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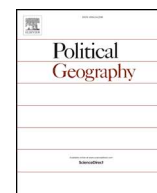
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‘Eating mountains’ and ‘eating each other’: Disjunctive modernization, infrastructural imaginaries and crisis in Greece

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ABSTRACT

Since the eruption of the Greek crisis in 2010 it has been almost impossible for the Greek state authorities to initiate any infrastructural project without significant local and wider resistance. In this paper we seek to answer how infrastructures became novel arenas of political conflict in Greece. We suggest that crucial for understanding this process is the dynamic relationship between infrastructures and popular political imaginaries. During the recent ‘golden’ period of infrastructural development in the country (mid-1990s to mid-2000s) there was a mutually constitutive relationship between popular imaginations of progress and the materiality of infrastructures, which attempted to underplay the disjunctive modernization processes within which that development took place. Later though, this parallel relationship between the two was contested as the infrastructural imaginary, which was transformed by the everyday discourses and practices created around infrastructure projects, blurred the expectations and imagination ascribed to the ‘glorious’ period of national success and modernization. In combination with the infrastructural gap of the crisis, the narrative dimension started taking over the materiality of infrastructures allowing it to take on a life of its own. Understanding the mechanisms of this relationship between imaginary and infrastructural materiality is key to comprehending the Greek economic crisis without a crisis essentialism that attributes every process into the crisis per se.

Introduction

One of the major uprisings of the early post-dictatorial period in Greece (1974–1981) took place in response to plans to construct a new infrastructure. The people of Spata, a town in the *Messogeia* area outside Athens, fiercely resisted government plans to build the capital city’s new airport within the boundary of their municipality. Following many months of protests in 1975 and 1976, the locals erected a ‘watchtower’ overlooking the site where the airport was to be built and took shifts in order to prevent works from starting and to alert those in the town of any suspicious activity. On 13 February 1976, however, the government decided to clear out the protesters. A large force of riot police was sent from Athens to take control of the territory. This resulted in a series of violent confrontations that lasted for many hours; 27 police officers and 10 Spata residents were injured. The protesters overturned police buses and took a policeman hostage for several hours in retaliation for the arrest of five of their fellow villagers.

According to local oral histories that we recorded in 2014, the majority of Spata’s population in the 1970s relied on farming as a major source of household income and they were not interested in losing their

land for an airport that none of them would use. At that time, air travel was still exclusive and well outside the socio-cultural matrix of most Greeks. Thus, although the government officials had promised compensation, or had at least made abstract promises to farmers about establishing new export markets, the Spata residents remained unconvinced. Nevertheless, today, Athens International Airport ‘Eleftherios Venizelos’ is located precisely in Spata. Just 20 years after the riots, work eventually began on it and it was completed in 2001–with no significant resistance. This event is a testament to the seismic shift in the collective perceptions, not only of the local community, but also of the majority of the country’s population, regarding infrastructural development over those two decades.

However, this collective enthusiasm for new infrastructures within the majority of Greek society– which as we will show below reached its height from the mid-1990s to the mid-two thousand – was short-lived. Since the outbreak of the crisis, the acquiescence for large scale infrastructure projects took on a new form of suspicion and resistance. *Messogeia*, located at the periphery of the metropolis, again became one of the first places to demonstrate this new shift when, in late 2010, Keratea, a town neighbouring Spata, rose up against the government’s

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plans to build a new waste management facility for Athens and its periphery there. What makes Keratea important analytically, though, is not only its similarities to Spata's anti-airport struggle, which took place thirty years earlier, but also the fact that Keratea was the first major grassroots struggle that the Greek austerity governments faced following the signing of the initial loan agreement in May 2010. As such it was also to prove indicative of the social movements that were to come during the crisis. Keratea was paradigmatic not only in terms of qualitative characteristics, which one observes being repeated during the protests of the crisis, but mostly because it indicated the concretization of a new period in the history of Greek politics where infrastructures re-emerge as one of the major public arenas of political and social contestation.

In the current paper, first of all we describe the process of transition from the stage of consent of the 1990s to that of contestation in 2010s. We explain that at the forefront of this transition is Greece's disjunctive modernization, a notion we employ to refer to contradictory, fissured and disparate processes that have shaped infrastructural development in the country. Disjunctive modernization, we claim, is associated with Greece's transition towards specific political, economic and technological goals within the framework of EU policies, and it is best reflected in the selective implementation and political translation of a set of technologies of governance, westernization, and neoliberalism in the Greek context.

We explore this by paying attention to the relationship between popular imaginaries and infrastructure, which we suggest is a key factor in understanding this rapid transition. We approach imagination as the 'underdetermined effect of the technologies that engender it' (Sneath, Holbraad, & Pedersen, 2009, p. 26). Looking at the relationship between infrastructure and imagination through its effects allows us to consider their circumstantial, contextual, and creative codifications. This approach echoes an already observed relationship as imagination and infrastructures are so closely linked that Masquelier (2002) used the term 'mythography' in order to talk about the ways in which local communities in Africa imagined the new roads. Even at the heart of North-Western Europe, the strong relationship between engineering and imagination has led to the employment of the concept, of 'imagineering' (Löfgren, 2004). South Eastern Europe is no exception to that rule as highways, such as those along the Albanian-Greek borders, facilitate the international flows, but also the local and the official state-run imaginary (Dalakoglou, 2009, 2010). As Jasanoff (2015, p. 22) suggests technological projects can be associated both with 'past cultural achievements' and with futures that seem promising or should be avoided. In this sense, Nielsen and Pedersen's (2015: 239) discussion on infrastructural imaginaries is instructive since they put forward a framework to engage with imagination 'not merely as an individual's subjective capacity for making sense of the world', but also as 'a creative force that is internal to matter itself'.

Synthesizing the micro and macro constitutions of infrastructural 'reality' we look into the diverse ways in which infrastructure is enacted; how, in other words, infrastructure – and its infrastructural qualities – is not only constituted and made sense through its material and technological codification, but also through its association with wider symbolic and discursive registers. To do this we use the concept of imaginary, rather than imagination, since the former connotes a contextual and social approach (Bottici, 2014, p. 39). We understand infrastructural imaginaries to refer to the interweaving of diverse narratives, imaginations and technologies mobilized around and in relation to infrastructure to co-shape wider socio-political dynamics. As we show, such imaginaries can extend well beyond the infrastructural materiality, thus reconfiguring socio-political and infrastructural arrangements. Hence, what is changing over these historical stages of infrastructural development is the ways that collective imaginaries are shaped – which in combination with the emerging infrastructural gap (Dalakoglou, 2017a) are determining political futures locally and nationally. Thus, given that the social imaginary refers to the ways that

'people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others' (Taylor, 2004, p. 23), infrastructural imaginaries eventually entail the question of 'how we ought to live together in society' (Taylor, 2004, p. 3).

Consenting infrastructures

If today the Greek authorities struggle to implement their decisions regarding infrastructures, things were not always like this. There was a period when announcements about infrastructures were met with consent or even the enthusiasm of the 'critical mass'. During the so-called 'golden decade' of public works (Tarpagos, 2010) – between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s – even the majority of Spata's inhabitants welcomed the new airport, which was part of a large urban and infrastructural (re)development project that took place during that period. The role of that project was so crucial, ideologically and in terms of political economy, that the Greek construction sector was labelled the 'steam engine' of the period's growth (Tarpagos, 2010) as Greece had one of the European Union's highest rates of economic growth between mid-1990s and mid-2000s (Kaplanis, 2011; Matsaganis & Leventi, 2011, p. 5).

The pinnacle of that development was the 2004 Olympic Games. From 1997 on, when it was announced that Athens would host the Games, they became the self-explanatory justification for almost every policy, including the extensive destruction of the Athens cityscape and its (re)development (Dalakoglou, 2013; Tarpagos, 2010). Athens and Attica were transformed into large construction sites during that decade (Totsikas, 2004). The list is long: new airport, Attica Ring-road, a metro, a tram, suburban railway etc. Apart from the construction of new infrastructures, the Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works announced that it will conduct more than 120 different public site regenerations in more than 60 different sites in Attica during the period between 2002 and 2004 (To Vima, 2002). Those very few voices that raised concerns were ignored. This included some Leftist resistance like the 'anti-Olympics' movement (Portaliou, 2006) or marginalized groups such as the drug users of Omonoia Square who reacted to construction workers and police when the latter tried to renovate the square in the 1990s. In addition, more organized groups like the Anarchists systematically resisted the construction works particularly the Olympics related surveillance systems.¹ Aside from these few exceptions, Athenians simply learned to walk, drive or ride mass transport around construction sites, finding new pathways which were perpetually rearranged as the constructions progressed. Such projects, though, did not only target Athens' city centre but extended well beyond it. For example, a large part of Messogeia, the place where the new Airport and 'Attica Ringroad' were built, was included within the city's urban plan (To Vima, 2002). This had as a result the exponential increase of land value (Gefou-Madianou, 2014: 19) and certainly led the people of Messogeia area who previously were not considered Athenians to start embodying, together with the Athenians, everyday practices of slaloming construction sites. Moreover, the expansion of the city and the new transport infrastructures also meant the creation of new suburbs, which in combination with the EU integration and lower taxes in cars led to the automobilization of Athens. It is perhaps enough to mention that in 1989, Greece, with a population of almost 10 million, had approximately 1,5 million private vehicles; by 2008 there were more than 5 million private vehicles (Dalakoglou, 2013) registered.

Despite the hassle of the myriad of public works, The Games' symbolic value was promoted on a massive scale and they were elevated to a 'national goal.' The successful bid for the games was more or less considered 'the fulfilment of a national destiny, another Great Idea

¹ It is worthy to note that the majority of the CCTV's put by Greek Police on streets and public areas in the name of the Olympics' security were destroyed before the Games by Anarchists with little sympathy for the Games.

(Megali Idea) aiming to give back to Greece its “rightful place” among the leading nations of the world’ (Karamichas, 2005, p. 134).² Some of the official slogans of the Games were telling of these efforts to create a collective common identification of the entire nation with the Olympics, like ‘The Whole Greece is Olympics’, which was also the title of the official television show of the Organisational Committee of the Athens Games run between 2002 and 2004.

Certainly, this rhetoric would not have been embedded properly into the Greek national narrative if there were not effective references to a historical continuity from antiquity (Herzfeld, 1987). The Olympic Games, as an institution, has its own paradoxical connection between the ancient Greek world and the world of multinational corporate sponsors of 20th century, so the two became ideal partners for such rhetoric. ‘Welcome Home’ (Yalouri, 2010, p. 2162), which was another central slogan of the games, was also very indicative of this particular connection between the past and the present. It explicitly claimed a national collective ownership of the Games, and simultaneously also implied a collective responsibility of the host. However, as Stavrides (2014, p. 83) explains, in order for this imaginary collective self to be created, a reconciliation had to be made between the two opposing poles around which ‘Modern Greek national identity oscillates: “uniqueness”, based on a selective appropriation of history as opposed to “inclusion” into a European modern cosmopolitanism’ (Stavrides, 2014, p. 83). Certainly, this whole phenomenon found its materialization not only in the Olympic Games, and their spectacle related activities within the city (Stavrides, 2014), but also within infrastructural projects of that most recent golden era of contractors such as the Athens metro that aimed to merge glorious ancient past with a bright present and a technologically advanced future (Kaika, 2006, pp. 296–297).

Thus, during that period, the various governments, the big Greek corporations, and especially the corporate media (the owners of which also had – in many cases – significant interests in the construction sector) promoted a hegemonic rhetoric about the Olympics as the great leap forward of progress and the future. A simple look at the shared slogan (‘we move forward’) of the two largest companies involved in the Games, Cosmote Telecommunication company and the Greek national lottery organization (OPAP), is explicit. This discourse was very similar to the election campaign slogan of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement), the party which won the crucial national elections of 2000: ‘We are making the new Greece – The Future Started’. This was the party that governed the country between 1996 and 2004 carrying out the majority of the country’s infrastructural modernization. Perhaps unsurprisingly that was the period that PASOK was controlled by the fraction of the so-called ‘Modernizers’ (Ecsynchronistes/Εξυγχρονιστές).³ This was the nickname of the Greek version of third way social-democrats who had as their stated aims to modernize both the Greek polity and society (and indeed infrastructures). Within that framework, it is not an exaggeration to say that modernization became the new major political ideology among the Greek political elites at the time, replacing older divisions e.g. between Right and Left. The empirical research of the Greek political elites of 1993 and 2000 prove this explicit transformation (Pantazopoulos, 2002). Probably the most recognizable politician of the golden period of infrastructural development was the Minister of Public Works between 1993 and 2001, Costas Laliotis, who apart from being a key person within PASOK’s internal politics, oversaw most of these newly built infrastructures. Arguably, the image of him giving a speech to journalists and metro construction workers in front of

the ‘metro-mole’ (metroponitikas/μετροπόντικας) – the nickname given to the huge drill used for the tunnels of Athens metro – is one of the best visual encapsulations of the period (Fig. 1.)

The release of news and images concerning the progression of public infrastructure works was high in the political agenda of the Modernizers. To this end, digital animations and physical architectural models depicting how these projects will look when completed were frequently broadcasted on national TV. Hence, they aimed at bringing (visions of) the future closer to the present. Everyone could then participate in a collective advance view of how the (modern) future would look, triggering public imagination. The use of architectural models was so widespread that the government of the Modernizers was accused by the leading opposition New Democracy party that they governed via architectural models. The PM of the Modernizers, Costas Simitis, was so annoyed by these accusations that in 2004, and during a public speech, he shouted in anger: ‘For years they were telling us about architectural models, all the public works are models, is this public work here a model?’.

This golden period of public works also saw the creation of its own new type of elites, the mega-construction contractors (mega-loergolavoi/μεγαλοεργολάβοι), who also serve in the collective imaginary of contemporary Greece as representatives of that whole era. The activities of such mega-contractors, like Giorgos Bobolas, have been extended in many of the public works of the golden period (e.g. Athens Airport and Attica Ringroad) as well as arguably in some of the most successful mass media corporations. The built environment though was not renewed only in terms of public spaces but also in terms of private ones. The main protagonist of this renewal is probably Babis Vovos (Fig. 2). In fact, the highway that connects Athens’ centre with the North suburbs and Attiki Odos was notoriously given the name of ‘Vovopolis’ (Βωβοπόλη) after the series of construction projects he carried out there (Chorianopoulos et al., 2013). Another famous big contractor of public works of the same period was Socrates Kokalis who was involved in the renewal of telecommunications infrastructures and was famous for his company’s collaboration with the state-run Greek Telecommunication Organization, and was the owner of the big football club Olympiacos.

All this material and urban newness and modernization was topped up by a similar process that reached beyond the national borders realizing a new form of Balkan expansion close to the original ‘Megali Idea’ but in terms of neoliberal take over. Several companies (partly or entirely) based in Greece took advantage of the postsocialist collapse and expanded into the Balkans, buying and building infrastructures there, such as the takeover of telecommunication companies in the Balkans from the Greek Organization of Telecommunications (OTE) (Dalakoglou, 2017b, 2010) and the renewal of networks carried out by Kokalis’ companies, as well as the purchase by Greek companies of extraction facilities in the Balkans etc. This Greek corporate expansionism was well embedded within the inflation of national pride of the period that played simultaneously into many fronts: from a thriving economy to the integration in the Euro-zone, the renewal and undisputed modernization of the built environment, and the hosting of mega-events. To top it off Greece also became an important power in sports during that period. This included golden medals and world records in various sports and the European Championship in football in 2004. National anthems, spectacular parades of glory for athletes from the airport to the city centre, and similar events became part of the daily life in Greece.

In terms of political economy, the growth of the construction sector during the 1990s was facilitated by two main elements: influx of resources and legal adjustments. The first refers to two main processes: the flow of cheap labour to the country coming from Balkan migrants, and in terms of liquidity it refers to the Community Support Frameworks of the European Community (especially the 1994–1999 and the 2000–2006 ones). Among their aim was European integration, namely to assimilate less affluent countries within a supposed modern

² Gefou-Madianou (1999: 432) notes that “The vision of the Great Idea and the belief in their ancient past made the Greek people believe that they were in a superior position in comparison to the rest of the Balkan peoples”.

³ The Modernisers took over the party’s mechanisms after the internal elections of 1996 that the PM between 1996 and 2004, Costas Simitis, won. PASOK’s election slogan in 1990 was: ‘Reform, Co-operation, modernization, development, stability’.



Fig. 1. The Minister of public works, Laliotis, visiting the Athens metro construction works. 5 March 1998. Image Credits: © ΑΠΕ-ΜΠΕ/ΜΑΡΟΓΙΑΝΝΗ ΜΑΡΙΑ.

European model including infrastructures. This came together with the influx of the matching national funds. In this context, the legislation regarding public works changed aim, partly, to a faster and more effective absorption of these packages. For example, during this golden era, the state changed the regulations governing the tendering of public works, allowing the concentration of activity to a few large firms through the implementation of privatization models such as self-funded or co-funded (public and private) works (Tarpagos, 2010). Similar legal adjustments were also prevalent within the major infrastructure projects associated with the 2004 Olympic Games. During that period new legal instruments were created that enabled a ‘fast track’ process of privatization imbued with a sense of urgency (Skayannis & Kaparos, 2013, p. 45) as the entire modernization of the society and the economy and the consequent national identification with modernity was at stake.

As perhaps was to be expected, under this framework where an entire system was adjusting to serve the Olympic Games and modernize and transform the infrastructures of the country, the majority of its population identified with this historical project (Sevastakis, 2006). Thus, the majority of Greeks were persuaded of the significance and positive nature of the Olympic Games including all the new infrastructures that would come along with them (Georgiakis & Nauright, 2012).⁴ Indicative of this was that Athens Olympic Games received over

⁴ Indeed, the application submitted to the International Olympic Committee in the bid for Athens’ candidacy included two different surveys, made by separate companies, both of which showed that over 90% of Athenians had a positive attitude toward opinion about hosting the Olympic Games (See Vernardakis, 2004).

100,000 applications from Greeks to work gratis as volunteers during the Games. This is one of the highest records of volunteers in the history of the Games, and it becomes even more significant when considering the country’s population.⁵ Indeed, among the volunteers the rhetoric of the collective achievement and identification with the Games were dominant. The great majority of the people who were interested in volunteering for the Olympic Games 46.6% stated as their main reason for volunteering the success of the Games and another 26.6% stated as main reason their wish to participate in the excitement of the games (Panagiotopoulou, 2003).

Scandalizing infrastructures

This ‘positive’ dynamic around infrastructural projects was followed by a period where infrastructures were invested with symbolic references of mistrust and controversy. Soon after the end of the Olympic Games, a series of major political scandals, which involved infrastructures, shook Greek politics, starting the deconstruction of the imaginary of modernization with its new and shiny infrastructures.

First of all was the Vodafone Scandal. According to the NSA files leaked by Edward Snowden, the Athens Olympic Games were a big concern for the NSA as they were the first Olympic Games after 9/11. Thus by 2002, US intelligence with the collaboration of Greek authorities had already begun wiretapping communications (ostensibly) for the security of the Games. Although, the government of the ‘Modernizers’ was in support of ‘legal’ wiretapping in the name of Olympic Security, the period before the Games was pre-electoral and they did not dare to pass such a decree, however, according to the leaked US archives this does not mean that unlawful interceptions did not occur (Kathimerini, 2015). This was not limited to suspects. A whole mechanism centered around the US-embassy in Athens used the Vodafone network to tap the phone lines of several members of the Greek government, including that of the PM (Eleftherotypia, 2011). Everything unravelled only a few months after the end of the Olympic Games, in March of 2005, when Vodafone allegedly discovered wiretapping software attached to the main operational software of their network. One day prior to this being revealed, Costas Tsalikides, one of Vodafone’s Senior Network Engineers who was responsible for the upgrade of the network and its transfer to 3G in early 2000s was found dead in his flat. At the time the Greek police recorded the incident as suicide despite his family’s insistence of foul play and pleas to investigate further (see To Pontiki, 2017a), however, in June 2018, the Court of Appeals Prosecutor pressed homicide charges against ‘unknown persons’ labelling the case as homicide, whilst the European court of Human Rights where the engineer’s family had lodged their appeal, also ruled it as a homicide (see Efsyn, 2018). The CEO of Vodafone Greece, one day after the death of his senior engineer (10/03/2005), requested and met with the Greek government to inform them of the illegal software that they discovered. Perhaps coincidentally, the very same day the only existing legislation that allows for lawful interceptions in Greece was passed (Presidential Decree 47/2005).

The other big scandal, still commonly mentioned in public and private conversations in Greece, was the Siemens scandal, which majorly contributed to the deconstruction of the collective public imaginary of Greek progress and modernization in relation to infrastructure. In 2008, in Munich, the German Department of Justice revealed that, during the golden period of large public works in Greece, Siemens had spent 1.3 billion euros to bribe the governing parties and their officials in order to win the tender process competitions for public works or have the contracts handed directly to them without any competition. Siemens, often together with its Greek partner Intracom (owned by Kokalis), digitalized the telecommunication network in

⁵ Study on volunteerism in Greece (In Greek). See: http://pelopas.uop.gr/~volunt/pdfs/volunteer_1.pdf (Accessed 2 April 2017).



Fig. 2. The signature of Vovos's constructions has been the placing of his name on these buildings. One of these buildings, visible from Kifisias Avenue, co-exists here with one, out of many, Orthodox churches spread around Athens. Image by authors (2 August 2018).

Greece. It also took the contract for the Olympic Games security system C4I, along with the contract for the third and longest part of the suburban train in Athens, and the contract for the Greek Army telecommunications system Ermes that was to be upgraded in part due to Olympic security. The CEO of Siemens Hellas, Christoforakos, escaped to Germany before his trial in Greece. In 2009 German courts decided that they could not honour the European warrant that Greece had issued because according to the German legal system Christoforakos crimes had a statute of limitation. In 2009 he admitted to the attorney of Munich that he bribed Greek political parties and received a small sentence. In 2010, the Greek Minister of Transport and Communications of the 'Modernizers' between 1997 and 2000, Tasos Mantelis, admitted that he received 450,000 German marks worth of pre-electoral sponsorship in 1998 from SIEMENS. He and a former SIEMENS executive were eventually convicted of money laundering in 2018 (See Naftemporiki, 2018).

In addition to these scandals one of the most important and widespread conspiracy theories about the Greek debt crisis emerged in 2010 and spread so extensively that it is difficult to find a Greek who has not heard a version of it. According to this theory, one of the reasons Greece ended up in the current crisis has to do with South Stream, a large Gazprom pipeline that was to bring natural gas from the Black Sea region via Greece to Western Europe with supposedly vast profits for Greece. Supposedly, Costas Karamanlis, the Greek Prime Minister from 2004 to 2009, made an agreement with Vladimir Putin for the South Stream pipeline that would have usurped Nabuco pipeline, the one being planned by the US to bring natural gas from Asia to Western Europe via Turkey. The plan never materialized. Articles were published (Epikaira, 2011) claiming to have information from a secret report of the Greek intelligence services which indicated that, in 2008, an assassination attempt was made against the Greek PM. The risk caused the plans to be put on hold and forced Karamanlis to call emergency elections. The Greek-American Papandreu won the 2009 elections and a few months later imposed the loan agreement with the troika (IMF, EU, ECB) making the country dependent on Europe and the USA (via IMF) and steering Greece away from Russia.

This story was reproduced widely in the following months via social

media and websites, leading, in 2012, to one of the attorney generals of Athens to file accusations of high treason against unknown persons who planned to assassinate the PM (see Reuters, 2012). Eventually, in 2017 the Greek Justice ruled that the allegations about the assassination plan against the Greek MP were true and ordered the arrest of several people involved, including US secret agents (To Pontiki, 2017b). In May 2018, however, new information, which dates back to 2009, surfaced revealing that there never was an actual assassination plan (see Tvxs, 2018). Certainly, this ongoing juridical roller-coaster adds rather than subtracts to dynamics from this powerful interpretative framework developed around this infrastructure.

The widespread discursive dynamic of these stories in the public arena has in effect made possible the re-narration and challenge of the connection between the infrastructures of the golden era and the imaginaries of progress and national pride. These challenges were soon extended to include the entire Olympics. Gradually and increasingly narratives appeared which suggested that the development of the Olympic infrastructures and the Games were the causes of the 2010 debt crisis. Infrastructures, then, acquire meaning not merely through everyday 'conventions of practice' (Star, 1999, p. 381) and public contestation, but also, through popular narratives, conspiracy theories and daily small talk. The interplay between infrastructures and their materialities on the one hand and morality and discourse on the other, has already been explored (Humphrey, 2003, 2005). In this framework the communicative channels created by 'phatic labor' (Elyachar, 2010, p. 459) 'have allowed for the flow of reputation, information, and emotion'. That is because phatic forms of labour become formative of imaginaries around infrastructure by ascribing specific meaning to these materialities (or immaterialities in cases like South Stream) and their effects.

However, these narratives not only challenge and cancel the actual qualities of the material infrastructures along the previous narrative, but dangerously shake the entire potential future of that infrastructural model and its socio-material ideology, since they portray under similarly 'negative' terms potential infrastructures that lack materiality as they were never actually built. Thus, the discursive and symbolic dynamic which has emerged around infrastructure, and has been

spreading widely through phatic labour, not only takes over infrastructural materiality but, in fact, replaces it.

Contesting infrastructures

A further elaboration of the attempt to build the big waste management facility in Keratea is useful in order to explore this transition from an imaginary of progress and modernization to a wider state of contestation and controversy, but also to help understand the elevation of various symbolic and discursive dynamics beyond actual infrastructural materialities. Thus, in Keratea, according to the government at the time, the project was supposed to be a completely new type of environmentally-friendly facility for the country's low waste management standards, while Greece's supreme court, where the municipality of Keratea had appealed the government's decision, had ruled that there were no environmental risks. The site selected, while several miles away from the town itself, was well within the boundaries of the municipality and the people of Keratea and surrounding villages were not ready to accept the garbage management facility of the 5 million inhabitants of Athens and its outskirts (perhaps controversially including their own garbage). As such the conflict was inevitable. On 11 December 2010, the contractor – acting with the explicit support of the government – began to move their construction machinery onto the site, while a convoy of riot police accompanied them. The violent confrontations, which erupted just after and led to a mini war, lasted for four months. This conflict saw an extended use of police violence, the first use of a water cannon truck in the country since the early 1980s and full mobilization of special police forces. The police force was not limited to guarding the remote area of Ovriokastro—where the landfill was to be constructed. Rather, they carried out a series of full offensive manoeuvres against the town itself. The police basically occupied urban territory from the youth of Keratea who were fighting them street by street. The Keratea residents and those in solidarity engaged in a multifarious struggle that varied from road blockades, Molotov cocktails and sabotage of the contractor's heavy machinery to cultural events on the highway's main barricade, such as music festivals. Additionally, collective kitchens and assemblies took place. Participation in these events was widespread, including school pupils, local middle-class shopkeepers, residents of neighbouring towns, priests and mayors along with local and Athenian Leftists and Anarchists.

During those months, Keratea became a site where various different grassroots political agents met. The conflict also exemplified the wider legitimacy crisis of the state and official institutions in Greece. In the course of the conflict, the subtle disparity and unevenness between local and national ideas, symbols, and discourses in the Greek social field emerged. In this particular struggle, many people from Keratea put forward a local rather than a national identification in the context of the struggle. One of the banners in Keratea read: 'No to the landfill'; we are Arvanites',⁶ referring to the fact that the majority of the original Messogeia residents belong to the politically well-integrated within the state apparatus, but linguistically distinct bi-lingual (Albanian and Greek) speaking minority of Attica. Similar narratives were mentioned in the assembly or around the main barricade, sometimes as part of a joke about the alleged stubbornness of Arvanites. Other motifs that were recorded ethnographically during the winter of 2010–2011 were the ones that denied the modernization of Messogeia and their integration into the social Athenian urban fabric, despite the actual material integration with the new Attica Ringroad. This is illustrated in statements such as 'We are Arvanites and we will take the rifles' (referring to the high percentage of hunting rifles that people possess in the area). In the same context, discourse about the discrimination of the

area and its residents from Athenians who allegedly used to look down on them as rural (see Madianou, 2014) were often mentioned. Moreover, another repeated oral motif was the discourse against the big public work contractors mentioned above. More precisely, Bombolas was mentioned as pushing for the new landfill, as one of his companies, Helector S.A., is involved in Attica's only landfill in Fylis. Indeed, many Keratea activists presented their struggle as an anti-systemic struggle against the corrupt regime of contractors and politicians that have bankrupted the country. These discourses were so prevalent that Helector had to release a public statement clarifying its non-involvement in the project (To Vima, 2011).

As we already mentioned, Keratea was not just the first major anti-government struggle against the so-called 'regimes of the memoranda' – named after the memoranda of understanding accompanying the troika's loan agreements in May 2010 – it was also the first in a series of major infrastructure related political struggles that ensued in the following years. These political struggles have escalated to unprecedented levels over the years of the Greek crisis. One of them is the struggle against the privatization of the water network of Thessaloniki – the second largest city in the country. This struggle saw actions ranging from public protests to acts of disobedience by the Water Company workers who refused to cut houses from the grid if they were not able to pay their bills. The impasse culminated in the first ever self-organized referendum in the history of the country. The referendum managed to appropriate the electoral catalogues from municipal authorities with more than 218,000 people showing up to vote. The citizens voted overwhelmingly to halt the privatization plans and for the socialization of the city's water system.

The struggle of local communities against the gold mines of Chalkidiki in North Greece is yet another example. Although the residents of the area have protested against the gold mines since the 1980s, the escalation of 2012 was unprecedented. In early 2012 the company Hellas Gold was bought by a Canadian company, the Eldorado Gold Corporation. From the beginning the company clashed with protesting local residents. Similar to the case in Keratea, riot police were used to protect the private company against the residents' outrage. The police force and security staff from the company raided the villagers' watchtower, which had been built to guard the site and from which the protestors based their operation. Since then, extreme police violence has escalated with the implementation of anti-terrorist legislation against protesters and the police force's own terrorist attitude has become an everyday reality. The company also coordinates the miners and their security staff in carrying out jobs deemed too dirty for the police force to do themselves. In doing so, they have transformed the local Skouries forest and the villages of the area, especially Megali Panayia, into a battlefield (Kadoglou, 2014).

Similar grassroots practices that focus not only on contests, but also, the wider re-conceptualization of infrastructure have also arisen during the crisis. One such social movement that blossomed during the crisis is the so-called 'I don't pay movement'. This movement began following the revolt of December 2008 (Vradis & Dalakoglou, 2011) targeting the rising price of the highway tolls. A process of highway privatization had begun in 2007 which had led to an enormous increase in both the number of toll stations and the price of each toll. In the years following 2010, the 'I don't pay' campaign spread from a refusal to pay tolls into a refusal to pay utility bills, mortgages, bus and metro tickets etc. This, eventually forced the governments of the time to create specific legislation illegalizing the act. In tandem with other pre-existing movements there was a concerted effort to focus attention on important public welfare issues, such as the cost of public transportation. They also facilitated pro-bono DIY re-connection of the houses that had been disconnected from electricity or water grids. Moreover, the 'I don't pay movement' expanded its activities during the crisis; it began to organize gatherings and to intervene to prevent evictions and foreclosures after they began in 2018.

The profound political elevation of infrastructures' importance

⁶ It has to be noted that 'Arvanites of Messogeia have long been "closed" communities culturally and politically marginalized by central power structures' (Gefou-Madianou, 2014: 18).

during the crisis was also very evident in June 2013 when the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) was shut down. The closure came out of the blue, heralded only by an emergency governmental decree that was applied within a few hours. A black screen replaced the three publicly funded TV channels and the dozens of national and local radio stations went silent. The government ordered the eviction of all national and local public TV and radio stations. All technology associated with broadcasting was to be shut down. In response, thousands of employees and activists occupied the facilities all over Greece. In Athens many local stations and guerrilla broadcasting programs began to use the internet or alternative airwaves. As the broadcasting infrastructures were disrupted, media channels and radio stations went off the air. Eventually, after many months of struggles, police forced the evacuation of the stations in Athens; however, the facilities of North Greece and several other smaller cities remained under workers' control all the way through to 2015 when the new government of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and ANEL (the Independent Greek party) announced the re-installation of ERT to serve their own Parties interests.

Nevertheless, SYRIZA-ANEL coalitions have not escaped from the 'curse' of Greek infrastructures during the crisis. Both its two major infrastructural projects have met with fierce local and national protests. The first is the extraction of petrol and natural gas in North Western Greece, which comes with grandiose promises about rescuing the country from the crisis (Dalakoglou and Bormpoudakis, *in press*). The second is the sale of the old Elliniko Airport in order for a completely new city of 620 ha (including a metropolitan park of more than 200 ha) to be created on the coast of south Athens (Dalakoglou, 2017b).

'One eats the other': Rethinking Athens

Even if some argue that during the Greek crisis many of the aforementioned cases might be seen as controversial there have been, much more straightforward cases of proposed public work projects which likewise did not manage to change the negative collective imaginary. After all, an airport means noise and air pollution, waste management facilities are considered filthy and polluting. It could even be argued that the national TV Channel had a controversial role due to its chronic usage as a propaganda tool by various governments, however, a beautification and regeneration of the city's centre like the 'Rethink Athens' should had been a much easier case; yet, as it turned out, it was not.

In 2013 the Greek government announced that Athens city centre would be part of a high-profile regeneration project. The proposal was packaged as 'Rethink Athens'. It included the reconstruction of one of downtown Athens' main north-south central avenue, Panepistimiou, and the two most central and emblematic Squares of the city centre: Syntagma and Omonoia. An international architecture competition took place during 2012 and the winner – a Dutch urban development company, Okra – was announced in early 2013. The project, according to the approved plans, involved the partial pedestrianization of Panepistimiou Avenue, which would be re-paved, and several new features such as water fountains and trees would replace the asphalted avenue. Several other 'improvements' were also planned, including the addition of tramlines. One major aspect of the proposed project was the activation of a 'greening strategy for Athens'; the idea here was to create a 'resilient, accessible and vibrant city'.⁷ Shortly thereafter, another project was attached to Rethink Athens; sponsored by the Onassis Foundation, the initiative was called 'Reactivate Athens: 101 Ideas'. Reactivate claimed to be a project of participatory urban planning which asked individuals to give ideas to professional urban planners.

⁷ Speech by Martin Knuijt in 2013. See: http://www.rethinkathens.org/uploads/images/okra/Speech-Martin%20Knuijt_OKRA.pdf (Accessed, 10 July 2018).

Meanwhile, plenty of digital and physical models, plans, and paintings of the way that the new centre would look were employed. TV Channels, newspapers and magazines promoted the images, public exhibitions in the otherwise declining centre of Athens were erected and all the promotional tricks of the golden era were applied (Fig. 3).

The political authorities of the country, including the Prime Minister at the time, participated in the event launch. The rhetoric around Rethink echoed the connection between imagination and matter that we saw in the previous stage of the Modernizers. He stated that 'along with other interventions, Athens can be reborn again in our minds, our psyche, and in a few years in reality' (To Vima, 2013). The grand narrative was also present. 'Rethink Athens' was presented as part of a larger project including the privatization and regeneration of the old Athens airport together with the regeneration of the Athenian seafront from Faliro to Cape Sounio (To Vima, 2013); 72 km south of Athens city centre. Attempts to appeal to the collective self were made again, yet, in a less glorified manner, and much more in terms of emergency in comparison to the Olympic period. According to the president of Onassis Foundation, which was also involved, 'saving the city centre is dependent on the Athenians' patriotism'.⁸

Despite this, the people most commonly quoted as those supposed to benefit the most by Rethink Athens, the residents and the shopkeepers of the so-called 'commercial triangle' of Athens⁹ were not convinced. This was evident during our ethnography in 2012–2014, precisely the period that Rethink was most promoted. Most of the residents of the areas around Panepistimiou and the merchants expressed disbelief and mistrust towards the new project. And if the area on the eastern part of Panepistimiou, which is peripheral to Exarcheia is supposedly resided mostly by people closer to radical political attitudes who would be suspicious of public space regenerations, the area western of Panepistimiou and around Syntagma Square are in their great majority anything but politically radical. Yet the majority of land use on Panepistimiou and its arcades is commercial, thus the merchants of Panepistimiou and Stadiou and Akademias street were the ones most directly concerned (Fig. 4).

So many business owners there believed that public works from the golden era, which they then welcomed and supported wholeheartedly, had eventually proven catastrophic for smaller businesses like theirs. The case of the repeated reconstructions of Omonoia Square over the last twenty years is often cited as a project that violently altered the order of things in the centre of the city. Certainly, Omonoia was quite an extreme example of creative destruction process, it is impossible even for merchants who are 40 years on the square to recall how many times Omonoia has been rebuilt from scratch since the late 1980s. Moreover, other informants drew ominous comparisons to the pedestrianization of Ermou Street, carried out during the second half of the 1990s. Ermou Street runs from Syntagma Square to Monastiraki and has traditionally been one of the busiest commercial streets in Athens. Its pedestrianization lasted for some time, and, by the end of it several of the smaller Ermou shops had closed. This happened partly because the rents skyrocketed in the reconstructed street but also due to the decreased consumption during the period of construction which smaller merchants could not afford. They were instantly replaced with international high-street stores. In fact, since the start of the crisis of 2010 there has been an almost complete elimination of independent merchants from Ermou. Meanwhile, during the period of the economic boom huge shopping malls sprang up in the centre and suburbs of Athens. These according to Athens' merchants radically altered the existing balance of the market.

⁸ Antonis Papadimitriou, President of the Onassis Foundation, talks to in.gr (2013). See: <http://www.in.gr/2013/02/24/culture/i-diaswsi-toy-kentroy-epafietai-ston-patriwismo-twn-athinaiwn/> (Accessed, 9 July 2018).

⁹ The Athens commercial triangle is located in-between the three main squares of the Athens' city centre: Omonoia, Syntagma, and Monastiraki.



Fig. 3. Representation of Omonia Square as expected that it would look like after the completion of the 'Rethink Athens' project. Omonia Square has been part of several regeneration projects throughout the years. Image courtesy of OKRA.

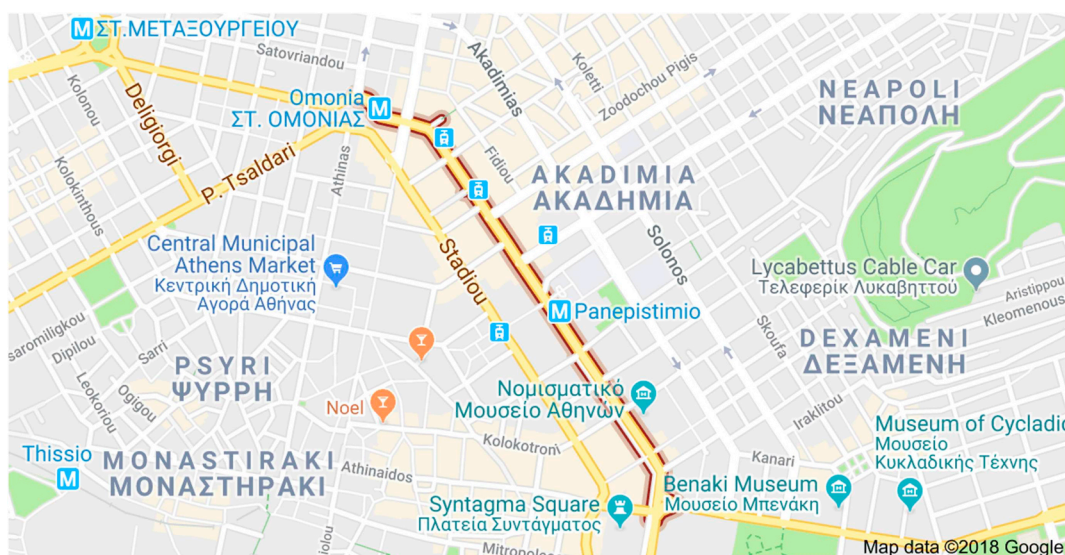


Fig. 4. Map of Panepistimiou Street which connects Omonia Square with Syntagma Square, where Parliament is situated. Source: Image credit: © 2018 Google.

Some small independent business owners, feeling the pressure of the economic failure, became verbal about the increasing structural unfairness of the new conditions implemented in the market since the construction of the big infrastructures such as the metro, the new airport, Attica Expressway and other similar projects in the early 2000s. Many explicitly blame the authorities that have done their best to pave the way for larger retail corporations to eliminate small independent shops. 'But that's the system, one eats the other'¹⁰, everyone is against everyone [...] and so that's the system, I have no other name for it' a shopkeeper remarked, in a moment of bitter realization.

One of the most common motifs both among business owners, workers and residents of the area seems to be the so-called 'interests' (*symferonta/symferouta*). Nobody was able to determine them precisely, but many people active in the centre of the city were angry about these 'interests' which promote the changes. As a term it refers

¹⁰ 'One eats the other' is a direct translation of a Greek phrase that stands for the English phrase 'dog eat dog'. For an elaboration of the idea of 'eating' in relation to economic activities and development in the Greek context, see Green (2008).

abstractly to political or economic powers bigger than oneself (often including international agents) that act in an unethical way and have an impact on everyday life. In the current case the implication is that there are such agents who collaborate secretly to ensure the manipulation of real estate prices in the centre of the city, via the new infrastructural regeneration presumably, in order to devalue prices to such an extent that they can eventually buy up huge swathes of property. Though there were a few companies who acquired a large number of properties in parts of Athens centre, like Keramikos or Metaxourgeio, prior to the crisis this activity later stalled and there was a sudden and massive fall in prices, however, just a few years later it appears the merchants were accurate in their predictions. Since 2016, with real estate prices decimated, a colossal transfer of ownership has occurred. Today, the emergence of AirBnB and the exponential increase of property prices has made next to impossible for Athenians to find affordable property to rent or buy in Athens' city centre.

In case of the merchants, and other business owners of the area where Rethink Athens was to be located, although their reactions never elevated to protest, they were never convinced by the plans to materially regenerate the centre. It is perhaps no surprise that the plans

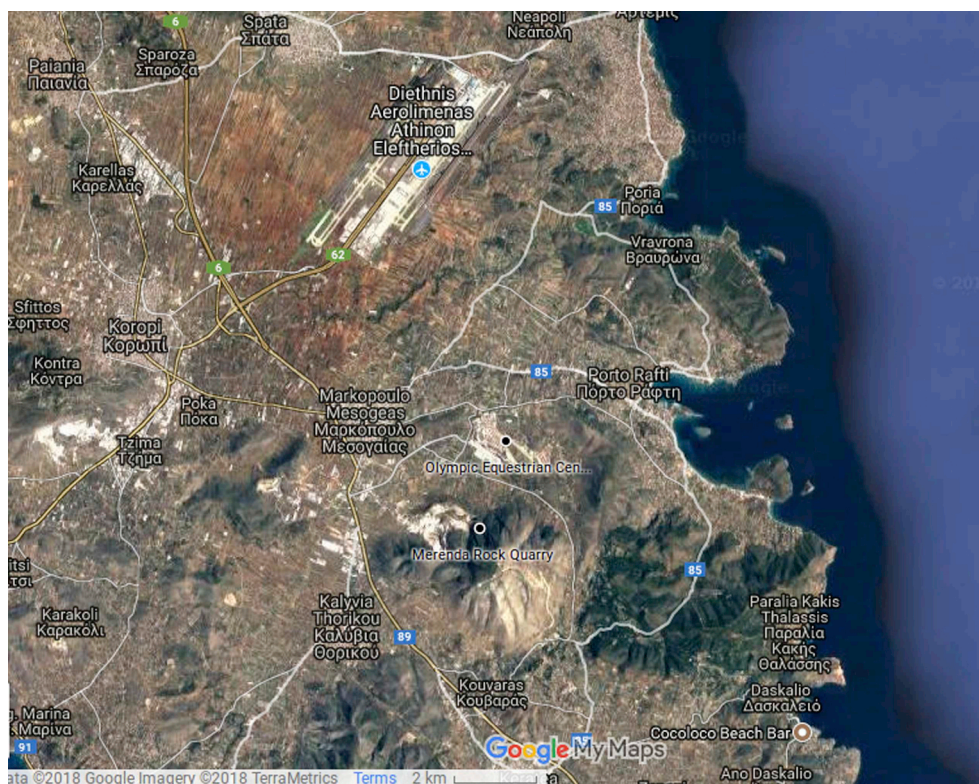


Fig. 5. Map indicating the close geographical proximity of the Olympic Equestrian Centre of Markopoulo, the Attica Ringroad and the new Airport with the Merenda rock quarry. Source: Image credit: © 2018 Google Imagery, © 2018 TerraMetrics.

never materialized despite their grand 'inauguration'. Arguably, it may be claimed that urban planning and economic policies are more complicated than the aforementioned interpretations. Nonetheless the popular narratives amongst independent merchants and retail employees during the time when these plans were being promoted so fervently – similar to the promotion of previous large infrastructural plans – are telling of the widespread imaginary about infrastructures and public works in Greece of the crisis.

Conclusion: 'eating mountains'

If one were to fly towards the new Athens airport they will notice the huge limestone quarries a few miles before the landing strip (Fig. 5). This is the Merenda limestone gravel quarry, which was the largest in Attica. It began to operate in the 1960s, during a previous Greek urban modernization project, yet its first legal permit was issued in 1980. In 1989, when the whole area of Merenda was declared an archaeological site, works were supposed to stop, but the quarry continued its operation based on temporary permits. In 1999 a decision for the restoration of the site came, but it was in fact cancelled by the Ministry of Public Works which allowed the continuation of quarrying as part of the need to complete several major infrastructure projects associated with the forthcoming Olympic Games (Kathimerini, 2012). As a local fan of Marko team in Markopoulo town, which has its stadium near the facilities, suggested during our fieldwork 'they ate the entire mountain just before the Olympics.' The facilities were eventually closed down long after the Games in 2009.

This controversial open extraction facility is right next to the Olympic Equestrian Centre of Markopoulo, close to the Attica Ringroad and the new Airport. The coexistence of all these built symbols of Greek modernization with the controversial Merenda quarry is one of the best spatio-temporal encapsulations of unevenness and disparity that have defined the Greek modernization project.

As has been analysed before (Herzfeld, 1987) and as we showed

above in reference to the Olympic infrastructures, the modern Greek collective identification processes have been defined by an identity disemia configured along two contradictive, yet interrelated axes. The first "*Hellenism*" tailors a grandiose and de-historicized Classical past', and thus an undisputed affirmation of a connection to the West; the other '*Romiossini*' expresses an intimate ideological process referring to unique – often exotic – characteristics (Herzfeld, 1987, p. 65). The attempt to blend these two opposing frameworks shaped what can be called a 'disjunctive modernity' (Prakash, 2000), a kind of modernity 'fabricated upon the fissure that appears to separate the Western and the native, the modern and the traditional', hence, framing its authority as 'perpetually unstable' (Mitchell, 2000: xxv). Oscillating between two opposing frameworks of reference, the formations of the collective Greek identification processes remain ambivalent, open to new configurations that constantly disrupt and (re)negotiate them within the everyday poetics and politics from below.

If, however, until the early 1990s some of the strongest claims of modern Greece to Western modernity were mostly based on imaginaries about the past achievements of Greek Classical antiquity (aided materially by the ancient monuments [Hamilakis, 2007]), in the 2000s these claims over Western modernity had also been constituted by material symbols of technological modernization; from suspension bridges and mega-events to a brand-new metro, airport, etc. After all, 'to be modern is to live within and by means of infrastructures' (Edwards, 2003, p. 186). Moreover, through an economic and infrastructural expansion to the Balkans, Greece could at last claim an undisputed inclusion into European westernness. Generally, during the golden age of infrastructural development, the 'experience of infrastructure' (Dourish & Bell, 2007, p. 417), the ways in which infrastructure emerged as a visible component of an 'increasing dependence upon it for the practice of everyday life' was connected to the ideological project of the (re-)imagination of the modern Greek self. Meanwhile practices that were labelled as more traditional were affected. For instance, in our case the mostly agricultural and thus 'backward' Messogeia (Madianou, 1999)

became an Athenian suburb, in the entire Attica walkers and public transport passengers were replaced by drivers, whilst the supposedly corrupt Greek politicians of the pre-Modernisers' period were replaced by the supposedly cosmopolitan technocrats who could negotiate successfully with Euro-zone officials in Brussels and the International Olympic Committee.

Although this process was part of an attempt to underplay the original disjunctiveness upon which the modern Greek project was built, the 'infrastructuration' of the latest Greek modernization politics in the 1990s and 2000s, quite literally, cemented this political project of the Greek modern self-making, thus encapsulating another set of disjunctiveness. The rigid materialization of modernization symbols denied the necessary space into 'the work of the imagination' (Appadurai, 1996) affecting the multiplicity and creativity at the grassroots level. Creativity is an essential quality of the imaginary (Castoriadis, 2005; 2001: 66) as it allows agents to 'see in a thing what it is not' and 'to see it other than it is' (Castoriadis, 2005, p. 127). Hence, the solidification of the imaginary through its connection to the new infrastructures took away the poetics from the politics of this project.

Beyond the specific set of contradictions embedded in the Greek modernization project since the 1990s, overall, the process of modernization comes with its own set of inherent and ontological disjunctiveness which were also inherited. On the one hand, the taming and control of 'nature' and natural resources by technology - e.g. the mountain that was transformed into building materials and big modern infrastructures - is connected to a series of environmental controversies. On the other hand, although the rule of law is allegedly an important characteristic of the modern polity, the breaking of ethical laws - 'eating the mountains' - and other unethical and/or unlawful practices, as summarized in the phrase 'one eats the other', are inherent characteristics of the neoliberal modernization process - 'the utopia of unlimited exploitation' (Bourdieu, 1998) that is at play in our case. It is important to mention that environmental crimes were only one part of the problem, for example, the building of the Greek Olympic infrastructures saw a record number of construction workers who were killed in work related accidents (13 people, in comparison to 1 in the previous Games of Sydney). The way in which this modernization process took place challenges a set of ideas related to the 'modern infrastructural ideal' that is based on 'rational, comprehensive, planning driving "progress" towards unitary, coherent and emancipatory cities' (Graham & Marvin, 2001, p. 41). Seen from this point of view the construction of the modern collective self is not disconnected from a wider neoliberalization process that permeates and redefines various different frameworks at the expense of public interest. Our case of disjunctive modernization, then, was constituted precisely through the material codification of everyday contradictions which were facilitated by this process of modernization.

Nevertheless, this project of modernization was interrupted by the disinvestment of the European and national infrastructural gap that appeared in 2007, and especially after the collapse of the global real estate markets in the crisis of 2008. Following the end of the peak period in 2005 and especially after the outbreak of the crisis, there was a disruption of this infrastructural imaginary of progress and development. However, given that the new national imaginary of modernized Greece was so solidly related to and thus depending on the material infrastructures, the disruption of this imaginary implied, by extension, a wider crisis of the entire system of reference. The same infrastructures which were imbued with particular ideas of modernization, the same government of Modernizers that were gloriously elected before, the contractors who were promoted as protagonists of modernization, became the very symbols which indicated a fundamental impediment to this process. In fact, the construction contractors, who today face severe economic difficulties and legal disputes, were even labelled as 'pimps' (davatziδes/νταβατζήδες) of the Greek political system in a famous statement by the PM of 2004–2009 Costas Karamanlis.

If the end of the Olympic Games was the beginning of the end for

this imaginary scheme, the outbreak of the crisis saw its complete collapse. Infrastructural investments did not only slow down, but also built infrastructures became the object of a negative collective imaginary associated with scandals and conspiracy theories. Simultaneously people began to lose access to infrastructure services and the State authorities lost control over much of this infrastructural stock as they sold them in order to pay off the debtors and manifest surplus. That said, questions regarding the abandonment of Olympic infrastructures appeared literally the day after the Games ended and yet plenty of them still stand today with very little use. Also, as mentioned above, highway systems were privatized in 2007, whilst in 2011 the Touristic and Olympic Real Estate SA companies that were founded during the late 1990s and early 2000s were merged together with other companies that administrated Greek public assets in the Public Properties Company SA. This company, which does not belong to the Greek Public Sector, now manages and occasionally sells some of the country's most expensive real estate and public assets. Indeed, these companies were initially founded during the golden period, as private companies - a new technocratic way of public administration - to take control of these assets, fundamentally bypassing basic legal frameworks which considered such assets as the common property of the Greek State or the Greek people and as such impossible to privatize (e.g. seafront, islands etc.) Within the then climate of optimism such incidents together with the eating of mountains, the deaths of construction workers, etc. were ignored.

Today, the infrastructural imaginary is connected with a general socio-political unease, and the experience of the (non-)existent infrastructure is shaped by an imagination that once again unsettles the position of Greece within the Western Modern endeavour. Moreover, imagination has now become formative of the very experience of infrastructures, therefore, 'overtaking' their material features. As the cases concerning the various conspiracy theories and scandals as well as the non-materialization of infrastructures (e.g. South Stream or Rethink Athens, Keratea waste management facilities) show, this infrastructural imaginary transformation is so widespread and dynamic that it upsets previously established ideas about progress and what it means to be modern today, thus forming an imagination about the politics of infrastructure that goes beyond its actual matter. While, the non-completion of some of these projects could be ascribed to the lack of funds, the widespread instances of contest point to the various ways in which existing infrastructure projects and the promise of new infrastructures have been confronted with doubt and mistrust on the one hand, and social conflict and contestation on the other.

The cases described here, also demonstrate that this transition from one context and level to the next is defined by a 'phatic labor' (Elyachar, 2010) that grows around and through infrastructure to provide specific interpretations of events that seem to have wider effects across civil society. Following Elyachar's (2010: 453) idea that phatic labour 'produces communicative channels that can potentially transmit not only language but also all kinds of semiotic meaning and economic value', we understand the everyday practices, narratives, and symbolisms that have emerged around infrastructures to mobilize and perform emotions, expectations and imaginations which reflect ways that people make sense of their position in the social field. In this particular imaginary, wider geopolitical processes reshape the everyday experience and view of infrastructures, since imagination about how global political processes take place intertwine with local processes and perceptions of governance. Infrastructural imaginaries, then, form a connective link between micro and macro socio-political dynamics. They force us to stay attentive to the variegated ways in which infrastructure is produced and (re)negotiated in the everyday and to the fact that infrastructures 'operate on multiple levels concurrently' (Larkin, 2013, p. 335).

Though diverse, and over two distinct periods in infrastructural history of Greece, the cases examined in this paper, share a common imbue of infrastructure processes with imaginary potential to

organize meaning around everyday experiences. In light of this, the social performance of ‘disjunctiveness’, as is conveyed through popular discourses, reflects imaginations concerning notions of citizenship, political participation, and the state and unveils ways in which these are negotiated, experienced, moralized and normalized – or not. Such rhetorical schemes, which point out critical fissures and contradictions, act as powerful urban and infrastructural pedagogies, not necessarily of either trust or distrust of the ‘system’, but in ascribing meaning to and performing, in other respects, elusive and ‘abstract’ top-down processes of ‘how things work’, which, here, should not be considered just an empty rhetoric devoid of hope, but rather, a tool of positioning in the social field.

Imagination, then, in the context of its relation to infrastructure, can be a tool of consent as well as a device of delegitimation and contestation. By employing infrastructure as an ethnographic category, what we have attempted to do is to elaborate on this dual function of infrastructural imagination by scrutinizing the way in which imaginaries created around socio-technical systems have been formative of civic matters. In addition, the notion of ‘disjunctive modernity’ has been helpful to us in demonstrating the various forces at play in relation to how infrastructures embody opposing dynamics which, in turn, produce various contradictions in the everyday. These processes also point out the ways in which infrastructures have been ‘activated’ in times of crisis. Functioning as artefacts through which the ‘elusiveness’ of the various dynamics that constitute the crisis can be experienced and imagined, infrastructures have become ‘matters’ of the crisis itself.

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