or a self-transformation of a society, it might allow for an expansion of our understanding on ways of organising and theorising society.

¹ International Monetary Fund, European Commission and European Central Bank

² The Second Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece largely known as Second Memorandum refers to the Memorandum of Understanding on the financial assistance signed by the Greek government and the IMF, EC and ECB in light of the Greek debt crisis. Since 2010, three Memorandums have been signed containing series of structural adjustment programmes known as austerity measures.

Therefore, considering the socio-environmental changes in the region of Chalkidiki, the struggles that people face and the responses to them, my research question asks,

How does this process reveal potentials for a radical democratic project and what is the conceptualisation of development that seems to be unfolding from such a standpoint on democracy?

In order to explore this question I am employing a qualitative case study, which deals with the relationship of two profound questions, that of democracy and of development. I will now briefly outline the starting points of these two concepts before I dive into the exploration of the relationship between the two when articulated from an alternative conceptual standpoint.

1.2. The question of Democracy

When I go back and dust off the political philosophical lenses that I intend to wear while analysing the case, two guiding principles seem to prevail: that of an ‘emancipated’ society and of ‘freedom and equality’. Since the outbreak of modern ‘democratic revolutions’, these concepts have been characterised as part of ‘an unfinished project’, which adorned itself with various struggles from women, workers and civil rights to struggles for the commons (Balibar, 1994; Callinicos, 2000; Habermas, 1990b; Habermas, 1998; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). As expected, the way to emancipation took multiple strands but what seems common to all these struggles is that they have put into question solidified assumptions of societal order that were often thought of as universal and inevitable (Kioupiolis, 2012).

Nevertheless, I believe that few would disagree that the present leaves much to be desired in terms of achieving these principles and an indisputable fact is the appearance of new struggles spawning dissent across the globe (ibid). On the one hand, the hegemonic *liberal dispositif*, embracing a representative state that vouches to promote freedom and equality together with a globalised neo-liberal regime, have lost much of their credence for promoting a path towards equality (ibid; Crouch, 2004 emphasis added). On the other hand, other forms of governance from Soviet socialism to revolutionary Marxism and anarchism seem to carry the same fate.

So, what would be a conceptualisation of democracy that could better foster and deliver these two principles and from where could we trace such an endeavour? This study seeks to probe the prominent work of radical political theorists such as John Holloway, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, who question the essentialist tradition of liberating projects. Following this line of thought, I understand that our ‘[S]elf-fulfilment as human doers implies creative change. Self-determination, even in an emancipated society, could not be static’ (Holloway, 2010:209), and that ‘[L]iberation aims at the freedom of self-determination and self-transformation, the freedom to determine what you can become; liberation [...] requires engaging and taking control of the production of subjectivity, keeping it moving forward’ (Hardt and Negri, 2009:331–2).

This interpretation of democracy sets the grounds and puts forth a viable account of an autonomous life. There have been many scholars such as Michel Foucault, George Kateb, and Roberto Unger, that have elaborated different versions of this idea but the most prominent work on the matter is that of Cornelius Castoriadis and his magnum opus ‘*The Imaginary Institution of Society*’ (1987). I will

therefore follow his theoretical grounds on autonomy to explore the *emancipatory* and creative force of the social subject through the case study in Chalkidiki, in my attempt to keep it moving forward.

In this light, the gist of this thesis arguments lies in the potentials of the project of autonomy insofar it allows for creativity, openness, contingency, plurality and contestation and which inspires re-thinking projects of development according to these tenets.

1.3. The question of Development

Acknowledging the substantial critiques put forward by post-development theorists, I share the concerns that development as a concept has become too vague since it cannot even provide for concrete terms of what ‘social progress’ or ‘social change’ mean for the people who are supposed to embrace its socio-economic strategies (Andrews & Bawa, 2014).

This vagueness also conspires to cover the concept in apparent neutrality, since it does not point to any specific normative direction. However, as many authors point out, it carries specific political ideologies which hide behind masks of universal principles manifested in empty words such as ‘progress’, ‘growth’, ‘improvement of lives’, ‘equality’ and so on (Escobar, 2012; Latouche, 1993; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997). Similarly, scholars have questioned the democratic principles carried in such ideologies, which do not seem to promote the self-reliance of the so-called ‘grassroots’.

At the other end of the spectrum, academics have pointed out that what is offered in this theoretical terrain is a mere critique without any construction or practical solution. Therefore, what is being asked is what would be ‘*an alternative to development*’ (Nederveen, 2010). Yet, this is not a call to start scripting alternative scenarios for development, as this would defeat the purpose of the main argument of the study, which lies on the understanding that these scenarios will emerge from the ground-power of social imaginaries or they will not emerge at all.

In my view, post-development scholars do not proclaim that all development initiatives are catastrophic but that development as a concept has grown obsolete by carrying delusions marked by unveiled political intentions (Escobar, 2012). Today, we are still grappling with the same effects of the socio-economic domination that the strategies of development seem to carry, but as my case shows, this domination does not only echo in global North-South dynamics. Instead, I contest such dichotomies and bring a relational approach precisely because neoliberal strategies are being manifested in a diverse range of contexts that encompass all areas of the globe.

What I am afraid is not properly articulated, is that the model of development we seek alternatives to, speaks from a specific political project, which is that of liberalism and what we since the 1980s call neo-liberalism. If we can agree that a theory of development may it be ‘*post*’ or ‘*sustainable*’ is expected to yield transformative and *emancipatory* paradigms for ‘*the subjects of development*’ then we might be missing the point of exploring the alternative political project of such endeavour.

Following this reasoning and avoiding any *romanticisation* of social movements, I am exploring this political project as a project of autonomy. This attempt seeks to elucidate the importance of politics,

not only as a means to debate and question the instituted laws and norms but because it allows society to create and institute new imaginaries. Thus, I understand development as a system of needs, values and actions that constantly seeks to orient human life by employing the creative power of societies to institute new imaginaries.

Chapter 2. Setting the Scene

What is here?

*Gold?yellow, glittering, precious gold? No, gods,
I am no idle votarist: roots, you clear heavens!
Thus much of this will make black white, foul fair,
Wrong right, base noble, old young, coward valiant.
Ha, you gods! why this? what this, you gods? Why, this
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides,
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads:*

This yellow slave

*Will knit and break religions, bless the accursed,
Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves
And give them title, knee and approbation
With senators on the bench: this is it
That makes the wappen'd widow wed again;*

*She, whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices
To the April day again. Come, damned earth,
Thou common whore of mankind, that put'st odds
Among the route of nations, I will make thee
Do thy right nature.*

Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*

The Ancient Forest of Skouries



Source: Mavroudi, 2013

Demonstrations held in the forest of Skouries in 2012 and 2014 (from left to right) by local residents, met by police opposition.



Source: Blackuroi, 2012

Source: Dromografos, 2014

2.1. Background of the Skouries case

The Cassandra mines in Chalkidiki peninsula have been operating in small-scale since the 6th century. Throughout the years, the ownership of the mines passed from private to public hands and was accompanied by marks of social dissent. From December 1999, the multinational extractive capital enters the scene under the name of TVX Gold S.A. and acquires all the mining concessions. The company included plans of gold extraction in the area but grievances from local communities that the investment would cause irreversible damage to the human and natural habitat, led to the decision of the State Council (613/2002) to halt the investment.

In December 2003, the Greek State acquired the Cassandra mines from TVX Gold for the price of 11 million euro and sold them the same day to a newly founded company called Hellas Gold S.A. - a subsidiary of Eldorado Gold S.A. based in Vancouver, without prior economic assessment or open competition. After the acquisition of the mines, the estimated value of the mineral deposits accounted for \$19.9 billion USD (Daley, 2013; Papada, 2014; soshalkidiki, 2013). According to the Greek Mining Regulation, which dates back to the years of dictatorship, the mining company has full possession of the minerals contained in the concessions granted and it provides *no royalties* for the State. In addition, any activity that disturbs mining in the designated areas is prohibited (Dimitriadis, 2011; Triantafyllidis, 2012).

After an appeal from the residents, the European Commission decided that the terms of the transfer amount to an illegal State aid, favouring the multinational company, equivalent to 15.3 million euro (European Commission, 2011). The Greek state immediately appealed for the annulment of the decision while the hearing of the appeal is pending to date³.

The current point of conflict is the new investment plan promoted by Hellas Gold S.A., which includes amongst other, the expansion of the existing mining activity and the creation of an open pit mine in the forest of Skouries of the mountain Kakavos, which holds the largest fresh water reserves in the whole peninsula (Zagkas, 2010; see Appendix 1). However, Eldorado Gold S.A. plans to de-water the mountain in order to develop the underground mining activities resulting in an irreversible damage of water resources (Hellenic Mining Watch, 2013). Chalkidiki has a diverse and biologically important natural landscape and the local livelihoods are largely dependent on natural resources, such as tourism, agriculture, bee- keeping, livestock, fisheries and small- scale logging (soshalkidiki, 2013).

³ no. T-233/11 appeal before the European Court of the Greek State against the European Commission

2.2. Resources and Sovereignty: A tale of a ‘modern’ Indebted State

The relation between natural resources and the sovereignty it brings over its users, have been extensively theorised by political ecology and post-colonial studies (Agrawal & Gibson, 2001; Robbins, 2012). This relation carries a distinct hue when explored within the dynamics of an indebted nation and the political project of neo-liberalism. As David Harvey (2005, in Fairhead, Leach & Scoones, 2012:245) poignantly asserts,

Indebted governments are extremely vulnerable when they face bankruptcy and can be forced by international financial institutions to agree to policies requiring the liberalization of markets and the privatization of public assets, as happened in the decades of imposed structural adjustment policies from the 1980s across the global South.

He argues (ibid) that these processes represent the proliferation of accumulation practices in the hands of economic and political elites, which seem to fit hand in glove with the case of *Skouries*. In the same line of thought, Klein (2014;2007 emphasis added) remarks that as nature has been locked into the financial markets, which are prone to boom and bust, environmental and economic crises interlock and feed off each other in a playing out of ‘*disaster capitalism*’. Thus, the debt crisis is another opening up for capital to proliferate its accumulation practices, engaging in the periphery of the capitalist system targeting countries mostly struck by the economic crisis where mining costs are getting cheaper (Petraikos, 2014).

Under this prism, the mineral reserves of gold and copper in the Kakavos Mountain become a valuable asset, which under the State’s policies, must be sold. However, the paradoxical logic account for the terms of the concessions granted to the company, as it leaves no room for benefits for the State. The resemblance with several post-colonial mining projects gives space to Kallis (2013:n.p.) to assert that today Greece experiences,

[...] a regression from a developed to an extractivist state, similar to the process many Latin American countries underwent in the 1980s. Extractivist is a state whose sole function is to provide the global economy with cheap raw materials, often at the cost of its own people and its own development.

The policies related to mining activities in Greece have taken a neoliberal turn in order to attract foreign investment and the *Skouries* case is a proxy experiment for a series of sell-outs of public assets to private capital ranging from seashores, ports, railways, water and energy public companies (Babington & Papadimas, 2014). As Patroklos, one of the interview participants, remarks,

[...] in Chalkidiki the state and corporation forces have carried out an experiment in order to repress local opposition and social movements. I have not been much away from this land but

I know that in the name of development they are taking away our land, our water, our air. But you know we cannot breath nor live without them, so we will first die here and then they will take us from here (Patroklos, M.Panagia).

On the investment front, the strategy of constructing and perpetuating ‘*a sense of crisis*’ was aptly employed by the former government in order to legitimize the extractive investment, as part of its privatization portfolio (Stearns, 2013). In this respect, the statement of the prior Prime Minister, A. Samaras in Wall Street Journal (in Granitsas, 2013:n.p.) shed some light.

[...]This is an investment that we very much want, and [...] this kind of act⁴ cannot be tolerated. Greece is a modern European country and we will at all costs protect foreign investment in the country.

The alliance between the capital and the indebted State resulted in several amendments in legislation and policies⁵ in order to promise a ‘*safe environment for investors*’ bestowing the nations’ sovereignty to the rules of the market (Klein, 2014; 2007). In the Skouries case the environmental regulations are treated as ‘*obstacles*’ and are amended through a rapid licensing procedure known as ‘fast-track’. Under the pretext of the creation of some 2,000 jobs, the previous Government supported that the investment would act as a remedy to break the cycle of recession and mark the new developmental path for Greece.

2.3. Oppression, mainstream Media and Propaganda

“The story of terrorism is written by the state and it is therefore highly instructive... compared with terrorism, everything else must be acceptable, or in any case more rational and democratic.”
- Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*(1987)

The Greek State together with the Hellas Gold S.A. have put together mechanisms for managing social tension, ranging from media propaganda, affiliation with part of the local community, private

⁴ Here, A. Samaras is referring to the incident on the night of the 16th of February where under unconfirmed allegations 40 masked men entered the premises of Eldorado Gold S.A. in the forest of Skouries and set equipment and cars on fire.

⁵ The new Master Plan of Thessaloniki (MPT_h), which defines the spatial development of the broader area of Thessaloniki and Chalkidiki exemplifies the adaptation of the spatial national planning to the interests of the mining capital. More specifically, the directions it provides for the sub-section of the N.E. Chalkidiki include ‘*mining parks*’ for the exploitation of mineral resources (OR.TH, 2015). Government officials together with the judiciary have amended the national environmental legislation in violation of the European environmental legislation of Article 6 [(clause 3-4) of the 92/43/eec directive] concerning the activities near areas belonging to the NATURA 2000, stating that the environmental impacts will be minor (Lekakis & Kousis, 2013:316; soshalkidiki, 2013).

guards⁶ and using the legal system to incriminate part of the resistance with terrorist activities (Papada, 2014).

Since 2012, public resentment has been met by police opposition and every local initiative to protest was responded with tear gas canisters, violent attacks and prosecutions of civilians. However, from the autumn of 2012, and under evoking concerns over terrorist activity⁷ the police imposed a regime of occupation in Ierissos with continuous house searches, mass prosecutions, arbitrary detentions, interrogations and some residents were forced to give DNA samples during detention (ibid). In 2013, Amnesty International (2013) launched a report on human rights violations against the Greek government, for its role on brutal repression and criminalization of the local movement's resistance. Until today, authorities are prosecuting 350 people with various charges including those of forming a terrorist organization.

The Orwellian reality that the local communities experienced during the years of 2012-2013 did not escape the support of mainstream media. While in the beginning they failed to report the grievances put forward by local communities, instances when the local opposition was connected with far right groups or with '*leftish assault battalions*' was also reported (Kathimerini, 2012;Reuters, 2012).

Between 2009 and 2013 Greece fell from the 35th to 84th place in Press Freedom which points to the interwoven corrupt relationships of media outlets, political and capital elites (Smyrnaio, 2013). Interestingly, the same person who owns 5% of Hellas Gold S.A. owns the biggest media channel *MEGA*. The practices of manipulating public sentiment created a polarisation in the social fabric and as Nicostratus explains,

[...]we are 50-50, there are the mining cafes and the opposition cafes; [...] I know families that do not speak to each other- one brother went to work for them and the other is facing charges for protesting in the mountain, [...]the worst thing that this development will bring is not the toxic waste but the toxic relations. (Nicostratus, M.Panagia)

⁶ In 2013 Hellas Gold S.A. changed its security company to Blackwater private security known for its involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan war (Eleutherotypia, 2013).

⁷ The turning point came on October 21st when about 2,500 protesters faced more than 200 police along the forest road leading to Eldorado's Skouries gold-and-copper deposit and 14 people were arrested (Hellenic Mining Watch, 2013)

2.4. The ‘*Golden era*’ of Austerity: Understanding democratic deficit

The section focuses on the democratic deficiencies reflected in the policies employed by the government to tackle the debt crisis in Greece and seeks to theorise the mechanisms that were put in place in order to suppress the essential openness and creativity of the collective and individual autonomy.

As Kiouпкиolis (2014) remarks, since 2010 onwards, one can identify a regime that abolishes the formalities of liberal democracies as standard operating procedures are being violated showing no concern for democratic *legitimation*. According to Maurizio Lazzarato (2012 in Kiouпкиolis, 2014 emphasis added), the ‘*repressive turn*’ of the liberal democracies is widely justified as an aftermath of the financial crisis and the inadequacy of neoliberal *governmentality*, which has praised individual creativity and consumerist hype realised by a risky spirit of enterprise.

The political responses that were imposed as a remedy to the debt- crisis have completely altered the socio-economic grounds of the middle and lower classes that, up until now, have consented to an impoverished democracy in return of the debt-financed affluence of the past years (Kiouпкиolis, 2014). Until today, the majority of Greek people have lost various social rights such as social benefits, welfare rights, labour rights and their political liberties were effectively trumped (Balourdos, 2011; Katrougkalos, 2012; Mouriki, 2012). This situation apart from the reduction in wages and welfare expenses, it paved the way for mass privatization of public assets and the removal of legal barriers to the exploitation of labour (Kiouпкиolis, 2014; Margaronis, 2012).

This type of governance, is an illustrative example of Agamben’s (2005) ‘*state of exception*’, which calls for technocratic pragmatism turning the government into an administration that solely executes predefined aims for managing ‘social data’. Under the ‘*state of exception*’, political decision-making is restricted and instead exceptional measures have to be taken in order to ‘*save the country*’ from a disastrous insolvency (Kiouпкиolis, 2014 emphasis added). Thus, the parliament was relegated to an institution that is mainly concerned in ratifying welfare reforms and industrial relations, which are no longer subject to debate (Margaronis, 2012; Venetsanos, 2012). These changes would have been unthinkable without the rhetoric of terror in ‘*a state of exception*’ deployed by many politicians throughout these years⁸.

Lazzarato’s (2012) accounts on ‘*the indebted man*’ are perhaps key in understanding the social technologies put in place by the state and capital mechanisms in order to restrict the autonomy of the

⁸ Examples of such rhetoric can be found in statements of various politicians from the ruling parties and the coalition government under the technocrat Lukas Papademos in 2012 such as Venizelos (2012) and Diamantopoulou (2012).

citizens and instil in them the reason for their subordination consolidating a docile self-disciplined subject. Lazzarato (2012) remarks that at the basis for this new subjectivity lays a morality of guilt, bad consciousness and fear (*especially in view of unemployment*). Likewise, Greeks as indebted subjects are guilty of years of mismanagement and irresponsible excesses as they have been brainwashed⁹ to believe that they have been living beyond their means in return of a hedonistic life, on the detriment of the hard working Northern European partners (Kioupkiolis, 2014). As a result, the entire societal body must wear the straightjacket of austerity in light of a constant threat of a ‘*bankrupt*’ state (Dean, 2010; Lazzarato, 2011; Rose, 1999). It is important to note that these technologies of power could not have been effective if they were solely based on external legal coercion without aiming at internalizing in the psyche of the individuals a ‘*responsible*’ subject.

My theorization until this point does not engage with the appearance of instances of democratic agency and the *Rousseauian* paradox¹⁰ of “how to institute self-governing people out of a dispersed crowd of politically ignorant and apathetic individuals”, would seem totally irresolvable (Kioupkiolis, 2014:152). Thus, I will take this turn and explore the creative praxis of the *demos* (aka. collective agent) in the case of the social movement in Skouries

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Democracy as Autonomy

According to Castoriadis’ (1987), the world makes sense through institutions of imaginary significations as individuals (socio-historical subjects) seek to construct or invent meaning between the extremes of *natality* and *mortality* (Castoriadis, 1997:273–274emphasis added). This chapter is concerned with the project of autonomy as the political praxis that emerges from the ontological position of chaos (*χάος*).

3.1.1. Democratic Praxis: The Project of Autonomy

For Castoriadis, politics is the “the activity that aims at the transformation of society’s institutions to make them conform with the autonomy of the collectivity [...] to permit the explicit, reflective, and deliberate self-institution and self-governance of this collectivity” (Castoriadis, 1991:71). This political project protests against the technological calculative thinking of today’s world that makes us forget that we are “improbable beneficiaries of an improbable and very narrow range of material

⁹ See Boll et al. (2012); Gow (2012)

¹⁰ for the paradox, see Honig (2009: 13–20).

conditions making life possible on an exceptional planet that we are in the process of destroying” (Castoriadis & Curtis, 1997:149). To elucidate his political project Castoriadis looks at the ancient Greek *polis* (city) where the emergence of democracy as autonomy took place precisely because the world was understood as an interplay between chaos and cosmos, and in order to shed light to the project of autonomy he contrasts it with heteronomy.

In *heteronomous* societies, individuals attribute their imaginaries to external authorities (e.g. ancestors, God, historical necessity etc.), whereas in autonomous societies the members participate in the explicit self-creation and self-institution of society (Castoriadis, 1997). Therefore, autonomy is the capacity of human beings to act deliberately in order to modify their forms of life; *auto* means oneself and *nomos* means law, so *autonomos* is “to make one’s own laws, knowing that one is doing so” (Castoriadis, 1991:164). What is important to stress here is that autonomy must be both of individuals and of society in the sense that while autonomous society can only be formed through autonomous individuals, autonomous individuals can only exist in an autonomous society (Castoriadis, 2007:196). In this light, democracy reflects the creative capacity of individuals to give meaning to social significations, which have no guarantee beyond the meaning that is placed upon them.

As such, I understand autonomy as a new form of life which involves the “unlimited self-questioning about the law and its foundations as well as the capacity, in light of this interrogation, to make, to do and to institute” in an endless process (Castoriadis, 1991:164). However, autonomy is not the utopia of a perfect and completed society but rather the recognition of contingency, ambivalence and uncertainty in order to travel the opening of questioning of existing institutions, laws and ultimately, the past form of being (Castoriadis, 1997).

3.1.2. The Three Spheres of an autonomous society

Castoriadis contends that the western liberal democratic systems are not democratic but what he calls ‘*liberal oligarchies*’. Democracy accounts for the action of ruling oneself and not choosing to be ruled by someone else, however that else might be chosen, and thus democracy is not a matter of social engineering. What is necessary is a self-transformation of society beginning with a *status quo ante* in a circular process where “[...]the subjects in question transform themselves by acting autonomously to make of themselves what they have decided they wish to become: subjects capable of autonomy.” (Klooger, 2012:91).

In other words, what the self-transformation entails is the process of allowing all citizens to be able to receive the knowledge and skills needed to be competent citizens of democracy.

The rebirth of the project of autonomy requires tremendous changes, a real earthquake, not in terms of physical violence but in terms of people's beliefs and behaviour (Castoriadis, 2007: 149).

According to Castoriadis (ibid), democracy requires that the decisions affecting the institutions of the polity should be given to the hands of the citizens themselves and not to the so-called democratically elected representatives. Many concerns have been raised on the feasibility of direct-democracy in terms of organization of big population sizes in modern times, but this view would account for ignoring the power of social-historical creativity. In this light, Castoriadis stresses the need to imagine new ways where this organization could work, as for example with gradual decentralization.

The need to rethink the institutional structures and the ideas behind them point to the questioning of the concept of representation that underpins the legitimacy of our representative democracy. Our modern culture today dismisses the possibility of a genuine democratic system largely because it takes the existing institutions as a given without re-evaluating the state-apparatus¹¹ (Klooger, 2012). The *Thatcherian* logic of 'there is no alternative' seems like is still present in the western political imaginary.

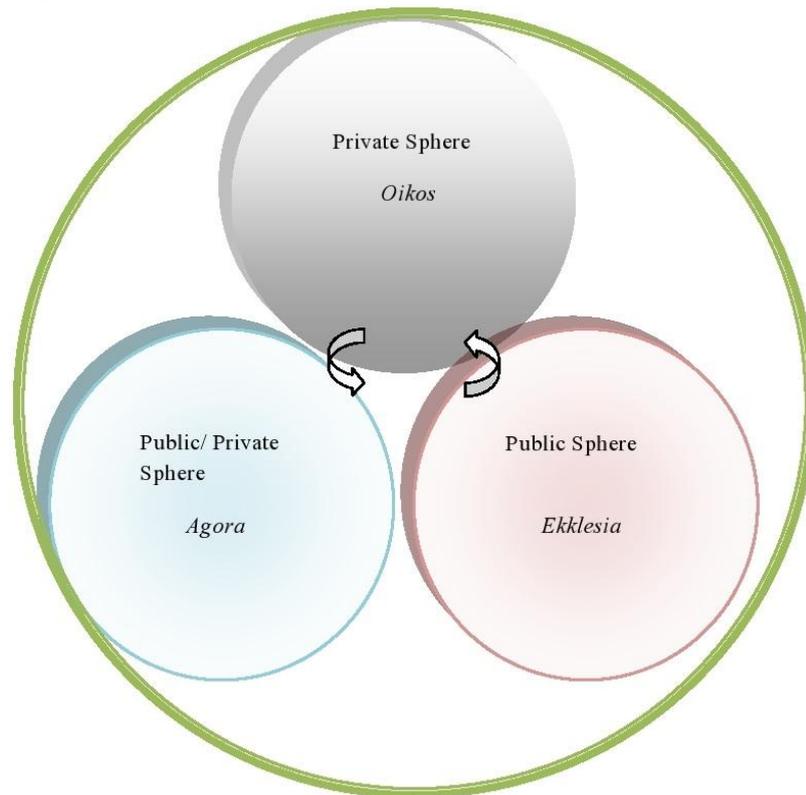
For Castoriadis, individual autonomy cannot exist without collective autonomy as the individual and society are not exterior to each other and society can never be understood as opposed to the individual (Klooger, 2012:96). His main contribution to the question of division of social space into realms that are subject to collective decision-making but also to individual autonomy is the identification of three distinct spheres illustrated in Figure 1:

(1) the private sphere (*oikos*) which strictly refers to people's personal life, (2) the public sphere (*ekklesia*)¹² where all laws apply to everyone are publicly sanctioned, and (3) the public/private sphere (*agora*) where major political and social issues are opened up for discussion and criticism (ibid emphasis added).

¹¹ In this respect, Castoriadis believed that a movement within the capitalist imaginary might not be able to bring about a radical change if it doesn't aim at the substitution of the system with a truly democratic one (Castoriadis, 1992: 163).

¹² Castoriadis claims that, the democratic (people's) assembly '*guarantees and promotes the largest possible sphere of autonomous activity on the part of individuals and of the groups these individuals form*', and thus, social autonomy implies democracy (Castoriadis, 1997b:411).

Figure 1. The Three Spheres of an autonomous society



These three spheres are not independent from each other and an autonomous society should guarantee the greatest possible mutual independence of all spheres. Castoriadis (1987) envisioned an autonomous society where the greatest possible freedom is given to individuals in the private sphere consistent by the autonomy of the *collectivity* (ibid). In order for each socio-historical individual to be able to participate in the community affairs, profound political equality and institutions that incite people to participate, seem imperative to exist. Individual autonomy can be achieved when individuals take direct part in the formation and implementation of their own laws that shape their activity (Fotopoulos, 1998:158). Thus, the project of autonomy is “[...] the project of a society in which all citizens have an equal, effective possibility of participating in legislating, governing and judging, and at last in analysis and in instituting society” (Castoriadis, 2010:3).

Today’s western societies with the dual system of market based economy along with the model of representative democracy have turn to be *heteronomous* societies, as the vast majority of the population is excluded from the basic decision-making process that influences their own lives (ibid). Many have criticized Castoriadis and the project of autonomy as being a project of utopia; however, the project of autonomy has never been shown to be impossible if one looks at the historical breaks when profound changes occurred in the institutional arrangements stemming from the creative praxis of individuals (Castoriadis, 2010:3).

Castoriadis is deeply critical to Kant's theory of moral autonomy, which refers to an individualised independence from others that underpins liberal thinking, and instead he “*de-transcendentalises*” the concept by eliminating the rational mastery of the unconscious (Kalyvas, 1998:163 emphasis added). According to Hannah Arendt (2006:154 emphasis added), “*the raison d'être of politics*” is freedom and so autonomy, which concerns itself with political freedom, echoes it through the collectively instituted social life. However, *politics* was the first thing to disappear from society when its members ceased caring about their common co-existence or stopped questioning the society's institutions, foundations and laws (Arendt, 2004; Castoriadis, 1991).

Closing the scope of the Castoriadian thought, one important question seems to stand out from the theorization of *self-government* and the realization that there exists no exogenous imposition of the meaning we assign to institutions; that of *self-limitation*. In fact, the ecology movement reminds us of this, as whatever each of us does can have implications for the rest of the societal body. Here, *self-limitation* is conceptualised in terms of deriving *by* the society of what it considers as “*acceptable-unacceptable*” tendencies and that of society *itself* through the limits and rules it exercises over its members (Castoriadis, 1997:251 emphasis added)

In sum, I would argue that the project of autonomy acknowledges that socio-historical subjects have the ability to *self-reflect*, *self-govern* and *self-limit* without believing in any other external or hierarchical imposition.

3.2. Towards a radical democratic project

3.2.1. The ‘public/private sphere’, the ‘public space’ and the importance of ‘politics’

An integral feature of the struggle that I will seek to explore theoretically is that of self-organization and the creative action that this process entails as people take it upon themselves and regulate their active participation in society. For Castoriadis (1991: 112) “politics” is the overall question of society where political participation is made possible by the creation of a public/private sphere, a point elucidated by Hannah Arendt (1989) and acclaimed by Castoriadis. Both thinkers acknowledge the radical possibilities for new imaginaries to arise within the true nature of politics, where practices of freedom, action and creativity take place. They contend that a public sphere entails public discussion, dissonance and deliberation and they discard the contemporary notion that regards politics as a defined set of practices that can be managed by bureaucratic institutions. In this respect they critic the nature of representative democracy as exercised in most contemporary democratic regimes, entailing little political potential (Arendt, 2004; Castoriadis, 1991).

On the contrary, the autonomous societies have as their primary goal the creation of new political identities through a re-articulation of particular entities as well as a construction of a collective democratic will, which will entail the plurality of values, and interests through,

[...] a creation of a public space [...] a political domain which belongs to all (*ta koina*- the commons) and the ‘public’ ceases to be a ‘private’ affair [...] of the bureaucracy, the politicians, and the experts. But the essence of public space does not only refer to ‘final decisions’; [...] it refers also to the presuppositions of the decisions [...] whatever is of importance to appear publicly. (Castoriadis, 1998:280)

And here lies the importance of the public/private sphere where the discourse of the people materialises through “[...] freely talking to one another in the agora about politics and everything they care about before deliberating in the ekklesia” (ibid). In order to exist, this public discourse presupposes not only the public space but also the public time for thinking, both of which are open for everybody in society (Castoriadis, 1986:383).

The project of political autonomy is a constant struggle for the formation of a collective intersubjectivity, which “is the one which made itself capable of recognizing and accepting this very multiplicity of human worlds, thereby breaking as far as possible the closure of its own world” (Castoriadis, 1994:142). This attempt of instituting a collective agency that would allow for direct participation to the instituting of social imaginary, seems to demand a piercing of ideological mystifications imposed by the hegemonic rule of capital (Kalyvas, 1998: 174). As an interview participant pointed out when discussing his conceptualization on democratic processes, “[...] democracy is not something that you throw in any society and you expect it to work. Give as much democracy as you like to Golden Dawn¹³ party members and they would still try to find the leader.” (Kleisthenes, Ierissos emphasis added)

In addition, this instituting power can never be fully realised and cannot be located in one instance in society. Therefore, the project of autonomy is not a static manifestation of the will of the sovereign people but instead, “a struggle over the institutions, a struggle aimed at the change of these institutions [...] a struggle that brings about an extraordinary change in institutions.” (Castoriadis, 1987 in Kalyvas, 1998:175)

Finally, only after a society has moved towards constructing a democratic collective will, can it embrace an *emancipatory* programme based on the following political imperative:

¹³ Golden Dawn is the far- right/ Neo- Nazi party, which during the national elections in 2015 came third and holds 18 seats in the Parliament.

Create the institutions, which, by being internalized by individuals, most facilitate their accession to their individual autonomy and their effective participation in all forms of explicit power existing in society. (Castoriadis, 1991:173)

3.2.2. ‘Agonistic pluralism’ and ‘the political’ as constitutive elements

I will now turn to examine the aspects of political creation in a radical sense, which derive from the critic of the model of deliberative democracy as conceptualized by Jürgen Habermas (1987;1990a; 1990b;1997), and his theorisation on the ‘public sphere’, and Rawls’ (1993) political liberalism. In order to move beyond this political paradigm and explore the possibilities of a new conceptualization of a public sphere, I follow Chantal Mouffe’s ‘*agonistic pluralism*’, which its theoretical tenets have been delineated in the ‘*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*’ by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985). It is my intention to include this element in the conceptualization of a truly democratic public sphere in order to elevate the dialogue and bridge the thought of Castoriadis with contemporary radical political theorists such as Laclau (1996;2004;2005), Mouffe, (1993;2000;2005), Beck (1997) and Lefort (1986).

For Mouffe, an inescapable element of the political process is that of antagonisms, a power-laden procedure that creates an adversarial relationship with the ‘Other’, in contrast to the liberal thinkers such as Habermas or Rawl¹⁴ who believe that consensus can exist in the rational discourse exercised in the public sphere (Jones, 2014). However, accepting society as porous and open rather than a closed entity I understand that pluralism entails multiple social identities that are themselves contingent and constantly changing (Laclau, 1996).

Both Laclau and Mouffe tried to envisage pluralism in an anti- essentialist perspective and used the concept as an axiological principal that, according to Mouffe (2000), has to be embraced, enhanced and put at the centre of a radical democratic project. Under this prism, differences take a positive hue whereas homogeneity and unanimity are treated as fictitious notions based on forms of exclusions created by liberal ideology (ibid). Thus, what Mouffe advocates for, is to create institutions that would allow for this social plurality and difference to take place arguing that,

[...] radical democracy demands that we acknowledge difference – the radical, the multiple, the heterogeneous – in effect, everything that has been excluded by the concept of Man in the abstract (Mouffe, 1993: 13).

¹⁴ Rawls acknowledges pluralism as a mere exercise of Reason by identifying a “*diversity of reasonable comprehensive, religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines*”, and that “*this is a permanent feature of the public culture of democracy*” (Jones, 2014:15).

Following these conceptual grounds, *'the political'* is understood as a space of power and antagonism. Political philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben have opened this conceptual path. As Mouffe (2005:9) explains, “the political refers to the dimensions of antagonism which can take many forms and can emerge in diverse social relations, a dimension that can never be eradicated”. Thus, *'the political'* is not restricted to a certain sphere or certain societies but it pertains to every human society determining their ontological grounds (Mouffe, 1993). Therefore, any attempt to organise human co-existence is always potentially conflicting as it is affected by the antagonistic dimension of *'the political'* (Mouffe, 2005).

What this means is that a democratic society cannot reach the imagination of a society of perfect harmony which can claim the elimination of power, and so there can never exist total emancipation but only partial ones (Mouffe, 1999). Social objectivity is created through acts of power entailing traces of exclusion. The point of convergence between power and objectivity is what Laclau and Mouffe conceptualised as *'hegemony'* (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). In this sense, the question is not again how democratic politics will eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power that are compatible with democratic values.

In this light, the novelty of democratic politics is that it understands the 'Other' not as an enemy in antagonistic terms but rather as an adversary (Jones, 2014). In this light, radical democratic politics seek to acknowledge the existence of adversarial relations in order to incorporate and transcend the differences, avoiding the consensus in the liberal sense, and which according to Mouffe (2000:49) “[...] is – and always will be – the expression of a hegemony and the crystallization of power relations”.

3.2.3. De-politicisation of public sphere and 'Emancipatory Agonism'

Guided by the theoretical grounds that were laid out in the previous sections the concept of emancipation breaks with the traditional notions of liberalism. The 'politics of freedom' is a concept taken up by a pool of theorists such as Castoriadis (1991;1987), Hardt & Negri (2004), Laclau (1996), Connolly (1995;1993) and Mouffe (2005), and carries the fundamental logic of *being* that has pre-figurative value for emancipation. What is enticing in exploring such a concept is its potential to allow transformative agency to come into light under a pre-determined social order (Kioupkoulis, 2012).

The affirmation of the *ineradicability* of power and exclusion from politics renders possible a potential mitigation of suffering and harm, whereas pretending that a harmonious political arrangement can exist in absolute and universal terms has the exact opposite effect (Mouffe, 2000; 2005; Connolly, 1991). This is why Mouffe and Laclau (1992) stress that there can be no universal dimension and so, no final reconciliation between the pluralistic differences as if it existed there would be no room for the contesting interpretation of them. Consequently, if such universal liberty was secured then social movements would have no legitimate space for articulating their voices or push for social transformation to remainders of injustices (Kiouпкиolis, 2013). This argument would then lead us to treat politics in an administrative way where the public sphere itself becomes *de-politicised*.

Following Fossen (2008:393emphasis added), we can identify two main mechanisms of liberalism for the “*de-politicisation*” of the public sphere: that of (1) *masking* and (2) *branding*. As for the first one, the pretension of rational consensus accounts for a mask of supposedly agreement and for the second one, when exclusion comes into sight then the subjected individuals are branded with the label of ‘*irrationality*’. Both mechanisms act as restrictions of pluralism and hence agonists call for a valuation of these differences (ibid).

Emancipation is not simply a call to equal (in socio-economic terms) forms of life among societal groups under the presence of some sort of universal task or as a transcendence of relations of power through the exercise of Reason , but as Fossen (2008:385emphasis added) argues,

[...] the term emancipation is meant as an umbrella that captures attempts to redress instances of what agonists variously identify as inequity, injustice, exclusion, marginalization, subordination, and violence, while acknowledging that these harms are to some extent inherent in politics. The *emancipatory* value of contestation lies in its capacity to allow individuals to challenge these harms and thereby possibly diminish them.

Conclusively, emancipation is a perpetual contestation, which prevents injustices and the like of being deeply naturalised and rationalised in a “higher direction of being”, and so it can never be fully achieved (Connolly, 1991:93). Contemporary social struggles are bringing to the fore this *emancipatory* discourse, which as Castoriadis (1987) has already brought into light, opens immense political possibilities. This is the point from which the post-modern era should start articulating *liberatory* discourses and perhaps is what Laclau (1996:137) wanted to stress when he asserted that, “this age signals the end of emancipation and the beginning of freedom”.

3.3. Refocusing Development: ‘From Ecology to Autonomy’

‘Ecology is subversive in that it calls into question the capitalist imaginary that prevails everywhere. It rejects the central leitmotif according to which we are fated to constantly increase production and consumption [...] It’s not just the irreversible dilapidation of the environment and the squandering of irreplaceable resources. There’s also the anthropological destruction of human beings, transformed into producing, consuming animals: into mindless zappers. There is the destruction of the milieus in which they live.’

-Cornelius Castoriadis, *A Society Adrift*

As Castoriadis (1997) pointed out, modernity understands nature as an inert material that has to be mastered and dominated by culture. The most profound formulation of this ideology can be found in the statement of the rationalist philosopher Descartes when he states that, “we are to attain knowledge and truth in order to make ourselves masters and possessors of nature” (Castoriadis, 2010:76).

Societies cannot exist without giving themselves a dominant self-representation and as opposed to previous religious or mythical societies, the capitalist ones use the rationalistic ideology as its self-representation (ibid:114). The capitalist logic is founded upon the idea of universalistic rationality echoing the idea of “mastery over nature” as both the means and the end for social life embodying current structures of domination that are manifested in all spheres of social life (ibid). Castoriadis (2010:114-115 emphasis added) notes that “*pseudo-rationality*” is the cornerstone of the imaginary that is pertained to the capitalist but also the Marxist logic¹⁵.

In addition, Castoriadis (2010) noted that the evolution of contestation and revolution in modern history can be understood through two dimensions of the institution of society: that of the instillation in individuals of a scheme of authority and that of the instillation in individuals of a scheme of needs. The first one can be understood through the worker’s movement that put into question the problem of domination (even if it left aside important aspects) that were later addressed by the women’s movement (Castoriadis, 2010). The latter was deeply revolutionary as it attacked the relations of authority in other spheres of social life. At the other end of the spectrum, the system of needs can be understood through the ecology movement, which put into question the whole construction of the system of needs, values and orientation of human life (ibid).

¹⁵ Castoriadis, provides a long critic on the ‘traditional’ elements in Marxist thought such as the deterministic historical evolution of the working class and the historical ‘laws’ in societal development and rejects the materialist conception of History as a linear or dialectical progress (Gezerlis, 2001: 484).

To speak today of autonomous societies, is not only to attack the schemata and figures of certain forms of domination, but to question the entire structure of needs and present institutions. This process presupposes that individuals have the will to self-govern and self-institute themselves. Thus, to pose the question of needs and values is to pose the issue of a new cultural creation (Castoriadis, 2010). In this light, I align my thinking with Santos (2005:17) who understands ecology as “[...] a basic axiom of human existence which if reactivated can yield higher-level principles for reorganizing the economy in a humane way and refocus development in terms of well being”.

In this thesis, I argue that democracy as seen through the lens of the project of autonomy can yield transformative changes for an ecological paradigm to occur. This constant “*becoming*”- to use Heraclitus words (Carraro, 2014:47), reveals the creative power of human societies to institute new imaginaries for sustainable living and at the same time understand the limits there to, in a process of *self-limitation*.

Chapter 4. Methodology Or...The Natural History of my Research

*Sweet is the lore which nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mishapes the beauteous forms of things;
—We murder to dissect...*

- William Wordsworth, ‘The Tables Turned’ (1798)

4.1. Methodological Strategies and epistemological assumptions

The thesis accounts for a qualitative case study following Yin’s (2009) teachings in order to explore the complex social phenomenon manifested in Chalkidiki peninsula of northern Greece. In order to frame the research objective and explore the case of the social struggle, I employed several methods of collecting data and employed a thematic analysis for their interpretation.

The critical theory stance that was endorsed by adopting Castoriadis’ epistemological position had been in constant dialogue with the *constructive* epistemological approach employed by post-structuralist academicians. I lean towards the epistemological position of critical theory as it is oriented towards critiquing and changing society and seeks to diagnose the nature of social changes in order to produce democratic societies (Layder, 1994). Its focus on the connection between politics,

values and knowledge instigates a deeper understanding of the power dynamics inherent in social relations (ibid).

In order to explore my *problematique*, I was seeking to identify the notions, discourses¹⁶ and narratives on development and political participation that were articulated and practised by the people of the social movement. In order to ‘*sculpt the field*’ according to these tenets, I crafted the following sub-research questions that helped me operationalise my research and which ask,

What are the social representations¹⁷ in relation to democracy, political participation and development?

How do people from the movement understand their struggle?

How do people organise, and what strategies do they employ in order to achieve their goals?

In order to avoid the closeness of the *a priori* theoretical choices, during fieldwork I endorsed a flexible stance in terms of theoretical orientation. It also seemed unavoidable, as I would not be able to understand such a complex phenomenon with limited predefined theoretical lens. Therefore, I place this study among *retroductive* approaches and so my empirical findings both inform and are informed by a set of theories (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011).

4.2. Methods for Data collection

According to Yin (2009), Silverman and Marvasti (2008) qualitative case study research employs a variety of methods for collecting data and so I used as primary sources (i) semi-structured interviews, and (ii) participant and non-participant observations. For secondary sources, I used (iii) academic literature review, and (iv) scientific reports produced by national academics and environmental agencies, websites, photographs and audiovisual documentaries relating to the Skouries case.

4.2.1. Semi-structured Interviews

The most important sources of information were the (41) semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants from the social movement that gave me an understanding of how people build their discourse around their struggle and how they construct the notion of political participation,

¹⁶ The discourse that I am referring to is the spoken, written or otherwise communicated language of the people involved in the study so as to produce recognizable social orders and processes. The practices account for all the tangible expressions that result from the ideas and values of people involved in the area such as the construction of the mine, the pamphlets, signs, meetings and so forth.

¹⁷ According to Moscovici (1972) social representations account for a system of ‘values, ideas and practices’ that individuals employ in order to communicate and organise their social reality.

democracy and development in the local context. The interviews were conducted in Greek and were recorded but in instances where the respondent did not feel comfortable to disclose information, the process was stopped and notes were taken. The length of the interviews ranged between 1h 30 min. and 5hrs 45 min. and later transcribed in Greek. I only translated in English the excerpts that I used to elucidate the analytical results. An interview guide and a table of respondents are provided in Appendix 2.

4.2.2. Participant/ Non-participant Observations

The participant and non-participant observations as methods for collecting primary data were crucial in order to observe how people live in the area, how they organise their struggle and their daily interactions, which shed light on respondent's ideas and values, and revealed contradicting instances of behaviour (Silverman &Marvasti, 2008). The participant observations account for two demonstrations in the area and for one assembly meeting with people from the 'struggle committee' in the city of Thessaloniki. I also had several informal meetings and discussions with residents in the mountain of Skouries, where the extraction mine is currently constructed, which proved valuable for a holistic understanding of the socio-political background of these communities (see Appendix 3). I was also keeping a field diary with all my thoughts and *learnings* throughout fieldwork that was used as '*a record of time*' for my thoughts.

Conducting research in a field of conflict is a task that reveals the gravity of participation and the choices that a researcher makes in the field. During my presence in the villages of Ierissos and M.Panagia I witnessed the normalisation of '*the state of control*' that has been imposed in the area. After being followed by two men while commuting from Ierissos to M.Panagia for several days, I was stopped and asked about my presence in the area. When I reflected this incident to a key informant, jokingly she told me "[...] oh of course dear, they know us better than we know ourselves'" (Eumelia, M.Panagia).

4.3. Fieldwork sites & Sampling

The study is based on empirical data collected over two months in N.E. Chalkidiki and the city of Thessaloniki in northern Greece. The chosen field sites are the villages of Ierissos, Megali Panagia (M.Panagia) (which constitute the centres of the struggle), the town of Poligiros and the city of Thessaloniki. There are also smaller villages that I visited, where residents have formed their own struggle committees, but were not considered as primary sites for collecting data, such as Ormilias,

Nea Roda and Ouranopoli. Figure 2. presents a map with the focal field sites (marked in red colour) that I visited in order to conduct fieldwork.

In the selected sites, a purposive and ‘snow-ball’ sampling strategy was employed, to identify the people that are affiliated with the movement (Creswell, 2007; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The established criteria did not limit the opportunities to meet and discuss with people that were not directly associated with the movement but had influenced its dynamics, such as the mayor of the municipality of Aristotle, lawyers and environmental activists.

Figure 2. Map of field sites



Source: Pyrgadikia; Enchantedlearning

4.4. Methods for Data Analysis and Interpretation

In order to make sense of the collected data, the study employs the method of thematic analysis (Creswell, 2007). According to Braun & Clarke (2006) and Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is used for analysing and reporting patterns of themes within the dataset, according to the researcher’s epistemological tenets.

The process of the thematic analytical interpretation was in tune with the retroductive approach of research and the theoretical confines were treated as elastic allowing the space for unexpected themes to emerge. The prevalence of themes was not based upon quantifiable measures but instead

on whether a theme captured a substantive element in relation to the research *problematique* (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007).

The process of collecting, analysing and presenting data was not a linear one but rather a ‘*recursive process*’ throughout the phases of research (Ely, 1997). The thematic analysis followed the central steps of: (i) coding the data (into meaningful segments), (ii) identifying repeated patterns of meaning and developing themes from codes, and lastly (iii) construct meaning and present the narrative of the themes (Creswell, 2007). In Appendix 4, the process of analysing the data by employing a thematic analysis is illustrated.

4.5. Strategies for validating findings

The strategies employed for safeguarding the trustworthiness of analytical results, resonate Creswell’s (2007) and Yin’s (2009) suggestions and account for triangulation of information by using different sources and peer-review from academics and master students in the relevant field. In order to minimize errors, a ‘*case study protocol*’ (Yin, 2009) was developed including an overview of the project, field procedures (sources of data and unanticipated events) and research reflections. The most important strategy is that of soliciting the participants’ views and reflections on the study’s findings. This strategy is also crucial in order to safeguard the movement’s position in an environment of conflict.

As Creswell (2007) remarks, qualitative studies cannot be replicated and reach the same findings, as the researcher is not passively encountering the field but on the contrary the researcher is the one to shape and interpret the surrounding reality he/she seeks to give meaning. Therefore, I do not aspire to generalize my potential findings but rather engage in a theoretical discussion on the way socio-historical subjects reclaim *the political* in the social phenomenon manifested in Chalkidiki.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

4.6.1. Reflexivity and Positionality

In line with Sultana’s (2007) considerations on ethical issues, qualitative research should be treated with reflexivity resonating the epistemological choices of the researcher. I approached the field without being affiliated with any organization and this posed certain challenges especially in the beginning of fieldwork. The initial attempts to reach out to key informants were met by suspicion

and scepticism and my interpretation to this phenomenon leads me again to reflect about conflict environments.

It should be made explicit that my status as a young woman from the capital, who is also studying abroad seeking to do research on perceptions of democracy and development in light of the critical national elections for the country's future, has certainly affected the responses of participants. This has been depicted in their initial reluctance to my research but my commitments of preserving the anonymity of respondents featured in the thesis together with persistence and patience, allowed me to create an open relationship with most people I encountered in the field. The fact that I am also Greek allowed me to understand the cultural subtleties and specificities in order to overcome these impasses.

However, the crucial point is that of neutrality. In a situation of conflict, portraying the position of a neutral researcher, seemed to have been the greatest obstacle to the opening of the people that I was seeking contact. Only when I disclosed my stance on the mining case, was I able to engage in deep and reflective discussions on the study's research *problematique*. All these factors created the grounds and rules in which I set-up the interviews and interpreted the data and which portray the partiality of this study's findings.

4.6.2. Confidentiality, Anonymity and Informed Consent

In accordance to academic principles and prior to the conducted interviews, I asked for consent for the interview to be recorded and before fieldwork, I sent a written form of the research design to the coordinating committee of Ierissos. Amongst the scope and purpose of the research I committed to treat the respondents with confidentiality and thus throughout the paper I am using pseudonyms to refer to respondents inspired by ancient Greek names.

4.6.3. Constructing Knowledge for whom?

It is imperative for academic research to engage with past knowledge produced by academicians and theoretical schools of thought. I believe that this fascinating academic dialogue for constructing knowledge and expanding the cognitive confines is imperative. However, when these efforts are largely based on interactions with people in the field, an important ethical issue seems to arise. For whom am I, as a researcher, constructing knowledge? I believe that constructing knowledge is not a one-way process and thus it needs to be mingled with ground responses, reflecting an understanding of the reciprocal relationship between the researcher and '*the field*'. Therefore, I decided to disseminate the findings of the research with Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in order to organise

potential seminars with the ‘coordinating committees’, solidarity groups, activists and academics in an attempt to openly discuss and make their voices louder.

4.7. Limitations

This study does not seek to construct any ‘*given truth*’ and the analytical issues that it brings forth are to be treated with reflection. In this light, I acknowledge the fact that a deeper analysis of the internal dynamics of the movement would allow for a better understanding on certain issues of identity, representation and self- organisation. Due to the sensitivity of the case and the specificities of the circumstances during fieldwork (national elections), I was not able to participate in the weekly meetings of the villages of Ierissos. The decision was conveyed to me before fieldwork, the reason was that past researchers, and journalists have partially reported their struggle posing biases that jeopardised the movement’s image.

In addition, I recognise that an in depth socio-political understanding of the group’s inherent relations and interactions would have been more robust if the analytical process was extensively informed by the sociological characteristics of each respondent. Yet, I believe that this analysis would require an ethnographic research approach, which I did not employ.

Chapter 5. Analytical Results

Courage consists, however, in agreeing to flee rather than live tranquilly and hypocritically in false refuges. Values, morals, homelands, religions, and these private certitudes that our vanity and our complacency bestow generously on us, have many deceptive sojourns as the world arranges for those who think they are standing straight and at ease, among stable things.

— Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1984)

5.1. Creating a public/private sphere

5.1.1. Self-organisation and Refocusing ‘The Local’

This section is concerned with the characteristics of the self-organisation of communities in Chalkidiki and Thessaloniki in an attempt to understand the logic behind the need for collective self-organisation that creates new ways of understanding and ‘living’ the local.

The majority of the villages that oppose to the extraction plan have formed local ‘coordinating/struggle committees’ in an attempt to communicate and collectively organise a response. Looking beyond the immediate surface, residents of the self-organised committees expressed feelings of indignation against the privatisation of social life and the need to respond to the years of oppression. The first ‘coordinating committee’ was formed in the village of M.Panagia¹⁸ by a minority of residents who were concerned with the catastrophic impacts of the mining activity and had formed the ‘Initiative against the Harmfulness’. According to the residents of M.Panagia who formed this committee, harmfulness refers not only to the destruction of the environment but it also entails,

[...] the indifference, the passivity, the private life. And an even more serious and dangerous harmfulness is the illusion that by reclaiming the land, by flattening the mountains and by building the streams, we contribute to the creation of a better future for the coming ones. [...] The only way out is self-organisation and collective action by those who believe that they themselves are responsible for their own lives (Initiative Against Harmfulness, 2014).

In addition, the self-organised communities condemn and expose the corrupt power dynamics embedded in the local administration by unveiling interweaving relations between mayors and the company, and the clientelist system that had been crystallised in social relations. As Pafsanias explained, the self-organised committees reflect a need to resist, “[...] the monstrous society that for years is decaying in scandals and so we wanted to be organised, for we see many more problems coming in the next years” (Pafsanias, Poligyros).

The initial form of ‘coordinating committees’ did not entail any formal¹⁹ organisation or specific statutes but mostly resembled the organisational form of popular assemblies that are open to whoever is concerned with the current socio-economic development imposed in the area. Thus, the assemblies welcome people from all established political ideologies (right/left/centre or conservative/liberal/socialist) and socio-economic backgrounds (class, locality and so on). These assemblies exhibit a pluralism of ideas based on different values that seek to expand the system of participation in decision-making.

Through the process of deliberation and contestation, the emergence of a weak dimension of political identity starts to appear. Its discourse is largely articulated within the ecological sustainability terrain

¹⁸ The village has a long history of underground mining in the area and until today, most residents have ties with the mining industry.

¹⁹ During the last years of struggle and especially after 2010-2011, the ‘popular assemblies’ started forming sub-teams or designated groups that would be responsible for certain activities such as ‘the communication team’ or the ‘legal team’.

and strictly refrains from any identification with party-political ideology. However, these characteristics do not negate the confrontational impulses that emerge from the multiplicity of identities.

The decision-making process in the committees is based on direct democratic processes and all issues set by the communities are open to public discussion and deliberation. In every village, committees and popular assemblies understand direct democratic processes as an organic constitutive element of decision-making, contrasting the hierarchical and bureaucratic management of local administration in Greece²⁰.

By moving from the private to the public/private sphere, the residents reclaim the essence of democracy and seek to re-politicise their communities, as they actively participate in the decision-making of community affairs. As the ‘coordinating committee’ of Ierissos claims,

[...] active participation in associations within their community is an expression of democracy, an unalienable right and a responsibility towards the land they belong to. Members of the Coordinating Committee of Associations of Stageira-Akanthos are all those citizens [...] who among themselves share thoughts and proposals for all open issues, which concern the local communities. (soshalkidiki, n.d.)

The communities place the notion of ‘locality’ at the centre of the self-organisation process showing how the multitude of individuals became collective actors in an informal, ad hoc way. Against the traditional forms of political organisational principles that are based on differentiations such as insider/outsider or leader/ members, the form of internal organisation in the communities is based on weak demarcations of such dichotomies (Offe, 1985). There seems to be a fusion between public and private roles, instrumental and expressive behaviour and the character of the objectives set by the collective seem to hold decisive effects for the society as a whole rather than a separate group.

Residents in these villages understand community organising as the most viable domain for mounting exclusion and for constructing a public space where people are able to debate alternatives consolidating direct democratic procedures. Therefore, ‘the local’ accounts for a key dimension for the collective re-politicisation of individuals in order to become active agents in all domains of social life (Caruso, 2013; Voss & Williams, 2012).

²⁰ In light of local elections in 2014, the communities of the municipality of Aristotle under the banner ‘An Initiative of Unity’ organized a ballot to represent the anti-mining block with the aim of overthrowing the crystallised corrupt relations in the area.

To talk today about the local does not mean to go back to old fashioned local structures that carry patriarchal values and other exclusionary elements that other movements and parts of civil society have been fighting for decades. Here, we understand ‘the local’ as spaces (localities) that contain the universality of capital dynamics but the response to this domination has certain specificities that have to be met by local opposition for an effective response.

These ‘localities’ are projected to the global terrain of struggles creating a trans-locality of spaces and demands. This is exemplified by the large repertoire of actions employed by the movement that renders it flexible and polymorphic²¹. The movement has employed a multi-scalar range of actions (from local to global) and has mingled with various demands from environmental to human rights movements in an attempt to acquire visibility, solidarity and legitimacy for its claims. The connecting thread of all these heterogeneous networks and solidarity groups is the circumstance of exclusion in political decision-making and the reducibility of self-determinacy to the neo-liberal market logic. In conjunction with the understanding of locality, the strategies employed by the movement rely on the intertwining of the local and the global dimension and point to the need for a common dialogue and for collective action.

5.1.2. Self- Governance as articulations on Democracy

The process of self-organisation of the communities brought to the surface the element of questioning existing democratic institutions, which no longer enable citizens to exert influence over politics. The process of questioning the status quo emerged in public spaces where residents from all ideological positions started debating the notion of representation that the nature of the party system had established and which is embedded in bureaucratic institutions. As Menelaos asserts,

²¹ At a local level, they have jointly organised actions ranging from large demonstrations and rallies to knowledge exchange workshops, with most of the national movements that emerged during the Greek crisis.. Illustrative examples account for the ‘Keratea movement’ against a large-scale waste- management project, laid- off civil servants, anti- fascist movements, the VIOME struggle of workers who are self- organising and managing a factory, and the list is not exhaustive. On the European level the ‘Skouries’ movement shared common struggles with other local movements opposing to similar extractive plans such as ‘Rosia Montana’ in Romania and ‘Corcoesto’ in Spain. They have also organised common days of action with other European movements like the NoTav in North Italy and the ZAD land occupation movement in the north of France. Human Rights organisations such as Amnesty International and research centres for corporate accountability such as the Dutch SOMO, have publicly supported the struggle and reported the violations carried out by the Greek state and the tax avoidance scheme deployed by Eldorado Gold S.A. (SOMO, 2015). Finally, on a global scale the movement has solidarity ties with Canadian anti-extractive activist groups and with the Comodoro Rivadavia in Argentina. The members of the solidarity groups stress the fact that the tactics of extractive capital in order to suppress social resistance are common throughout the world.

[...]You can be whatever you want outside these meetings but none of us accepts party-politics here [...] all the decisions are going through our popular assemblies. We do not belong to any organisation or political-party. We organised ourselves to solve our problem. There is no leader in the movement nor hierarchy. Our goal is common.(Menelaos, Ierissos)

These spaces account for opportunities where the political aspirations of the citizens can be realised. In these spaces, active participation in political discussion and deliberation constitute an end in itself, allowing the potentials for instituting self-governance to take shape. As elucidated by Agamemnon,

[...] through this process, we finally learnt to discuss with each other. In a way, I am thankful for this misfortune because it woke us up. We were sleeping as individuals and we woke up as citizens. (Agamemnon, M.Panagia)

As expected, there are differentiations in the conceptualisations of self-government. The majority of residents question the association between democracy and representation by putting pressure on existing forms and seek to experiment with new forms of representation. However, some residents expressed more radical ideas about the notion of the nation-state and of sovereignty, which were articulated as schemes of exclusion and were understood as obstacles for any radical political innovation.

At this point, certain reservations concerning self-organisation processes seem to arise and point to the fact that due to differentiations on class and educational status, lack of experience and time, only residents who can 'afford' to take this time could participate (Abers, 2000). This in turn would result in yet another elitist rule over the public sphere excluding the underprivileged from democratic processes (ibid: 117-120).

However, these concerns were not quite confirmed in the Skouries case, as to a large extent, most people participated in the meetings to discuss social issues in the area. It should be noted that their political participation was ignited by several factors, such as social solidarity, relations of reciprocity, urgency of the threat to their existence in the area and locality, but what seems to be the crucial point is the successful result of participation itself. This process has opened up Pandora's Box by starting to question the status quo and embedded societal values that could no longer pertain to a sustainable co-existence. The more people participated the more they were able to accomplish in terms of their struggle and experience change collectively in their lives. The dynamics of deliberation and the need to make joint decisions brought about the strengthening of social ties or social capital in the communities as articulated by most members that I have been in contact with.

The case of Skouries has revealed that at least on the local level, spaces of self-government can be formed and are crucial for the self-determination of individuals. This suggests that possible

formations of similar spaces are not merely a utopia but possible institutions created by the spontaneous collective ground-power of communities. As Antigoni claims,

[...] We have not lived in real democracies. Democracy is identical to freedom, but a freedom that allows people to decide for themselves. [...] Freedom is to believe that nobody can save you but you will save yourself [...] The messianic way of thinking and acting has put our societies in an endless sleep. (Antigoni, Ierissos)

5.1.3. Self-Limitation as articulations on Development

The process of self-governance and self-determination opens up the issue of self-limitation. This point is best elucidated in cases where natural resources are at the centre of the debate because they bring forth the vitality of what is at stake in most practical terms. This opening directly links to the question of limits concerning social needs, illuminating the fact that the consequences of what one does with ‘the commons’ affects the whole.

The Skouries movement places its critique on the current socio-economic structure that sets no limits to economic growth, and poses questions such as, for whom and for what do we need the gold and copper hidden in the Skouries mountain? At this point, Leonidas’ words shed some light.

[...] We are not opposing this development with a fundamentalist logic. It is neither desirable nor possible to return to the Stone Age. It seems as though we are in the era of metals and minerals. But, at some point we have to seriously reflect on the reasons why we extract these metals. Is it for the collective well-being? Or for the stock-market exchange games of Eldorado? (Leonidas, Ierissos)

This excerpt holds the core question of the system of needs and societal limits. It seems to me as though it is posing the question of the possibility of a radical transformation of society and all the implications that this possibility might entail. I stumble upon Castoriadis (1997) problematisation and acknowledge that societal transformation does not only imply self-organisation, self-governance and self-instituting but above all it requires another system of needs and values; in conclusion, another orientation of human life. And here is where I situate the problem of development - a constant quest of orienting human life.

Seeking to identify the signs of values of this new cultural creation in the case of Skouries I find that communities start by rejecting the logic that relies on expropriation of nature for private interests and capital accumulation. They understand nature as having both intrinsic and instrumental value but its utilisation has to fulfil societal needs, which are collectively negotiated in the public/private sphere. These claims can be exemplified by Oresti’s who lived in the heart of the mountain before he was evicted.

[...] I do not abuse nature; I cohabit with her. We are all part of her after all, right? This is at least how I understand our existence. Our steps should be gentle on earth and not heavy. [...] what is happening here is hubris²² (ὕβρις). I see a system that starts eating its own flesh. (Orestis, M.Panagia)

This self-destructive character of the existing system is the element that reinforces the argument of societal self-limitation. However, the issue does not lie in the wishes and needs of a minority group in Chalkidiki peninsula but in those of the mass population. Here, we can only answer for the rejected needs brought by the present system manifested in the area of Chalkidiki and trace the appearance of other needs that seem to derive from this rejection.

In this light, the organised communities in Chalkidiki together with academic and technical institutions are trying²³ to put together a development plan for the area based on the logic of diversified small-scale production of the villages in accordance with their ecosystem and the comparative advantages of each village²⁴.

The question of self-organisation and self-governance seems like it is inextricably linked to the question of self-limitation. This process reveals new articulations on development as a way of orienting human needs. Castoriadis, has particularly stressed the point that to recognise these limits is giving full content to an autonomous society as it recognises itself as the ultimate source of the institutional creation.

5.2. Private sphere and new social relations

In this section, I explore how the process of questioning the status quo has affected social relations and the private sphere of individuals, as such an endeavour may prove insightful for tracing social change and the creation of new subjectivities.

During the last three years, attempts for cooperative forms of organising local productive activities, such as eco-tourism, promotion of the cultural and rural heritage of the area and local agricultural products, started appearing. In addition, some residents seek to organise collaborative schemes of

²² Hubris (ὕβρις) was a fundamental concept of the Ancient Greek worldview, and was used to depict the overestimation, the excess of someone's capabilities resulting in abuses of power.

²³ A developmental scheme based on the aforementioned logic is supported by the new municipality of Aristotle but has yet to come into full practice as the extractive capital is still present in the area despite the efforts of the SYRIZA government to halt it.

²⁴ For example, M.Panagia is a mountainous village and thus agro tourism, bee-keeping, livestock, small-scale logging and agriculture can be better organized, Ierissos is a coastal village and thus touristic activities and small-scale agriculture can take place.

commercialisation of crafts and local products in a non-hierarchical form. The residents are also trying to put forward a similar logic in all dimensions of social life. An illustrative example is the nursery school of the village of Ierissos that was constructed by the residents themselves after rejecting the corporation's financial support.

However, these initiatives have not reached their full potential and by no means can we claim that the construction of an alternative society is in place. This would require profound changes in the subjectivity of the majority of the communities. As Castoriadis (1997: 379) points out, the subject is attached to social practices through the embodiment of the institutionalised values, attitudes and beliefs. These dynamics are internalised by the subject and so the process of removal of repressive institutions usually carries a violent rupture associated with previous perceptions of one's self-identity. As Menelaos explains,

[...] this process has changed me as person. Wake up, go to work then drink raki [local drink] with some friends while blaming each other's political ideological preferences for the misery of this country and in the meantime wait for my life to be administered by the State. I cannot relate to this person anymore. But this came at a high cost. Some people went to jail and a forest is being raped every day. (Menelaos, Ierissos)

The constant opening and questioning that has been taking place the last three years in the public spaces seems to hold the value that will attack the inner foundations of social handicaps and keep agents vigilant against subtle circuits of social discipline (Kioupkiolis, 2012:90). Inevitably, some form of alternative establishment of social norms will take place as people continue to seek meaning within institutionalised social significations. However, putting in place these spaces of deliberation might allow for challenging repressive social mechanisms before the layers of inequality become definite.

Another point of reference that can point to signs of change in the private sphere is how the traditional role of women in the villages has been challenged. Electra put it rather aptly when she said that,

[...] our lives as women have changed and I, myself cannot go back. You know, we [women] were mostly concerned with cooking, children and keeping the doorsteps clean. Now, I wake up in the morning and the first thoughts I have relate to the struggle. What to do next and how to organise. (Electra, Ierissos)

Women in the self-organised villages are at the core of the struggle and actively take part in acts of political activism. This process has resulted in the election of Andromache as a deputy member of the SYRIZA government and who is also a member of the movement.

This opening and the re-politicisation process that these societies are going through point to the human ability of initiating change and transcending the given through collective action (DellaPorta & Diani, 2006; Eto, 2008). This process ignites changes in social relations precisely because the subjects have questioned their own position in relation to social ties. This point reflects the dynamics between the private and the public/private sphere and point to the fact that democratic politics allow for a constant opening of these changes to occur through deliberation and self-reflection.

5.3. The emergence of the ‘common’ and ‘community’

This section attempts to theorise questions of ‘the commons’ starting from the resource-based conceptualisation but seeking to uplift it in order to connect it with the social process of creating and instituting new imaginaries for radical politics.

As Nightingale (2011) remarks, debates about the commons have largely taken shape within rational understandings of cooperation and institutional design for managing resources that seek to understand under which circumstances Hardin’s (1968) ‘Tragedy of commons’ becomes irrelevant. Since then, discussions on the commons are marked by the legacy of Ostrom (1990) and the Bloomington School who argued for a nuanced empirical and multi-disciplinary approach to the commons, in contrast to panaceas offered by market and state environmental governance. In addition, and as St. Martin (2009) notes, the stories about the commons bear an interpretation of location and material entity, which are often related to neoliberal becomings and are represented as threatened and enclosed by neoliberal logics of privatization.

However, in order to avoid replicating the past work of the aforementioned academics, I seek to posit ‘the common’ as something that ignites from the material, but seeks to connect with potentialities for social change. The words of Alcibiades, Lysandra and Damianus shed some light in this respect.

[...] the struggle is a struggle for the commons. For our land, our waters, our air and our freedom. But it is also a common struggle. (Alcibiades, M.Panagia)

[...] The movement has shown that the common interest is guaranteed through collective processes and not by individual strategies, which even if they are based in good faith, escape common decisions that do not reflect the goals set by the community. (Lysandra, Ierissos)

[...] sometimes the differences within the struggle committees are immense. Before this with some people, I would never be able to communicate at any level. Through this process, I have learnt to discuss with them and make common decisions. I could never imagine this happening if you had asked me three years ago. (Damianus, Thessaloniki)

Through this struggle people's understandings seem to point towards 'the common' as a process where the collective potentiality can set in motion new forms of collective life (Hardt & Negri, 2004; 2000). The new articulation of 'the common' seems to address the issue of the *governmentalisation* of community²⁵. However, this "governmentalisation" instead of depending on repressive mechanisms of control entails the active participation of individuals through community ethics (Parmett, 2012 emphasis added). The 'common' then seems to hold all the collective potentialities embedded in the active, material and creative self-instituting that serves to constitute new forms of being. In addition, the collective experiences of the re-politicisation of these communities seem to open up the notion of 'the common' in a new, conscious way.

As De Angelis (2003) remarks, all commons are sustained by communities, which in turn are sets of '*commoners*' who share and define the rules for access to the resource-commons. However, the crucial element for the conceptualization of the commons is the verb "*to common*", which accounts for "the social process that creates and reproduces the commons" (De Angelis & Stavridis, n.p. emphasis added). Thus, community is the subsumed form of collective potentiality from which the means and actions for sustaining the common can be abstracted (Parmett, 2012:174). In the case of Skouries, the community can be understood as a 'terrain of struggle and contestation'. On one hand, the forces of capital pose a certain collective discipline in order to achieve the developmental prosperity and on the other hand, the movement resists with alternative forms of appropriating the commons from below (Barchiesi, 2003: 4-5).

At this point, it is interesting to explore how the latter instrumentalises the former. It seems there is no unified One against the capital but rather a multiplicity of singularities coordinated together and seeking to negotiate 'the common'. In this sense, the movement does not seek to eliminate differences into one unifying identity and thus, turns out to be less exclusionary. However, this position does not negate the communication impasses that derive from the multiplicity of identities. On the contrary, communities in Chalkidiki are still grappling with social handicaps of crystallised forms of identities that create obstacles on their opening.

Under this prism, two emerging issues seem to relate to the values of the potentialities for a radical democratic project. Firstly, the mutual understanding of different subject-positions within the spaces of struggle results to a reworking of the social subject with sensitivity to 'the Other'. This sensitivity is not only an ethical one but derives from a deeper recognition that in order to form truly democratic

²⁵ At this point, it is important to stress the remarks of Parmett (2012) who points to the inadequate ontological theorisation of the relationship between common and the community in order to salvage it from sublation and unification tendencies.

societies, dealing with differences by accepting them seems crucial. Secondly, the constant experiencing of this process allows for a dissemination of seeds of the values and principles of autonomy in the collective unconscious of the social body. These processes of the collective imaginary stem from the creative power of the singularities, which are set in motion through the construction of 'the common'.

As De Angelis (2003) suggests, the articulation of communities through 'the common' can point to new paths of organising society based on human interactions that give rise to different exchanges away from competitive capitalist ones. However, the initiatives that emerged during these years have yet to appear in all spheres of social life largely due to the crystallisation of capitalist relations in Greece. Thus, we could say that the extent to which the new social relations will influence all spheres of social life will largely set the limits of the movement and the potentials for political and social change.

5.4. Eminent pitfalls and reflections on co-optation

The struggle in Skouries depicts the enclosure of the commons by private interests while at the same time ignites opportunities for articulating new conceptualisations for 'the common'. However, there exists a *space* in between, where cooptation can take place. Co-optation can be conceptualised as the 'enclosure of the collective potentiality' (that emerges in this *space*) by dogmatic affinities that tend to bring closure to the collective opening. This threat attacks the genuine political discourse of the movement and seeks to associate it with party-political dogmatism.

The political discourse that has been taking shape in self-organised public spaces has been used by institutionalised political powers in order to promote the interests of party-politics. In light of the recent national elections, which occurred at the same time as my fieldwork, pre-election campaigning had been taking place in the area. The left-wing SYRIZA party was gaining momentum, largely because it promoted an anti-austerity agenda and had pledged to stop the illegitimate extractive investment and de-criminalise all defendants. These commitments proved fruitful as the majority of the electoral body in Chalkidiki voted for SYRIZA. This event caused suspicion and questions as to what extent the movement has been co-opted by party-politics.

Since SYRIZA came to power, efforts to scrutinise the investment have been put in place but the legal barriers that were enacted by the previous government only reveal the interweaving relationships between state, governance and capital.

Although state-based bargaining was demanded and welcomed by residents in Chalkidiki, the reassurance that the state has the power to form autonomous communities is highly contested by most residents, as Empedoklis asserts,

[...] now some people have hopes that with a left government we might see a radical change. We, on the other hand, do not nurture such hopes. This system was never concerned with people's liberation, but it is in place only for controlling, keeping the balance and administer lives in this theatrical play of politics and power. (Empedoklis, Thessaloniki)

The autonomous subjectivity that is currently being created in Chalkidiki, seems to contrast with mainstream left politics. As Barchiesi (2003) remarks, the latter was largely premised on the idea of a revolutionary subjectivity such as 'the people' or 'the proletariat'. Usually, a vanguard party was responsible for the validation of these subjectivities and was considered "the only repository of a universal *science* of liberation to which specificities had to accorded and conformed" (ibid:6 emphasis added). On the contrary, the autonomous discourse seems to point to the creation of new subjectivities that are based on the multiplicity of identities seeking to exist in common. Unlike the homogenisation of a unified One, this subjectivity allows for an explosion of singularities in search for commonality avoiding any dogmatic discourse.

Therefore, if the movement adopts the mentality of past ideologies it seems like it reduces the potentialities for articulating new political discourse that can lay the foundation of an autonomous society. It is clear that if one accepts the dichotomies offered by the social order and choose one side over the other, one is already playing the game of the instituted power (Castoriadis, 2010).

By now it is understood that vanguard parties and centralised forms of leadership cannot fulfil self-rule. This limits the possibility of creating a public/private sphere as again, we turn to dogmatic ideas, representation, and back to the crisis of limited imaginative capacities. Sustainable societal transformation and change cannot be imposed from above but rather should ignite from personal self-realisation. Allowing the public space for such realisation to happen seems imperative. Radical democratic politics account for an ongoing project, and what I was seeking to explore here is not based on populist ideas of socialism, anarchism or communism, as I contend that all of them, are just ideas and theories. Ground responses are much more complicated and do not seem to fit into pre fixed ideologies.

Chapter 6. Thesis/ Discussion

We cannot live outside our bodies, our friends, some sort of human cluster, and at the same time, we are bursting out of this situation. The question which poses itself then is one of the conditions which allow the acceptance of the other, the acceptance of a subjective pluralism. It is a matter not only of tolerating another group, another ethnicity, another sex, but also of a desire for dissensus, otherness, difference. Accepting otherness is a question not so much of right as of desire. This acceptance is possible precisely on the condition of assuming the multiplicity within oneself.

— Félix Guattari, *The Guattari Reader* (1996)

In light of the theoretical framework and my analytical efforts, this section discusses the importance of radical politics for an *emancipatory* project of development.

It seems like the crisis of the dominant modality of our political imaginary reveals that the politics of today is “a politics of frustration and *aporia*” (Stavrakakis, 1999:99 emphasis added). And why is that? The remnants of a *fantasmatic* ideal state of order (utopianism) are still dominant in the political imaginary that understands this ideal state as impossible and catastrophic, which for many signals hopelessness. Yet, accepting this state of impossibility is probably a good way to start thinking about radical politics (ibid).

The political project that was explored in this study not only legitimises dissent but also puts it at the core of its establishment in place of the idea of a harmonious order. The possibility of conflict resolution regarding antagonistic diversity, embedded in different worldviews, is not envisaged as a process that can result in the idea of an ultimate order, supported by measures of social exclusions or by more recent ideas of unconstrained communication (see Habermas, 1987; 1990a; 1990b). As discussed, such approaches may well put the pluralist democratic project at risk.

Moreover, understanding this character of democracy presupposes an understanding that society does not exist in the sense of Unity, and so its formation in any particular shape cannot be guaranteed in advance (Stavrakakis, 1999:124). Thus, democratic politics cannot be seen as an a priori institutional arrangement that can be applied in a given society to fulfil some essential needs (ibid). A radical democratic project will attempt to create unity in a terrain of social dislocation precisely because social ambiguity precedes democratic politics.

At this point two tendencies seem to threaten democratic politics, which carry different discourses on liberation: that of universalistic totalitarian tendencies and almost a symmetrically opposite one,

which accounts for fragmentation and “*particularism*” (Laclau, 1992 emphasis added). The first tendency contrasts democratic politics as it eliminates all opposition and places a universal law on the entire societal body (Lefort, 1988). Under the pretext of a lost organic unity, totalitarian impulses seek to eliminate disharmony and as Stavrakakis (1999:125) notes, “the dawn of *utopia* is never too far away”. The second tendency can fragment the social fabric into monadic segments, which will not seek meaning in any “*conformation*” between them (Ranciere, 1992; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:188 emphasis added).

Yet, putting in place institutions that establish a certain dynamic between consensus and dissent, echoing the dynamics in the public/private sphere seems like a process that leans towards democratic politics. Rather than seeking consensus, the aim of democratic politics is to create unity within diversity, “[...] to create a thoroughly doubtful society, beset by productive self-doubt, a society that traverses its utopian mirror image by identifying with its supposed enemy” (Beck, 1997:169).

In this light, the acceptance of the anti-utopian nature of radical democratic politics seems to demand the creation of a democratic ethos, associated with the mobilization of differences, passions, institutions and the plurality of practices (Stavrakakis, 1999:112). Instead of accepting the utopian image, the identification with the anti-essentialist and self-critical democratic ethos accepts the impossibility of reaching such a state of affairs. This position does not of course bring closure to my *problematique*. It seems to only account for the beginning of what lies ahead at the moment when the political creates a fissure in the established social structure and desires a new articulation. And it is a moment that surprises the agent/subject itself. Here again, I will bring Menelaos words when he said that, “[...] I cannot relate to this person anymore”. (Menelaos, M.Panagia)

Thus, understanding society as a paradoxical unity consisting of differences seems to raise profound questions about the human. *What does that mean for humans and their development?*

As I have argued throughout this paper, the human is self-creating (*autopoiesis*) and this element drives individuals to constitute new social imaginary significations. Through this process, subjects can claim the possibility of self-transformation to alter their realities and release themselves from crystallised patterns of social oppression (Arendt, 1978; Castoriadis, 1997). Following Castoriadis, we can never comprehensively understand this creative process, and the unconscious can never be completely conquered or absorbed by consciousness. Therefore, we can only establish “a reflective, deliberative subjectivity” in relation to the unconscious (Castoriadis, 2007; Frosh, 1987). As such, the self-reflective subjects are understood as a site of creativity, and their development, as a

continuous search for orienting their meaning. At this point, it seems clear that if this change does not occur by the self-reflective subjects themselves with the aim to re-orient their meaning through social significations, the autonomous project is being put to an end.

However, as the case of Skouries clearly elucidates, the malleable object (nature and society) places significant limits to the active and self-determining agents who seek to articulate new imaginaries after reflecting that their actions affect and are affected by these pliable limits. The same logic seems to account for nature as well. The universalistic natural laws seem to pose the constraints I previously mentioned, but at the same time, nature accommodates a diversity of patterns of thought and action creating *a canvas of diversity on a common body of nature*. The synthesis of the constant interplay between nature, culture and human subjectivity help me understand that the current conflict in Skouries might after all find shelter in the present inadequate conditions of co-existing with human and non-human beings but more importantly with the different subjectivities we construct for ourselves, and hence the question of *politics*.

Finally, the contingency of social structures and the creative nature of humans are the elements of an autonomous society in which agents could call into question the established institutions and orient social bonds in a new figurative pattern, which will be negotiated in the public/private sphere. Democratic politics as envisaged in this paper would put in place the institutional patterns that would empower the cultivation of individual potentials and the direction of their development. In that sense, democracy is essential to development because it is concerned with “the permanent creation of the new” (Unger, 2005:156) and with “ensuring everyone’s power to share in the permanent creation of the new” (ibid:23).

Chapter 7. Inconclusive Conclusions

In this paper, I analysed the social representations of the Skouries movement within the theoretical confines of the project of autonomy together with concepts of radical political theorists, in order to explore openings on questions of democracy and development.

My analytical results point to the understanding that, the communities in Chalkidiki are facing a vital threat brought by the dynamics of the extractive capital that pushed a large portion of the population to self-organise and form public spaces for deliberation and collective action brought by the creative human praxis. Through 41 in- depth interviews, I was able to remark that, *the shift* from the private to the public/private sphere brought into the surface questions on self-governance and self-limitation

as the creative agents took it upon themselves and decided that they are responsible for their own development.

This is a moment where ‘the political’ makes a distinct appearance in the societal body creating fissures and calling for self-reflection. I observed that through the creation of a public/private sphere residents started questioning their status quo, which has also affected the dynamics in the private sphere. I traced this change through new articulations on democracy and development and the exploration of the relation between the two, led me to the understanding that a radical democratic project should allow the multiplicity of subjectivities, within and around us, to take shape in a non-unified way. I was able to conceptualise this position by abstracting the discursive local understanding of the word ‘common’ and relating it to the concept of ‘community’ in order to reflect how differences co-exist without falling back to uniformity. At this point, I highlighted eminent tendencies of co-optation by dominant ideologies, which might take place when new political articulations are trying to emerge and might result in a closure to the social opening.

The struggle in Skouries is understood as a site of creative human praxis seeking to provide an alternative response to the social oppression in the area by modestly articulating an autonomous language. However, this articulation carries an idea that exceeds the practical enactments of the movement but at the same time, this *lack* only reveals the ‘*perfect*’ fulfilment of an autonomous society. Ultimately, this paper is seeking to convey that the political, axiological, moral or theological disagreements of our times, can no longer be treated as problems that have to be solved by endorsing a universalistic thought of conformity based on philosophical doctrines or grand theories of change in order to understanding different ‘*knowledges*’ and ‘*languages*’.

Yet, and closing the scene, I only hope for an opening of the exploration of the analytical points raised in this study, which should be remained open for discussion and contestation, in an attempt to *keep it moving forward...*

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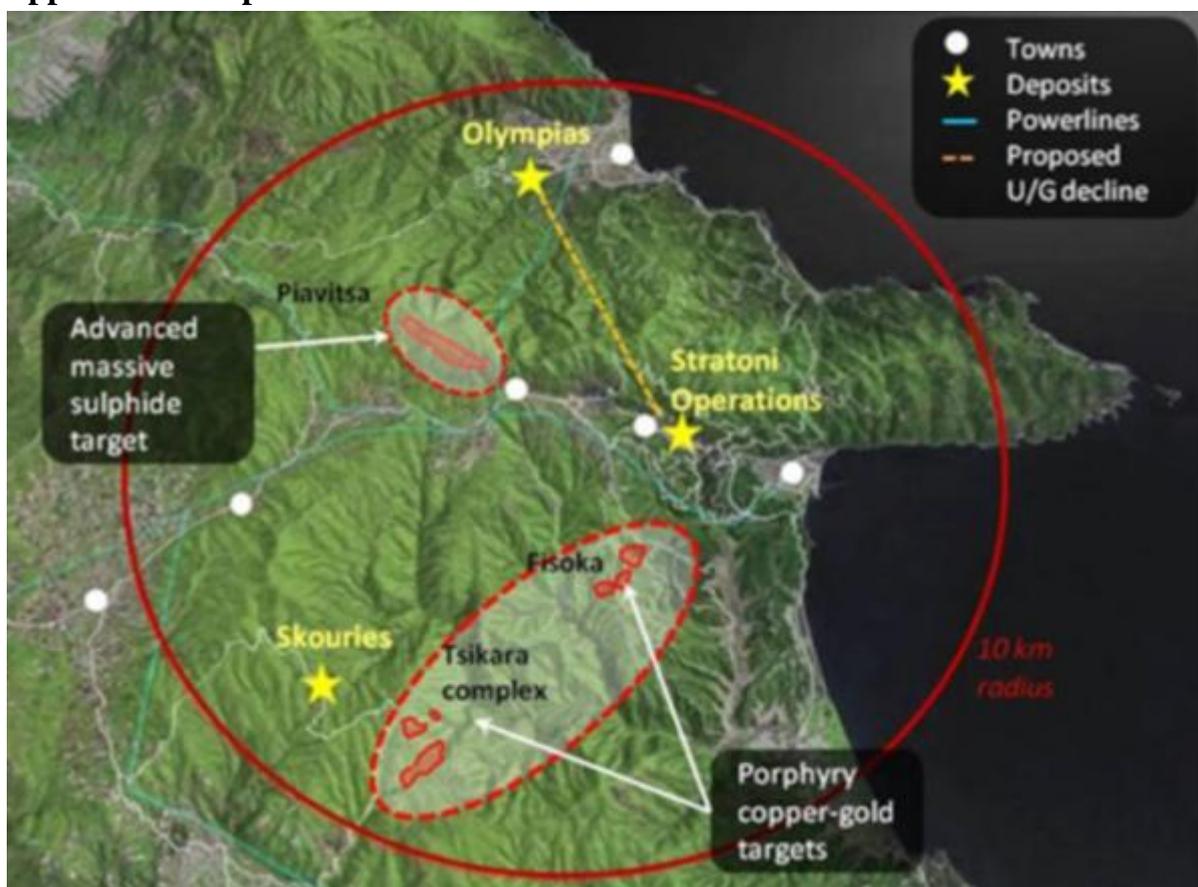
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Appendices

Appendix 1. Map of the Investment Plan in Cassandra mines



Source: Eldorado Gold

The company holds all mineral rights in the designated area (marked by the red circle) and no expenditure is required to keep the concessions. In addition, Eldorado Gold owns the designated land and any other activity that disturbs mining is prohibited. The terms of the contract between the Greek state and the company stipulate that the latter has no responsibility “for any historic environmental liabilities” (EldoradoGold, n.d.)

Appendix 2. Interview Guide and Table of Respondents

Interview Guide for Data collection (translated from Greek to English)

Date: *Place:* *Gender:* *Time:*

Main Issues Discussed:

Reflections by the Researcher:

General Themes: Social Movement, Democracy/ Political Autonomy, Development

The following questions depict the initial formulation of my questions before I started fieldwork. As expected, many questions changed and other were added during discussion and the sequence is only indicative. In addition, I tried to formulate my questions in the following fashion, in order to allow for a more analytical response.

Can you tell me...?

What do you think...?

Thematic Units

1. Social Movement

How was the movement formed and organised and which were the decisive moments/instances for the development of the movement?

What are the demands put forward by the movement?

Do you think that there is a large number of people that takes part in the decision-making process within the movement?

What are the strategies that you employ in order to achieve your goals?

How does the local administration see the movement?

What are your relations with the town council?

Who are in solidarity with the demands of the movement?

Are there any common values/ideas in the movement apart from the aim of halting the development of the mines?

What are your motivations for continuing the struggle?

Did past common actions exist in the area before the formations of the movement? Are there new common actions after the movement?

Have you seen/experienced any change in the area after the development of the mine and the formation of the movement?

What do you think/feel you have gained through this experience?

Do you think that there is a sort of rupture in the local society? How has the movement reacted towards this rupture?

What are your aspirations for the future of the movement in a potential fulfillment of your immediate demands?

2. Democracy/ Political Autonomy

Are there any local (or other) forces that affect or in some way control the economic and political reality in the area? If so in which ways?

Who is trying to suppress your struggle and why? In which ways?

Why do you think the government persistently supports this investment?

Do you think that the democratic system in Greece works?

How do you understand your role as a citizen?

How have the democratic institutions treated your struggle and the demands you put forward?

How have the media treated the movement and your demands?

3. Development

How do you understand development?

What kind of development do you envision for your land and your community and what are the changes that have to occur in order to fulfil it?

In what ways has the development of the mines affected the local community?

What are the most productive sectors of the area and how have they been affected by the development of the mines?

What are the everyday problems in your area? How do you experience them?

Are there any common forms of solidarity amongst the residents in the area?

How do you think we can manage 'the commons'? Who is responsible for this?

Table of Respondents

Respondents	Geographical Place	Gender	Date	Recorded	Member Group
1. Klitemnistra	Ierissos	Female	14/01/15	Yes	Movement
2. Nefeli	Ierissos	Female	14/01/15	Yes	Movement
3. Clitus	Ierissos	Male	15/01/15	Yes	Movement
4. Dareia	Ierissos	Female	15/01/15	Yes	Movement
5. Themistocles*	Ierissos	Male	16/01/15	Yes	Member of the city council and member of the movement
6. Menelaos*	Ierissos	Male	18/01/15	No	Mayor of municipality of Aristotle
7. Electra	Ierissos	Female	20/01/15	Yes	Movement
8. Pelopidas	M. Panagia	Male	20/01/15	Yes	Movement
9. Alcibiades	M. Panagia	Male	20/01/15	Yes	Movement
10. Aischylos	M. Panagia	Male	21/01/15	Yes	Movement
11. Euripides	M. Panagia	Male	23/01/15	Yes	Movement
12. Agamemnon	M. Panagia	Female	23/01/15	Yes	Movement
13. Eumelia	M. Panagia	Female	23/01/15	Yes	Movement
14. Orestis	M. Panagia	Male	24/01/15	No	Movement
15. Patroklos	M. Panagia	Male	24/01/15	Yes	Movement
16. Herakleidis	Ierissos	Male	24/01/15	Yes	Movement
17. Isidora	Ierissos	Female	25/01/15	Yes	Movement
18. Lysandra	Ierissos	Female	25/01/15	Yes	Movement
19. Nicostratus	M. Panagia	Male	26/01/15	Yes	Movement
20. Leonidas	Ierissos	Male	27/01/15	Yes	Movement

21. Eutropios	Ouranoulopi	Male	27/01/15	Yes	Movement
22. Alkyone	Ouranoupoli	Female	27/01/15	Yes	Movement
23. Antigoni	Ierissos	Female	28/01/15	Yes	Movement
24. Crysanthos	Ierissos	Male	29/01/15	Yes	Movement
25. Andromache*	Ierissos	Female	29/01/15	Yes	Movement- Deputy of SYRIZA government
26. Aias	Ierissos	Male	30/01/15	Yes	Movement
27. Cleisthenes	Ierissos	Male	31/01/15	Yes	Movement
28. Vyronas	Ierissos	Male	01/02/15	No	Movement
29. Pafsanias	Poligyros	Male	02/02/15	Yes	Movement
30. Galene	Poligyros	Female	02/02/15	Yes	Movement
31. Demeter	Poligyros	Male	02/02/15	Yes	Movement
32. Empedoklis	Thessaloniki	Male	06/02/15	Yes	Academic
33. Omiros	Thessaloniki	Male	08/02/15	Yes	Academic
34. Demosthenes	Thessaloniki	Male	13/02/15	Yes	Movement
35. Charikleia	Thessaloniki	Female	17/02/15	Yes	Environmental Activist
36. Damianus	Thessaloniki	Male	17/02/15	Yes	Environmental Activist
37. Theodor*	Thessaloniki	Male	18/02/15	No	Lawyer
38. Alethia	Thessaloniki	Female	19/02/15	Yes	Movement
39. Dianthe	Thessaloniki	Female	21/02/15	Yes	Movement
40. Diodoros	Thessaloniki	Male	21/02/15	Yes	Academic
41. Elysia	Nea Roda	Female	22/02/15	Yes	Movement

*Respondents have consented for their names to be reported in this paper but in order to maintain consistency, pseudonyms were also assigned.

Appendix 3. Table of Field Sites

Sites of fieldwork	In-depth Interviews (41) *duration ranging from 1h 30min. to 5h 45 min.	Observations (Participant/ Non Participant)
Primary sites		
Ierissos	17 respondents	<p>Non- Participant:</p> <p>2 meetings at the cultural centre with people from the movement together with representatives from different political parties discussing issues of development and mining in the area</p> <p>Several walks in the village, observing how residents claim the public space. I was also seeking to observe signs of their struggle such as banners, graffiti and so on.</p> <p>Several walks in the surrounding rural and coastal areas to understand and observe people's livelihoods and</p>

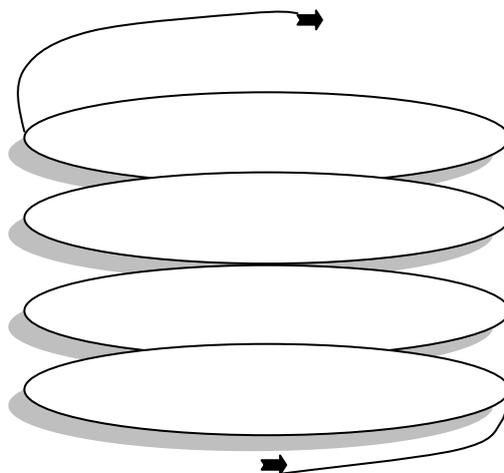
Megali Panagia (M.Panagia)	9 respondents	Non- Participant: 1 Meeting with residents, members of the ‘coordinating committee’ and members of the SYRIZA government in a pre- election campaign discussing issues of employment, the case of mine conflict and other socio-economic matters.
Poligyros	3 respondents	
Thessaloniki	9 respondents	Non- Participant: 1 meeting with the ‘coordinating committee’
Skouries forest		Participant: 2 demonstrations against the development of the mine
		4 walks with people from Ierissos and M.Panagia in order to observe the site where the open pit mine is currently under construction in the forest and how the company claims the public space.
Secondary sites		
Nea Roda	1 respondent	
Ouranoupoli	2 respondents	
Stratoni		Non- Participant: Observation of the existing mining facilities and the how it has affected the natural environment.

Appendix 4. The Data Analysis Spiral

The figure presents an adaptation of Creswell’s (2007) ‘Data Analysis Spiral’ schematic in order to illustrate the undertaken analytical procedure. The scheme is illustrated by analytical circles where the researcher enters with volumes of data, exits with a comprehensive narrative and in between explores several facets of analysis (ibid: 150).

Present the Story/ Narrative (Making sense of the data)

Procedures
Representing, Visualizing
Describing, Classifying Interpreting
Reading, Memoing
Data Managing



Data collection (primary and secondary sources)

The Case of Skouries
Conceptualization of Data patterns and themes
Context, Coding/ Categories, Thematic Map
Reflecting, Writing Notes/Ideas across dataset
Files, Organising, Transcribing

Source: Creswell (2007: 151)

Following Creswell's (2007) Data Analysis Spiral the study enters the lower loop of the spiral by organising the collected primary and secondary data in files and transcribing interviews in Greek. The second loop is concerned with the familiarization of massive volumes of information across the dataset. While exploring the information I was constantly writing memos, key concepts and phrases in the margins of field-notes and transcripts, listening and reflecting to the interviews, so as to identify major ideas for categorization. This process led to the next loop where I was seeking to code extracts and segments of the data while maintaining its general context surrounding them (Bryman, 2001). After several times of coding I ended up with 19 codes, which I tried to interpret in light of the theoretical tenets. Concepts such as political participation and representation, perceptions on development and democracy, the role and power of the state, self-determination/ organization/ creation, public/private sphere and emancipation have guided this analytical process. The following analytical step constitutes an attempt to develop themes based on codes where a broader meaning of the dataset could be generated in resonance with the research *problematique*. As Braun and Clarke (2005) suggest this analytical level seeks to identify assumptions, underlying ideas and conceptualizations that are theorised as shaping the general content of the data. This analytical step engages with the development of a larger interpretation of the themes, explores the connections and relations between them and creates different levels of abstraction.