

**'Uprisings Do Not Enter Museums'**  
Invoking the 1973 Athens Polytechnic Uprising,  
A Study of Political Myths

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#### DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Wherever contributions of others are involved, these are clearly acknowledged.

Miranda Jeanne Marie Iossifidis

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## **Abstract**

This project explores the multiplicity of contemporary invocations of the 1973 Athens Polytechnic uprising as remembrance practices of political myth-making (Bottici, 2007), focusing on the annual commemoration of the uprising in 2012 and 2013. Contextualised within the contemporary 'crisis,' this thesis poses the following questions: how and why are images of the Polytechnic uprising invoked and made transmissible in the present through remembrance practices? How are such practices meaningful for people involved in everyday political action? Using mixed ethnographic methods - audio-visual artefacts, pamphlets, interviews, and participant observation - I propose that urban sociologists concerned with political action should be attentive to political myths. I argue that the different spaces and temporalities created through myth-making are tied to different imaginations of political action. I situate these practices in Exarcheia, and explore how this area is produced as an exceptional space of contentious politics. While most scholarship focuses on myths of the nation-state, I disentangle competing dominant and counteractive political myths. I analyse how dominant political myths create a linear homogenous concept of time, and fabricate the Polytechnic as a space of mourning and, sometimes, extremism. I explore the heterogeneous counteractive political myths through the production of counter-spaces, examining how participants make artefacts using dialectical images to create distinct temporalities of a 'contemporary Junta' and a discontinuous history of tenacious resistance. I show how creating, sharing, and interpreting myths is meaningful for people in terms of political subjectivity and generating affective agency. I argue that these practices can be considered forms of indirect resistance, with the annual commemoration a 'coming together' serving as a resource that fortifies people's capacity to resist. This project hopes to build on the rich interdisciplinary contemporary scholarship on Greek urban political action by taking into account the importance of remembrance practices of political myth-making.

### **Indebtedness**

Out of all the death that has come down and is still coming down,  
wars, executions, trials, death and more death,  
sickness, hunger, random accidents,  
murders of enemies and friends by paid assassins,  
systematic undermining and prepared obituaries,  
it is as if the life I live has been granted by act of clemency.  
A gift of chance, if not theft from the lives of others,  
for the bullet I escaped did not vanish  
but hit the next body which found itself in my place.  
So as a gift I was not deserving of life has been given me  
and such time as I have left  
is as if granted to me by the dead  
to limn them.

November '57  
Titos Patrikos

### **Written on a Wall**

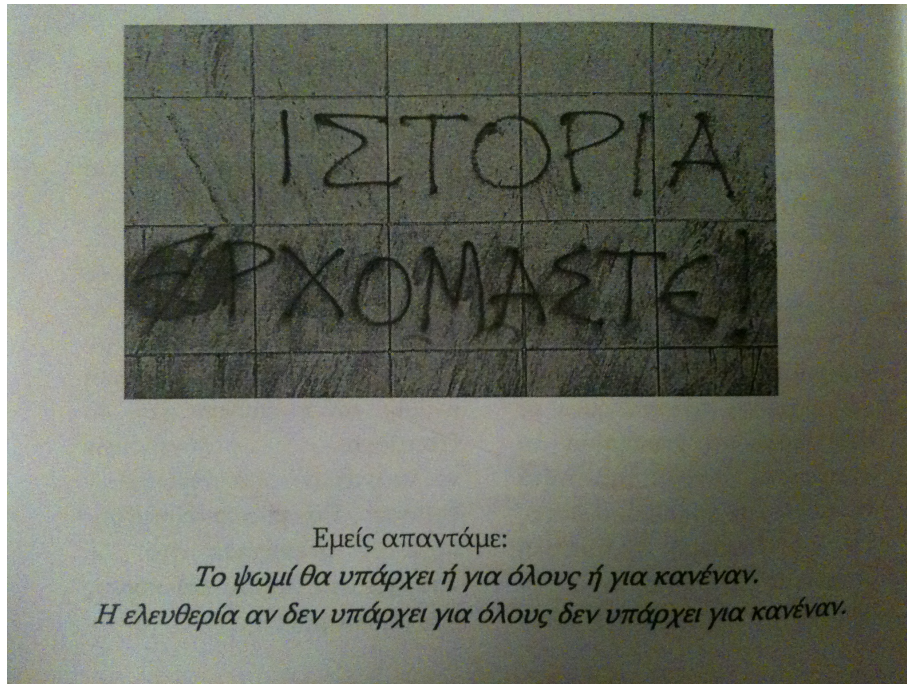
They put out our eyes  
they ripped away our speech  
and of that murdered voice  
remain the root and blood  
that split rock for water  
and come back in blossom.

Yorgis Pavlopoulos

November 1973

From the wild nights of Athens ...  
When the small and the great clashed  
the small won,  
so that the great could become a leading  
guide of truth...  
Auntie, light the candle, we shall win ...  
From the wild nights of Athens ...  
Wolves in the dark, wolves hunt down  
a virgin deer, they tear its belly drink its blood  
and inside them, I think,  
their beastly heart is shaken.  
Auntie, light the candle, we shall win ...  
I begin a song and the cyclical dance starts  
In the wax silence of censorship  
The knowledge circulates  
Don't disturb my circles ... a muddled up transistor.  
Auntie, light the candle, we shall win ...  
From the wild nights of Athens ...  
Think all together, you slaves ...  
The nightingale sang to you from the stone balcony ...  
And it only sings once!

Nikolas Asimos



# 1. HISTORY, WE ARE COMING!

We answer [to the 1973 Polytechnic uprising slogan: BREAD-EDUCATION-FREEDOM]:

There will be bread for all or for nobody.

Freedom, if not for all then there will be freedom for none.

Pamphlet made for the Polytechnic uprising commemoration  
(XAMAS, 2013)

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<sup>1</sup> All images were taken by the author, unless stated in caption.

### **List of acronyms**

AAL Academic Asylum Law

ANAFI Independent Left Electronic Engineering student group, affiliated with EAAK

ASYX Leftwing Chemistry student group, affiliated with EAAK

ANEL Independent Greeks

ANTARSYA The Front of the Anticapitalist Left

EAAK United Independent Left Movement (for students) affiliated with ANTARSYA

EAM National Liberation Front

EFEE National Student Union of Greece

ERT Greek State Radio and Television Broadcaster

ESA Special Interrogation Unit of the Greek Military Police

EDES National Republican Greek League

ELAS Ellinikos Laikos Apeleutherotikos Stratos: Greek People's Liberation Army

EPON United Pan-hellenic Organisation of Youth

KNE Communist Youth of Greece

KKE Communist Party of Greece

MAT Units for the Reinstatement of Public Order (riot police)

ND New Democracy

PASOK Panhellenic Socialist Movement

RAF-EAAK Radical Left Voice (affiliated with EAAK)

RAPAN-SAAFN Leftwing Law student group (affiliated with EAAK)

SYRIZA Coalition of the Radical Left

XAMAS Leftwing chemical engineering student group (affiliated with EAAK)



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALISING REMEMBRANCE PRACTICES OF THE 1973 POLYTECHNIC UPRISING

The “Polytechnic” lives  
in the victorious student movement of the victorious dictatorship,  
lives in bitter struggles of workers and youth in social spaces,  
lives in assemblies,  
lives in squats,  
lives in the demonstrations,  
is living on the streets,  
was living in December 08,  
lives in industrial mobilization,  
lives in the incubation of the new student movement,  
lives in strikes,  
lives in neighborhoods and squares,  
lives finally in practices that brings the student and the masses to  
the foreground and restores their role in determining history...

In this sense the “Polytechnic” is not is a celebration, not a  
memorial service of laying wreaths in honour of those who gave  
their blood in November 73

– RAPAN SAFN (2013)

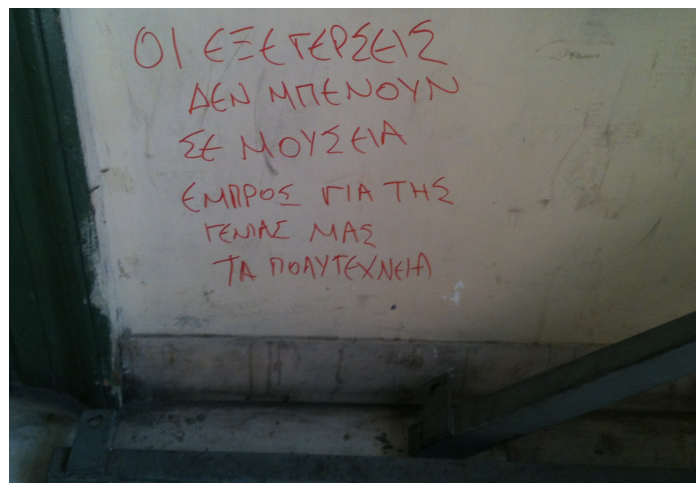
This text is from a pamphlet that I picked up during the three days of annual remembrance of the 1973 Polytechnic Uprising in November 2013. With its repeated refrains, this passage reads like a poem, asserting the vivification of the uprising. The 1973 Polytechnic uprising – as I will detail shortly – was an anti-dictatorial occupation, which was predominantly led by university students with support from workers, farmers, and massive support from Athenians. It lasted three days, culminating with military tanks driving through the campus gates and the police killing a contested number of people. Why, almost 42 years after its occurrence, does the Polytechnic Uprising resonate in everyday life, and continue to be invoked in relation to the contentious contemporary socio-political situation? During my fieldwork in 2012 and 2013, I encountered multiple, competing uses of the Polytechnic Uprising to intervene in the ‘present’. The uprising is invoked by the state as part of the national narrative of Modern Democracy, simultaneously employed by the government and mainstream media as a way of delegitimizing contemporary political action as violent, and maintaining itself as the ‘safe centre’.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the uprising is invoked every year in the same urban public space where it erupted in an annual commemoration organized by different political collectivities, who participate in remembrance

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<sup>2</sup> By the ‘safe centre’ I refer to the discourse of the ‘two extremes’ which the then-government used to delegitimize the Far-Left and Far-Right, while maintaining itself as the ‘safe centre’. I discuss this in depth in Chapter 5 and 6.

practices and invoke the struggles of 1973 in relation to their contemporary socio-political concerns.

This project is borne out of a fascination with the persistence of myths in urban social and political life, and specifically with the multiplicity of invocations of the 1973 uprising and their desired interventions in the contemporary socio-political situation. Why are images of past urban political struggles important? How are they intertwined with the present, as ways of mobilising people and bringing collectivities together? In this thesis I focus on the annual commemoration of the Polytechnic uprising as a way of exploring its diverse invocations. Specifically, this thesis asks how and why images of the uprising are invoked and made transmissible in the present through remembrance practices? How are such practices meaningful for people who are involved in everyday political action? By the term 'everyday political action' I am referring to the diverse engagements and responsibilities of informants that are part of their day-to-day lives, which include neighbourhood assemblies; social centres; self-organised medical centres, food markets, and parks; soup kitchens, refugee and migrant solidarity; as well as union work, strikes, and occupations. There are other actors who create and share political myths of the Polytechnic Uprising, as I discuss in Chapter Five: notably the then-government,<sup>3</sup> the state education system, the mainstream media, and Golden Dawn. Within this broad sphere of political activity, I focus specifically on people's practices and perspectives around the remembrance the Polytechnic, as I hope to understand the processes of political myth-making in close detail.



2. UPRISINGS DON'T ENTER MUSEUMS, LET'S GO FORWARDS TO OUR GENERATION'S POLYTECHNICS

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<sup>3</sup> The government during the time of my fieldwork had been elected in 2012, a 'National Unity' government, comprised of New Democracy, PASOK and DIMAR, with the Prime Minister Antonis Samras, leader of right-wing party New Democracy.

I argue that it is important for urban studies to pay attention to political myths because of their role in contemporary urban political action and in shaping understandings of and interventions in the contemporary socio-political situation. By definition, as we will see in Chapter Two, political myths 'remain open to the possibility of being renegotiated according to new experiences and needs' (Bottici, 2009: 370-1), which is part of the persistence and power of political myths. As I discuss in the following chapter, the multiple invocations and entwinements of the Polytechnic with the present are practices that transcend conceptions of collective memory, just as the role of the Polytechnic campus goes beyond a conception of the site as *a lieu de mémoire*. The multiplicity of political myths of the Polytechnic are vitally and inextricably tied to different imaginaries of contemporary political action, and yet remembrance practices of the uprising have not been studied. This thesis aims to fill this gap, using mixed ethnographic methods. As such it also addresses the lack of work on political myth that focuses on the practices of people who create, share and interpret them, rather than state and media discourse.

As my participant Diana, a law student and member of Synaspismos Youth<sup>4</sup> and Law Left tells me in October 2012: 'Each year they attach it [the Polytechnic uprising] to something else' – how are we to understand these attachments, which parts of the Polytechnic are attached, to what, and by whom? I propose to explore the competing and diverse contemporary invocations of the Polytechnic Uprising as a plurality of political myths, to be analysed as processes, of 'work on myth' or myth-making. Political myths take kernels of historical narratives, and ground them in contemporary significance, containing within them a determination to act on the present (Bottici, 2007). I am interested in the ways in which political myths are a site of the radical imagination, contribute to social imaginaries and generate affective agency and atmospheres. I explore how political myths produce spaces and temporalities that intervene in the contemporary socio-political situation and that may be considered as forms of indirect resistance to structural violence in times of 'crisis'. While much work on political myth has focused on the national or European scale through media and discourse analysis (Bottici and Challand, 2012; Esch 2010), in this thesis I trace the actual making and sharing of political myths, and how people render such remembrance practices meaningful.

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<sup>4</sup> Synaspismos tis Aristeras ton Kinimaton kai tis Oikologias, The Coalition of the Left, of Movements and Ecologists, are known as Synaspismos and are the largest party in the SYRIZA coalition. Syaspismos Youth is their student party active in universities.

Through interviews, observation, sound, images, and material artefacts, I explore the multiple applications of the Polytechnic that seek to intervene in the present and build an argument about the politics of invoking these images of the past. Using a theoretical framework which has been constructed through the interplay with my fieldwork, as outlined in the following section, I argue that remembrance practices of the Polytechnic transmit images of the past that act as a resource in the present, in the sense that these practices are spatial practices of political mythmaking *in* and *of* the Polytechnic, intertwined with its space and time over the three days in November. Furthermore, I argue for political mythmaking as practices that are performative of political subjectivity and that help sustain the possibility of political action in the present, maintaining the capacity to resist in the present time of crisis.

This research project is based on fieldwork of a very specific space and time, the annual remembrance of the Polytechnic Uprising in November 14-17 in 2012 and 2013, and a return to Athens during the European elections. All social research is bound to the spaces and times within which it is based, and as such this thesis offers a glimpse of a socio-political situation, with hopes of contributing to the rich body of contemporary research on urban political action in Greece (Vradis 2012a-e; Kallianos 2013; Theodossopoulos 2014; Walsh and Tsilmpounidi 2014). This project is situated in an interesting period, after December 2008 uprising, and the Syntagma indignant movement of May-July 2011, which have been widely written about, partially in the midst of the occupation of the state television and radio broadcaster *Ellinikí Radiofonía Tileórasi* (ERT) from June-November 2012, and before the election of the Coalition of the Radical Left, *Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás* (SYRIZA) to government in January 2015. As such, this project is situated within the period which has now come to be known as 'The Crisis' and, specifically a time marked by exhaustion, disappointment, weariness, and described as many as surreal – affective registers that I discuss in Chapters Four to Seven.

While this thesis pertains to the period within which the fieldwork was conducted, political myths of the Polytechnic continue to be 'worked on' in relation to the specificities of the contemporary socio-political situation. In summer 2015, as I write this introduction, the negotiations between the SYRIZA government and the Troika over the bailout agreement continue, the international glare waxes and wanes on the ever-changing unfolding spectacle of 'Greek politics'. I notice that my uncle in Athens has changed his Skype status to 'Then with tanks, now with banks' – a direct reference to the 1973 Polytechnic uprising. By July 2015, 'banks not tanks' which I mention

through graffiti in Chapter Five has become a meme on twitter, attached to #ThisIsACoup; perhaps the political myth of the 'contemporary Junta' has gone viral. In this chapter, I will first introduce the commemoration of the Polytechnic uprising, the multiple Polytechnics, and the 'story' of the 1973 uprising. I situate the uprising within Greek political and social history. As this project is concerned with what it means to invoke the Polytechnic in the *present*, I will then turn to the problematic notion of the 'present' and how this project deals with the notion of the time of 'Crisis.' Finally, I finish the introduction by mapping out the rest of the thesis.

### **The Commemoration**

The annual commemoration of the Polytechnic Uprising has taken on multivalent resonances, as we will see. Since the beginning of the crisis, ostensibly since 2009 because of the events of December 2008, the November 17 demonstrations have been bigger.<sup>5</sup> Tsilimpounidi describes the context in which the commemorations I explore in this thesis took place:

The city's streets are political. In Athens, in the current milieu, time is marked out not by changing seasons, but between installments of debt relief from the IMF and the EU. It is also mapped by politically motivated protests, gatherings and events. On a micro-level, it is ruptured by the daily performances of people facing growing uncertainty, eroding savings and pensions and a government with no autonomy. Every day, the streets tell stories of confusion, anxiety, depression and loss. (Tsilimpounidi, 2012: 551)

As such, the yearly commemoration of the uprising is tied to multiple rhythms of everyday affects, as well as more spectacular contestation. The commemoration is organized by a committee which is constituted by the University Authorities of the Polytechnic, the National Union of Greek Students, the Association of Imprisoned and Deportee Resisters of period 1967-1974, the Greek General Confederation of Greek Workers, the Progressive Union of Greek Mothers, the Parents' Federation of Athens and the syndicalist unions of teachers in primary and secondary schools. (Kotea, 2013: 20). Remembrance practices began in 1974 after the fall of the dictatorship, following years of left-wing repression after the civil war. The post-dictatorship era saw an emerging culture of commemoration that memorialized disparate events from the 1930s through the 1970s alongside each other, with the 1941-44 occupation resistance and Polytechnic featuring prominently (Papadogiannis, 2009: 80). The ways in which this 'collective memory' was shaped during this period, Papadogiannis

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<sup>5</sup> As reported in the blog 'From the Greek Streets' <http://blog.occupiedlondon.org/2010/11/18/420-the-imf-is-not-an-image-on-your-tv-screen-a-brief-report-from-tonights-demonstration-in-athens/>

argues, was 'not merely the outcome of the spontaneous explosion of expectations of left-wingers of different directions,' but a

top-bottom process, in which the Socialist and Communist youth groups were actively involved. Not only did they organize many of the aforementioned commemorations, but they also constructed particular modes of reception of cultural products, which were classified into 'progressive' and 'reactionary'. (*Ibid.*)

This description does not resonate with the diverse practices I encountered during the commemoration, and it is perhaps Papadogiannis's focus on collective memory rather than myth that restricts his analysis. Furthermore, in this thesis I also look at the remembrance practices of anarchist and anti-authoritarian collectives. As I explore in Chapters Five and Six, there are tensions between different collectivities who express distinct imaginations of political action within the commemoration. Through the making of pamphlets, exhibition and films, their interventions seek to contest the dominant political myths, analysed in Chapter Five, that render the uprising a static event that belongs to the past, removing its radical, critical properties. The counteractive political myths actively resist the 'museumification' of the Polytechnic uprising, while creating new spaces and temporalities through forging diverse connections between the past and present. In the following section I'll briefly introduce the notion of the multiple Polytechnics.

### **The Multiple 'Polytechnics'**

Perhaps the most effective way of introducing the multiple 'Polytechnics' – which form the core of different political myths – is through the following brief entries in the glossary of a compendium of essays entitled *Revolt and Crisis in Greece: Between a Present Yet to Pass and a Future Yet to Come* (Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011: 339). These terms are meaningful for the research informants, and here they are provided with a short description of their usage, written from a 'radical' or anarchist perspective:

**POLYTECHNIC UPRISING:** The anti-junta protest of university students that started on 14 November 1973 and which escalated into a popular uprising and an occupation of the Athens Polytechnic by students and other protesters, lasting for three days. Thousands joined the protests, but in the early morning of 17 November 1973 an army tank crashed the front gate of the Polytechnic, followed by a full-scale attack by police and the army, resulting in the deaths of at least forty protesters.

**ATHENS POLYTECHNIC (POLYTECHNEIO):** The historical building of the National Technological University of Athens, located on Patission Avenue. It was the epicentre of the 17 November 1973 anti-junta uprising. Much anarchist and other radical activity has been centred there since then.

**POLYTECHNIC GENERATION (GENIA TOU POLYTECHNEIOU):** Those involved as young students or workers in the anti-junta struggle and particularly in the November 1973 Polytechnic uprising. The term often has negative connotations when referring



to politicians, journalists, or other figures of power who will mention their Polytechnic credentials in order to justify their subsequent reactionary practices or discourses.

17 NOVEMBER: Originally refers to 17 November 1973. On that date, tanks, the army and police attacked students and other protesters who had occupied the Athens Polytechnic protesting against the dictatorship. Since then, a commemorative march has taken every year in Athens, from the Polytechnic to the US Embassy.

These entries hint at the complexity of invoking the Polytechnic Uprising in the present; not only are there multiple interpretations of the event itself, but the building and the neighbourhood of Exarcheia in which it is located, have now been a centre of contestation and political action for more than four decades, as I discuss in Chapter Four. As the glossary entries reveal, the 'Polytechnic generation' are often positioned as the political elite to be blamed for the crisis, as I discuss in Chapter Five. Further reflecting the complicated legacy of the uprising, Kornetis claims that 'the actual date of the event changed signifiers after it was appropriated by the terrorist organization' 17N, who operated between 1975 and 2002 (2006: 13). This strong statement and the affiliation of this 'terrorist' organization with the Polytechnic Uprising over the decades has led to concerns that the anti-dictatorship struggle has been 'purposefully...embroiled in the hunt for 17N by individuals all too keen to see the [it] delegitimized and discredited as a whole' (Xenakis, 2012: 442).

Furthermore, there is another 'Polytechnic' produced by the Far-Right that claims that no one died in the state's repression of the unrest, which began circulating as early as 1974 (Psarras, 2012). The number of casualties continues to be contested. This uncertainty can be traced to the political situation at the time. As the dictatorship was still in power, many did not want to collaborate with the Special Investigator (Andrews, 1980: 70-71). The state currently recognizes 24 persons as having died in the Uprising (Leonidas, 2004). It also lists sixteen anonymous cases that have a 'reasonable basis' for consideration as casualties, and a further thirty cases that 'appear consistently in catalogues since 1974 without ever being established.'<sup>6</sup>

### **The Story of the 1973 Polytechnic Uprising**

The multiple invocations of the Polytechnic uprising are the central concern of this thesis, so while it is a necessary task, it is also difficult to succinctly introduce the events of the uprising using historical or other academic accounts, each with their subjective positions. To seek a 'true' account, or claim that there is one, is not the

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<sup>6</sup> See News247.gr (2012a) *Research: Here are the 24 dead from the Polytechnic uprising* [Έρευνα: Αυτοί είναι οι 24 νεκροί του Πολυτεχνείου]. Available from: [http://news247.gr/eidiseis/ereyna\\_aytoi\\_einai\\_oi\\_24\\_nekroi\\_toy\\_polytexneioy.2009947.html](http://news247.gr/eidiseis/ereyna_aytoi_einai_oi_24_nekroi_toy_polytexneioy.2009947.html) (accessed 17 September 2013).

point of this project, which is concerned with *how* the uprising is invoked in the *present* and how this is meaningful for people. As such, I argue that a 'neutral' rendering of the narrative does not exist. However, we have to begin somewhere, and I ask the reader to cling onto a kernel of doubt throughout this introduction. The core story has been told to me so many times over the course of my fieldwork that it I can tell it by heart.

The Polytechnic Uprising took place six years into the Colonels' dictatorship of 1967-74, which is commonly known as the Junta, and referred to as 'Seven Black Years' or the 'Regime of the Colonels'. The dictatorship began with a coup d'état on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1967, widely considered to have been supported by the US government.<sup>7</sup>

Entitled by the Colonels as the 'Revolution to Save the Nation' (*Ethnosotirios Epanastasi*), and enacted by mid-ranking military officers, it followed the turbulent period of Greek political history that came after the Civil War of 1946 to 1949. The Colonels saw themselves as guardians of the nation, responding to the perceived Communist threat, and as such a highly oppressive regime began instantaneously. They immediately employed the legal and constitutional framework of the Civil War, including the Law 509/1947 which not only targeted Communist sympathisers but any citizen who might be opposed to the junta (Kamarinou, 2005: 266). Stefatos describes the breathtaking scale and speed of the repression:

Within a few hours the majority of the leaders of the Left, the Centre, even the Right were arrested as well as members of the Greek intelligentsia. In the first few hours' 8,000 people - among them the Prime Minister - were arrested and on the first day of the dictatorship 6,844 people, mostly political dissidents and well-known members of the Centre and the Left, were deported to the exile island of Yiaros. More than 80,000 citizens were arrested for political purposes in the 1967-1974 period. (Stefatos 2012: 141).

The dictatorship was brutally repressive, dissolved unions and fragmented student politics by banning student elections in universities and imposing non-elected student union leaders in the National Student Union, *Ethniki Foititiki Enosi Ellada* (EFEE) (Kornetis, 2013). Article 14 of the Greek Constitution was suspended, which protected freedom of thought and freedom of the press. The Security Police (*Asphalia*) and the Greek Military Police *Elliniki Stratiotiki Astynomia* (ESA) regularly utilized torture and the latter ran detainment centres. By the summer of 1973, the colonels were attempting to 'liberalise' in order to be able to enter the European Economic Community (EEC), and gave themselves the position of 'president' and

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<sup>7</sup> For further explorations of American involvement in the coup, see Andrews K (1980) *Greece in the dark*. Amsterdam: Hakkert. and Sakellaropoulos S (1998) *The origins of the April coup. 1949-1967. The social context of the road to dictatorship*. Athens.

'prime minister'. This environment opened space for students to gather more freely and publicly, to occupy buildings and organize demonstrations. In the 1975 documentary 'Testimonies', Polytechnic students describe this moment:

At the beginning the people were very frightened, during the first years of the dictatorship. The workers' natural leadership and above all the left, had been significantly, significantly damaged. Isolated on faraway islands and prisons were being filled up with activists. Terrorism by the dictatorship was extremely aggressive. People could not support the student movement, which at the time was not even so much developed. It mostly operated through illegal gatherings. Little by little though, it started obtaining more mass (Polytechnic student, 1975, 'Testimonies')

Students started the movement so that they could take back again the associations that were controlled/regulated by the representatives of the dictatorship in the universities and fight for democracy within the space of higher education. (Polytechnic student, 1975, 'Testimonies')

In February of 1973, there was an occupation at the Law school, which was heavily repressed.

The occupation of the law school is a very characteristic example, which we can say became an important landmark for the development of the movement. People stayed overnight outside the building during the occupation of the law school, despite the continuous attacks by the police. And in this way they managed to avoid the police attacking inside the law school. Throughout the next days, people carried on showing their support to the students who are still inside the building. Police tried to hold people back / push them away by beating them up mercilessly. Despite all that, people still stay outside of the building, sending support messages to the students that are fighting inside. The students inside the building are chanting / singing and shout slogans against Papadopoulos and the Americans. (Polytechnic student, 1975, "Testimonies")

In November, students, workers, and farmers from Western Attica, Megara occupied the Polytechnic. The group was heterogeneous, including communists, socialists, a few anarchists, and some liberals. Their general assemblies thus produced equally heterogeneous demands, but all called for the junta to fall. The occupation was supported by thousands of Athenians, who would gather outside the gates.

While this omniscient narration of the story seems to remove the perspective of the occupiers, many people who shared this story with me have heard it from family

members who were themselves involved. This raises the question of where people first hear about the Polytechnic uprising: is it at home, through family? At school, through the institutionalised national holiday, when primary and secondary school students read poems, sing songs, re-enact the events, and sometimes visit the campus to lay a wreath? For a person growing up in Greece and going through the state school system, it would be impossible to not know the core story of the uprising by the age of eighteen. Furthermore, many first-hand accounts have been published. Some have integrated these accounts into fictional texts, such as that of Dimitris Papachristos,<sup>8</sup> and anthropological texts, such as the work of Neni Panourgia:

Out on the streets, inside the Polytechnic, in middle-class and working-class homes, this was the moment. The slogans were not symbolic; nothing was hidden there: 'Down with the Junta'; 'People move – they are eating your bread'; 'Greece of Torturer Greeks'; 'Greece of Imprisoned Greeks'; 'Greece of Tortured Greeks'; 'Bread – Education – Freedom'; 'General Strike.' (Panourgia, 2009: 143).

On November 14<sup>th</sup> of 1973 students began gathering at the Athens Polytechnic to demonstrate against the Junta, with co-ordinated occupations and demonstrations in the cities of Patras and Thessaloniki. Students occupied the law building, building barricades and broadcasting via a home-made radio. They called themselves the 'Free Beseiged' in reference to a Dionysios Solomos poem about the Ottoman siege of Mesolonghi. Their famous chant of 'Bread, education, freedom' was repeated in protests, and, with their makeshift radio, they broadcast across the city: 'Here is the Polytechnic! People of Greece, the Polytechnic is the flag bearer of our struggle and your struggle, our common struggle against the dictatorship and for democracy!' Each day more people joined, demonstrating outside the university and giving supplies to the 3,500 students inside the building. Anti-Junta and anti-American graffiti covered the building and buses, disseminating their messages across the city. In the early morning of November 17, military tanks broke into the campus, described below by Kevin Andrews and Neni Panourgia:

By now, [the morning of November 17<sup>th</sup> 1973] the attackers would have broken – after ten minutes – the truce agreed to for all the besieged to get out of the Polytechnic within half an hour. By now the first tank would have broken the central gate ... by now, the students (who till the last minute had stood clinging to the railings, calling to the tank guns and the rifles and the submachine guns taking aim, 'We are unarmed, you will not kill us, you are our brothers') would have been surrounded in the forecourt by the first Commando units, some of whom told them to get out quickly by the other gates before the Police entered in force and drove them out, to be killed and wounded in the streets' (Andrews, 1980: 87).

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<sup>8</sup> Papachristos has published many books related to his experience in the Polytechnic uprising. See Papachristos D (1993) 19+1. Εκ των υστέρων [19+1. Ex Post], Athens, Papachristos D (2003a) «Από τη Νομική στο Πολυτεχνείο» [From Law School to the Polytechnic], pp. 192-196 in Giorgos Gatos (ed.), Πολυτεχνείο '73. Ρεπορτάζ με την Ιστορία [Polytechnic '73. Reportage with History], Athens, and Papachristos D (2003b) Ζούσε τη ζωή σα να τη θυμόταν [He lived life as if he was remembering it], Athens,

The tanks arrived at the Polytechnic at 1:00 a.m. One of them positioned itself outside the gate, which was teeming with students—seated on the rails, hanging from the pillars, inside it, outside it, everywhere. The chancellor's Mercedes Benz had been placed on the other side of the gate, inside, to prevent it from collapsing. The radio station still broadcasts, Dimitris's [Papachristos] voice is hoarse and rasping now, he can barely be heard, but he is screaming: 'Soldiers, you are our brothers, soldiers you are our brothers, you will not strike against us, you will not strike against us.' He and Maria [Damanaki] repeat this over and over until, at some point, they start singing the national anthem and ask everyone not to move away from their radios, to keep the radios open—and then the radio goes dead. Not a signal, nothing, just white noise. (Panourgia, 2009: 8)

On the night of November the 16<sup>th</sup>, with soldiers surrounding the Polytechnic. Tanks arrived. Police dispersed the crowd and at around midnight, with the only light coming from the university, as the city's lights had been shut down, the students were told to leave the building in 10 minutes. One hundred and fifty paratroopers came out of the tanks, in front of the main gate of the university on Patisision Street. There is a video showing students asking the soldiers to join them in the uprising, shouting 'We are your brethren' and reciting the national anthem. Albert Coerant, a Belgian journalist famous for filming the tanks entering the Polytechnic evocatively describes this moment in a later newspaper article.

The most horrendous and surrealistic scene of all; one which will never leave my mind. The tanks - more than 25 - arrived; as if they had to annihilate a well-fortified fortress and not a university campus full of unarmed children yelling for freedom. They came rolling in at about midnight. One enormous grey monster stood just in front of the gate of the Polytechnic. From the open turret an officer appeared with a pistol in his hand. The students begged the army not to use force and not to harm them. The officer shouted down from his tank that the Greek armed forces would not negotiate with anarchists. In the Acropole Palace, children were crying and many were kneeling and loudly praying to God to stop the madness. One of the most incredible and shameful things was that at this very instant, as the children of Greece were about to die for freedom, in the same hotel, at a short distance from the oncoming catastrophe, a room full of two hundred people, mostly women but also some men, were playing cards, totally impervious to the clamours and weeping of the youth of their country. (Coerant, 2001).

Different accounts point to different numbers, but there are at least forty people known to have been killed in and around the Polytechnic, with 886 arrests made (Leonidas 2004). A week after the uprising, a counter-coup took place on 25<sup>th</sup> November. Papadopoulos, the leader of the dictators, was ousted by the head of the Secret Police, Brigadier Dimitrios Ioannidis, who 'became a shadow dictator for the

next eight months,' with General Faidon Ghizikis as his public representative, a 'self-proclaimed President of the Republic' (Kornetis, 2009: 261-262). The dictatorship fell after the failed 1974 coup in Cyprus, and subsequent Turkish invasion, whereby it lost legitimacy (Andrews, 1980), and politicians from before the coup were invited by military generals to return. The first election was held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1974, and the first government of the Third Hellenic Republic was the newly founded centre-right party New Democracy, who swapped the role of governing Greece with Panhellenic Socialist Movement *Panellino Sosialistiko Cinima* (PASOK) until 2012, when they formed a coalition.

### **'You have to understand' ... a Greek history of sorts**



2. Resistance – Civil War poster made for the Polytechnic commemoration, 2013

Many people tell me that in order 'to understand the Polytechnic Uprising, you have to understand the Civil War,' and I share this sentiment with the reader. What follows is an incredibly brief outline of the Greek Resistance to Axis occupation and the ensuing Civil War, which I engage with in more depth in Chapter Six. The Greek Civil War officially lasted three years, from 1946 until 1949, and erupted after the Communist party's power grew during the occupation. During the Second World War, the occupation of Greek territory by Germany, Bulgaria and Italy ravaged the country. A British blockade intercepting food shipments caused a great famine during the

winter of 1941-2 (Close, 1993: 46). The two major resistance organisations were EAM (Communist-led National Liberation Front) and EDES (National Republican Greek League). The largest was EAM (the National Liberation Front), with its military branch ELAS (the National People's Army of Liberation), its youth organization EPON (United Panhellenic Youth Organization), and welfare organization EA (National Solidarity). Although widely referred to as 'the Communists' it is important to emphasise that the resistance was more heterogeneous than this might imply. As Hart notes:

Although the Greek Communist Party (KKE) was responsible for initiating the movement and dominated its leadership stratum, the EAM and KKE were not synonymous ... the EAM leadership actually comprised a coalition that included two prominent social democrats ... one from the Socialist Party ... the United Socialist Party and one from the tiny Agrarian Party (Hart, 1992: 640-1)

EAM-ELAS and the Nationalist EDES clashed throughout the period of the resistance. On April 23 1944, the first elections were secretly organized in the areas 'occupied and liberated by the Communist forces (also known as "Free Greece")', women had a chance not only to vote for the first time, but also to be elected to the National Council,' and indeed were (Stefatos, 2012: 72). Axis troops left Greece in October 1944, and the government-in-exile returned. By now EAM-ELAS had 'mountain governments' in Northern Greece and had garnered massive support across the country. At this point, the British government intervened. Kallianos describes the first act of the Greek Civil War, which took place in Syntagma Square on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1944. The EAM organized a demonstration to protest against the disarmament of ELAS. General Scobie, the British head of the Allied forces in Greece at the time, officially announced a general call of disarmament of all guerilla forces, excluding those allied to the government. (Margaritis, 2001: 67). This resulted in the resignation of the six EAM ministers in the 'National Unity' Government (*Ibid*). As Kallianos recounts, the disarmament was also contested by thousands of Greek citizens, who took to the streets to participate in a demonstration that was banned by the government (2009: 42). Kallianos continues to describe the initiation of the 'Dekemvriana':

When the masses reached the periphery of Parliament, the gendarmerie, followed by British troops and the para-state organisation 'X', opened fire, killing several people and leaving hundreds injured. For the next month the communists fought against the monarchists in the streets of Athens. This period is remembered under the term Dekemvriana. On December 25 1944 Winston Churchill arrived in Athens and negotiations with representatives from all sides began. The outcome was the treaty of Varkiza that ordered the disarmament and destruction of ELAS. (2009: 42)

The Varkiza Agreement is an important element in the political myths of the Civil War, which, in addition to being regularly utilized in the Polytechnic remembrance

practices, as I discuss in Chapter Seven, was also invoked in the run-up to the January 2015 elections; it alludes to a multiplicity of meanings. The agreement consisted of nine articles, with the aim of 'holding elections, the disbandment of rebellious organisations, the disarmament of ELAS and the granting of amnesties to its soldiers (Margaritis, 2001:78-85; Sarafis, 1979; Vournas, 1980; Close 1993 in Kallianos 2009: 42).

The geo-political position of Greece has been central to the various international interventions during its short history as a nation-state (Greece became independent in 1821). As Close argues, Greece was 'economically and strategically so interwoven with the capitalist, maritime powers of Britain and the United States, that it is tempting to argue that the violent suppression of the Greek Communist Party was almost inevitable' (2003: xi). Following the Varkiza agreement, the groups connected to EAM that refused to comply were renounced by the Greek Communist Party. Following this treaty, the 'White Terror' was waged upon communists and former partisans, with many EAM members and relatives tortured, jailed, or exiled in detention centres and prisons on islands. There have been many important works documenting the suppression faced by left-wing sympathisers up until the end of the dictatorship, which was endured by a large part of the population; 'by the end of the Civil War, in September 1949 there were 18,000 political prisoners and 31,400 persons at Makronisos and other camps' (Voglis 2002: 63).<sup>9</sup> The three years of the Civil War were devastating, destroying the already ravaged country and polarizing society, with repercussions felt to this day – as I will discuss in Chapter Six. Following the victory of the nationalists, the suppression of any leftwing activity continued until the fall of the dictatorship in 1974, when the Liberal Conservative political party New Democracy was formed and elected, and made the Communist party legal. The period between the end of the Civil War and the Dictatorship, 1949 to 1967, is a critical period yet its impact has not received due attention, as Stefatos describes:

The period ranging from the official termination of the Civil War until the establishment of the military regime (1950-1967) has been characterised as 'weak democracy' mainly due to the troubling coexistence of democracy in pretence and the *parakratos* (para-state), but also due to the proclaimed parliamentarism combining a series of paraconstitutional practices. (Tsoukalas, 2008: 41). Even though the period is extremely important, primarily because the persecution, repression and incarceration of leftists continued as during the Civil War (although not to the same degree and intensity), it remains largely unexplored. (Stefatos, 2012: 43).

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<sup>9</sup> This is just a glimpse of the numbers of persons exiled and imprisoned. For a brilliant account that focuses on womens' experience of state oppression, see Stefatos (2012) *Engendering the Nation: Women, state oppression and political violence in post-war Greece (1946-1974)* Unpublished Thesis.



The period following the fall of the dictatorship, known as the *metapolitefsi*, which means 'the politics of after', is understood in various ways. Kassimeris notes that the

transition to multi-party democracy, was marked by a curious amalgam of continuity and change. The symbols, the rhetoric and even the constitution changed, but without any systematic purge of the bureaucracy and the police apparatus; key sections of the state remained in the hands of the old order. (2005: 745)

Since 2010 and the implementation of austerity measures, the term has been the subject of fierce debate. Furthermore, 'many believe the revolt of December 2008 to signify the end of metapolitefsi' (Revolt and Crisis, 2011: 339). Indeed most contemporary debates are about theorizing the specificity of the contemporary period of 'crisis' and the next section I situate my project within this notion of the 'present'.

### **Athens in the Time of 'Crisis'**

Attempting to situate this project within a political context that changes daily is difficult in such stressful and intense times. Following news on Twitter, Facebook, and liveblogs, time is punctuated by missed payment deadlines, a referendum, leaked documents, seventeen hour meetings, long parliamentary debates, endless speculation, prime minister Tsipras's resignation, and another election.



4. Days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Elections" - from September 1, 2015 @harva8

Since January, the usual voices of friends, acquaintances and academics on social media - people living in Greece or the diaspora - who provide daily commentary, have been joined by countless other voices. Reading the UK, US, French and (translated) German, Portuguese and Spanish interventions, it is clear that the multiple ways in

which 'Greek politics' has been represented from without during the short period that SYRIZA has been in government would make a fascinating thesis in itself. The uncertainty of the current political situation is an exacerbation of the past five years in general. The inhabitants of many European countries have experienced substantial socio-economic transformations as a result of austerity measures under the cloak of 'the Crisis'. There are specific urban processes which are shared across the region: practices of capital accumulation by urban dispossession, racist state practices, the criminalization of dissent, police brutality and the tightening of national borders. These practices have proliferated for the past five years in Greece within an ongoing refugee crisis rooted in global conflicts, which has seen 77,000 people arrive in the country since the beginning of 2015 alone.<sup>10</sup> Eight-five percent of the arrivals are refugees and more than 60% are fleeing the conflict in Syria (UNHCR, 2015).

Living within ever-ravaging circumstances and prolonged uncertainty is an everyday experience for people living in Greece. Five years and 165 days have lapsed since the Greek state signed the 'Memorandum of Agreement' on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2010, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU) and the European Central Bank (ECB), commonly known as the Troika. The policies implemented have been compared to the 1929 crash in the US, with the Greek GDP contracting by 20% between 2008 and 2012. Unemployment has soared to 27%, with youth unemployment reaching 60% (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014: 125). When I have tried to explain this to friends in the UK, France, and Germany, we are usually sitting around a table, having drinks or dinner. I ask them to imagine having been unemployed for four years, and if they had had any work in that time, not having been paid for it, as is the case with my friends living in Greece. I asked them to imagine their whole family – all adults – living on one person's salary, or cut-back pension, as is the case with many families in Greece. In this introduction, I hope to contextualize my research project within the space and time that it has been conducted: the Polytechnic campus and its environs of central Athens, during the time of 'crisis', and as some see it, the end of metapolitefsi.

Crucial to how we might consider invocations of the past in the present, is how we understand 'the present'. In thinking this through, I will draw on some of the multi-disciplinary literature that has emerged since 2008 in Greece, which has sought to understand contemporary political action in the time of 'crisis'. This discussion is

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<sup>10</sup> For more information see the UNHCR reportage, dating from July 2015: <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/news-and-views/news-list/news-detail/article/an-average-of-1000-refugees-now-arriving-on-greek-islands-every-day.html>

informed by debates within history and philosophy on the 'present' or 'contemporary'. The austerity measures that have been imposed by the Troika and implemented by the state since May 2010 in agreement for a 110 billion euro bailout have radically transformed social relations, everyday life, and political action in Athens. These changes have been approached in different ways by academics from various disciplines with some who have actively sought to engage in the debate beyond their scholarship, each with their own ethics of political participation. This passage below reflects a small selection of the many words that have been produced in recent years, all of which are connected to different moment in time which focuses on the exceptional status of this period, and the ways in which the crisis is considered economic, social and political.

The [current] situation is exceptional and an unlimited critical understanding is urgent for two main reasons: one, due to the exceptional qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the crisis and two, because this is a period in which the neoliberal state (and its violent state and para-state apparatuses) is targeting any anti-systemic collective action – spontaneous or unspontaneous ... In Greece today we are experiencing a social crisis that has reached the level of claiming human lives daily. If the December 2008 revolt signified the spontaneous social response to the culminating social crisis that had been going on for over a decade of neoliberal configurations, the debt crisis is an escalation of this wider crisis carrying enormous structural violence and extending the state of exception (Dalakoglou, 2012: 541).

The notion of a state of exception, popularised by Agamben (2005), is considered by Dalakoglou to be an appropriate analytical mode for understanding contemporary governance. I almost crossed paths with Agamben in the Polytechnic campus on Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup> of November in 2013. He had arrived at 9am to lay a carnation. Someone posted a photo on twitter, which I noticed as I was walking there. He gave a lecture that night, invited by SYRIZA Youth and the Poulantzas Institute, to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising. It introduced by Athina Athanasiou, who stated, 'Forty years after the Polytechnic uprising, and at a time when the dominance of the crisis becomes a critical condition, collective poetry and the philosophical poetry of Agamben is urgently topical' (2013: online). In his lecture, Agamben argued that the governmental paradigm in Europe is non-democratic and non-political. Within certain countries – namely Greece and Italy – there is not a formally declared state of exception, but that in 'having to face a continuous state of exception, the government tends to take the form of a perpetual *coup d'état* ... This paradox would be an accurate description of what happens here in Greece as well as in Italy, where to govern means to make a continuous series of small *coups d'état*' (2013: online). Following Deleuze, he suggested that we [in Greece and Italy] have a 'Security State' that seeks to manage and control people, so that 'each dissention, each more or less violent attempt to overthrow its order, becomes an opportunity to

govern them in a profitable direction' (2013: online). As such, he argued for the abandonment of strategies of constituent power, which can be re-captured by the 'security state', and urged his audience to 'try to think something as a *puissance destituante*, a "purely destituent power" - a notoriously vague concept - that cannot be captured in the spiral of security' (*Ibid.*). He draws on Benjamin's *On the Critique of Violence* (1918) and Sorel's work on the myth of the General Strike (1908), which influenced Benjamin's text. While a constituent power destroys law only to recreate it in a new form, destituent power, in so far as it deposes the law once for all, can open a new historical epoch. What I want to take forward here, rather than the task of judging contemporary political action through a speculative consideration of destituent and constituent power, is Benjamin's notion of law-making and law-preserving violence. For some people, structural violence and state violence are recognised and named as such in a very concrete sense. The question of the *possibility* of breaking the cycle of lawmaking and law-preserving violence is central to my project, and in Chapters Six and Seven I explore the different imaginations of political action tied to different political myth-making.

My project is situated in a conception of the present that is indebted to Walter Benjamin's notion of the 'temporality of the present as the moment of destruction' (Benjamin and Osborne, 1994: xi). In this conceptualization, as Benjamin and Osborne note, the present is 'both the moment and the site of the actuality of the past. The past is contingent upon the action of the present: "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own threatens to disappear irretrievably" ' (Benjamin and Osborne, 1994: xii). As I will discuss in more depth in the following chapter, the remembrance practices that I am exploring in this project are all concerned with lived experiences of the present. I look at multiple practices that invoke the Polytechnic Uprising in ways that seek to 'destroy' other invocations of the uprising and to intervene in the current socio-political situation. I'm interested in exploring these invocations, or images of the past, in terms of political mythmaking, and the central question of such practices, which occur annually, is about this complex temporal *construction* of the present, which is - as we shall see - contested. It is through the wresting of tradition 'away from a conformism that is about to overpower' that 'both tradition and the present are constituted. The present is constructed in the destruction and reconstitution of tradition' (Benjamin and Osborne, 1994: xii).

These remembrance practices are explored in the thesis through focusing on its participants, a scale which is not often dealt with in work that attempts to theorise the present crisis.<sup>11</sup> As Vaiou states, 'As the crisis deepens, lively and often conflictual debates take place among politicians and commentators across the political spectrum, with arguments which become "obsolete" very fast as the speed of local, European and international developments increases' (2014:82). Much recent discussion has centred around the probability of a 'Grexit', the relations between different European finance ministers and heads of state, and the neo-colonial relations of core and peripheral European economies. Vaiou notes that such a

macroeconomic approach permits certain aspects of the crisis to surface/occupy central ground while others are hidden or deemed peripheral or perhaps "luxury" concerns ... [and] it is even more difficult to bring forward the "scale closest in", i.e.: the concrete bodies that suffer/resist the policies of austerity.' (Vaiou, 2014: 83)

This 'closer' scale is what my project focuses on; the people in this thesis are involved in everyday political action in their Athenian neighbourhoods and workplaces (if they are employed) and come together each year in November over three days in the Polytechnic. I want to situate these practices within a consideration of crisis as forms of structural violence, macro processes that profoundly shape the lived experiences and everyday political practice of people.

Ways of thinking about lived experiences has led to discussion of new subjectivities emerging in relation to the crisis (Douzinas, 2012, 2013) and indebtedness (Lazzaratto, 2013). In a series of conversations in 2013, Judith Butler and Athina Athanasiou discussed crisis as a mode of neoliberal governmentality, drawing on Harvey's (2003) 'accumulation by dispossession' through 'privatisation, financialisation, and management of crises, [whereby] jobs are taken away, hopes are obliterated and bodies are instrumentalised and worn out' (2013: 12). They argue that novel forms of dispossession engender new subjectivities and forms of coming together, a tentative performative, agonistic politics of appearance. In May 2014, Athanasiou elaborated on these thoughts as part of the 'Crisis-Scapes' conference that was held inside the Polytechnic itself, along with several authors whose work I have discussed in this section:

The state of crisis as a mode of neoliberal governmentality raises difficult questions about the links between precariousness and action, shame and solidarity, dispossession and intimacy. More specifically, it compels a consideration of how precariousness might shape political action, how a sense of shame might (or might not) trigger practices of solidarity, and how dispossession might (or might not) become the occasion for re-imagined and re-activated intimacies. Current regimes of

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<sup>11</sup> For brilliant anthropological work see Theodossopoulos (2014) and Rakopoulos (2014).

neoliberal governing through crisis management bring forth the (economized, but also gendered, sexed, and racialized) subject as a performative political arena of vulnerability and precariousness. (Athanasiou, 2014:72)

These tentative relations lead Athanasiou to argue that crisis has become an 'arena in which different forms of publicness are enacted and negotiated. As emergent subjectivities, affective communities, and spaces of non-compliance take shape in various multilayered city-scapes of crisis, [and] different forms of civic protest' (2014: 76). This hopeful proposition seeks to counter or transform the violence of austerity measures and takes into account the new networks of solidarity movements, collectivities, and bodies in the street. She names the inherent 'tension between, on the one side, the differential distribution and regulation of the terms of precariousness as an instrument of neoliberal governmentality and, on the other side, the struggle to reclaim the terms of a livable life without erasing vulnerability,' as 'precarious intensity.' (2014: 76)

Precarious intensity implies an agonistic (instead of antagonistic) way of attending to vulnerability; an agonistic engagement which often takes place within a contested public space, or within a contested realm of embodying public space (Athanasiou, 2014: 76)

This focus on precarious intensities as intertwined with specific spaces of the city, and the struggle to reclaim the terms of a livable life through political action in public space, connects to a rich and constantly evolving body of literature from young Greek 'activist-scholars,' such as Kallianos, Rakopoulos, Tsilimpounidi and Walsh, whose work I hope to build on in my thesis.

### **Mapping the Thesis**

This research is a study not of the Polytechnic uprising itself, nor of judging the 'right' way of invoking the Polytechnic in the present or the 'correct' delineation of its relationship with contemporary political action. It entails a closer examination of the processes through which the Polytechnic uprising is invoked and how these are meaningful for people. There are four aims to this starting point: 1) understanding that there are a plurality of invocations, which are worked on by different collectivities, including the government and mainstream media; 2) understanding how such invocations are inherently intertwined with and specific to the 'present'; 3) understanding how meaning is made through participating in the spaces and temporalities of collective remembrance, in terms of political subjectivity and affective agency; 4) understanding how these remembrance practices are interventions that can be considered forms of indirect resistance.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the theoretical concerns that guide my research questions, namely the relationships between political myth, resistant political action and subjectivities in urban public space. Using a theoretical framework constructed through the interplay with my fieldwork, I discuss how this project proposes to conceptualise the invocations of the Polytechnic Uprising, as well as how its annual remembrance has been written about in the literature and how this work relates to that on the remembrance of other uprisings and resistance movements. This discussion intervenes in debates about remembrance and commemoration, which brings us to consider what a philosophy of political myth might contribute. I will then outline how my thinking about remembrance practices of political mythmaking is entwined with ideas about spatial politics, and how this project seeks to build on work in the inter-disciplinary fields of resistance studies and urban studies. I outline how I propose to theoretically explore the ways in which political myths produce spaces and temporalities that are a possible site of the radical imaginary. Lastly, I turn to how this project proposes to understand how invoking the Polytechnic uprising is meaningful for people through notions of political subjectivity and affective agency.

In Chapter Three, I reflect on the mixed methods I have used to approach a 'sociology of political myth', as the political philosopher Bottici has described it (2007). I argue that mixed ethnographic methods facilitates an exploration of the richness and texture of the political mythology of the Polytechnic Uprising. In the methods section, I describe how I analyse remembrance practices, as well as other practices that invoke the uprising, such as protest, artworks, singing, everyday practices in public space, and texts, including academic and political works, pamphlets, and audiovisual material. Finally I reflect on the process of doing fieldwork, my position 'in the field' and the methodological challenges and opportunities this brought up.

Chapters Four to Seven are the substantive chapters of my thesis, where I attempt to disentangle the multiple Polytechnics through analyzing the 'dominant' and 'counteractive' political myths. Naming them as such is not an attempt to taxonomise them, but a means of understanding the specificities of the different invocations, and the particular spaces, times, and affective atmospheres and collective agency generated through remembrance practices. Throughout these chapters I show how these practices are forms of indirect resistance.

In Chapter Four, following a Lefebvrian approach to the social production of space as outlined in Chapter Two, I describe some of the geographies and histories of

Exarcheia, including those produced in academic representations, through interviews and everyday conversations, political pamphlets, and poetry. I then discuss how the Polytechnic is crucial to everyday political action, primarily through the introduction of the Academic Asylum Law (AAL). I explore how the AAL exceeds its legal function, is integral to the social imaginary of Exarcheia, and how it enables specific kinds of organizing and occupation. Finally, I discuss the annual Polytechnic occupation practices and the coming together over three days during the Polytechnic commemoration. Here the discussion centres on how these remembrance practices contribute to the production of Exarcheia and the Polytechnic as spaces of contentious politics. Furthermore, drawing on Benjamin's critique of historical time, I explore how participants experience the specific calendric invocation of the Polytechnic uprising as an affective space and time, and reflexively engage with notions of its annual invocation as 'tradition'.

In Chapter Five I discuss the 'dominant' political myths of the Polytechnic uprising. Having situated the Polytechnic campus in Exarcheia in the previous chapter, here I identify the 'dominant' political myths that are produced through remembrance practices, how people perceive their dominance and how this shapes their efforts to contest them. The sources of these political myths are slippery, as there is no single myth-maker, but specific images of the uprising constitute important elements of the dominant social imaginary of the contemporary Greek nation-state, such as the bloodied Greek flag. In this chapter I explore how the official mythology of the uprising reproduces it as non-violent, heroic and 'democratic', intertwining it with the metapolitefsi period. During the 'present' of my fieldwork, this work on myth legitimises different state practices and the various 'dominant' political myths come to the fore in the remembrance practices of the annual march and wreath-laying. In particular, I discuss that of the uprising as ushering in the Third Hellenic Republic, which creates a temporality of linear progress, positioning contemporary Greece as a peaceful democratic nation-state. I then consider how this political myth aimed to reinforce the presentation of the then government as the peaceful, safe centre and to legitimize the discourse constructing the Far-Right and the Far-Left as the 'two extremes' in 2012 and 2013. I also discuss the political myth of the 'Polytechnic Generation' through which the period of the metapolitefsi and the Polytechnic Uprising are intertwined and the protagonists of the uprising are simultaneously celebrated as heroes, on the one hand, and held accountable for the current crisis, on the other. Lastly I explore the ritual of the annual march from the Polytechnic campus to the American embassy on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, which, through its affective



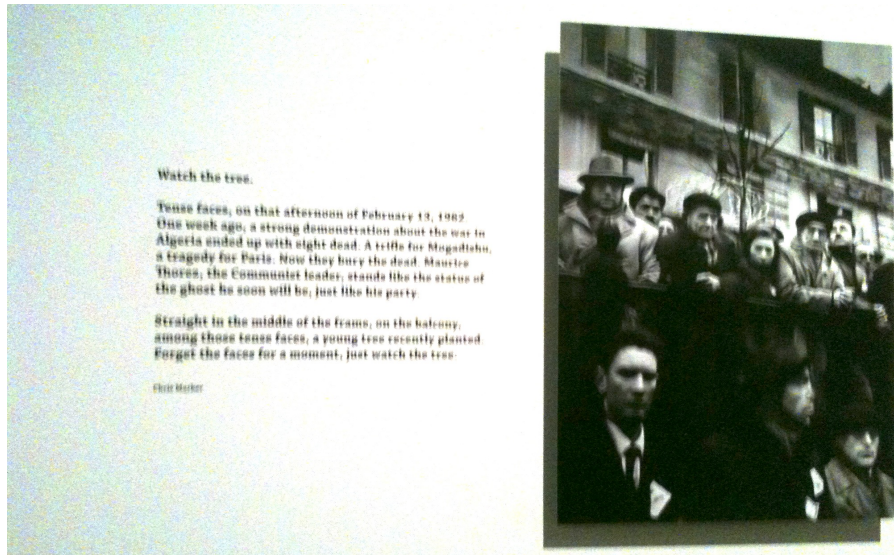
atmosphere, brings together thousands of people with different imaginations of the uprising and political action in the present.

Chapter Six specifically deals with political myth making of the Polytechnic uprising, which works to create an analogy between 1973 and the present through the use of dialectical images. I discuss how the temporality that these political myths create is one that considers 1973 and the present at once to declare the contemporary socio-political situation a 'contemporary Junta'. I examine the ways in which specific speech acts, artefacts, and practices perform analogies between the Polytechnic and the present. I argue that the content of these political myths, as well as the embodied practices of making and sharing these political myths, contest and unsettle the dominant political myths of the uprising, as explored in Chapter Four. First I look at the slogans and graffiti that enact a correspondence between the dictatorship and the present. I then explore the dedication-making practices of an artist-activist as a way of discussing the different affective registers and forms of embodied resistance that are narrated through multi-sensorial visual artefacts. From there I turn to the exhibition-making practices of the youth group of Synaspismos (the main party in the SYRIZA coalition). I analyse the physical dialectical cards this group created and the fears of state and fascist violence that they bring to the fore. I then turn to look at how the workers of the ERT, the national state broadcaster, who had been recently been evicted from an occupation of the ERT premises, broadcast from within the Polytechnic in November 2013, and the affective atmosphere they generated through utilizing the political myth of a 'contemporary Junta'.

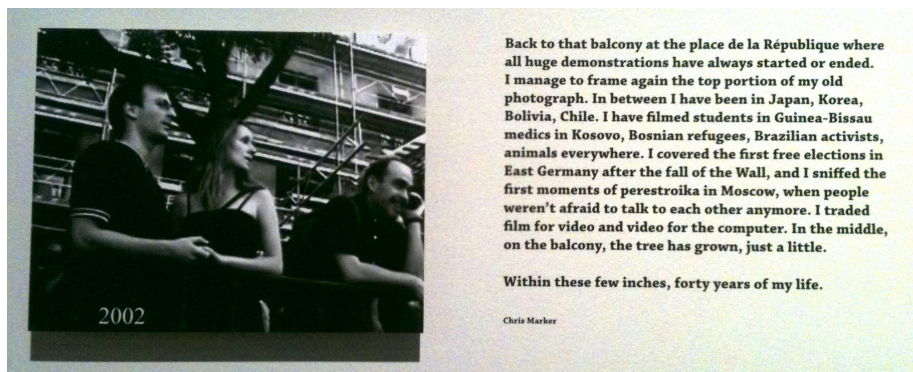
In Chapter Seven I discuss other ways in which images of the past are invoked in the space and time of the Polytechnic commemoration. Here, remembrance practices are not just about 1973, but about the recovery of other moments too, which situate 1973 as one node in a constellation of important political events. This chapter is concerned with embodied invocations of the past within the commemoration that do not engage with an analogous gesture: the singing of songs from the Greek Resistance and Civil War; the production and experience of a cine-event of 'Greek resistance'; invoking December 2008 and Syntagma 2011 in speech; and the critique of the 'nostalgic aesthetics' by participants. Rather than comparing 1973 and the present, these interventions and artefacts bring other moments to bear on the present, creating temporalities which aim to 'seize the past' through practices of citation and montage. I discuss the relationship that such invocations have with contemporary political action, and how they are meaningful for people in terms of affects of rage and

disappointment. Here, participants are angry with the official political myths discussed in Chapter Five, as well as with those which instrumentalise the Polytechnic uprising, an implicit critique of the myth-making practices explored in Chapter Six. I build on the arguments made in Chapters Four, Five and Six to show how participating in remembrance practices is meaningful for people, in terms of affective agency, and as a form of everyday resistance. Through these embodied remembrance practices of political myth making, people create spaces and temporalities through which they share affinities and disappointment with nostalgic aesthetics.

Going forwards, this thesis will seek to discuss the competing invocations of the Polytechnic uprising, arguing that it is important to understand the material practices of these processes of myth-making. I contend that careful attention to the power of political myths is critical in a time when we are dominated by national political myths that attempt to delegitimize contentious political action and when Far-Right parties work on myth as a way of mobilizing affects of hatred. We cannot overcome myth with 'truth' – but we can attempt to unpack the ways in which diverse myths are meaningful for people. While most political myths have been explored at a national scale, I hope to show how political myths are created and shared at a local level, and examine the interplay between different political myths. The central question for the people spoken to in this thesis is around maintaining the capacity to resist, to borrow Howard Caygill's phrase (2013). In this period of precarious intensity, I explore how creating, sharing, and critiquing political myths are meaningful practices, and can be considered forms of indirect resistance, with the annual commemoration a resource that sustains the capacity to resist. Working on myth is a pedagogical, creative, collaborative process through which the makers can open up a critique of contemporary socio-political situation. The sharing of political myths as part of remembrance practices constitutes a meaningful, agonistic and convivial coming together. Political myths open up a critique of the contemporary socio-political situation for people who participate in the commemoration. They should not be dismissed, but interrogated.



Watch the tree.  
 Tense faces, on that afternoon of February 13, 1962.  
 One week ago, a strong demonstration about the war in Algeria ended up with eight dead. A trifle for Mogadishu, a tragedy for Paris. Now they bury the dead. Maurice Thorez, the Communist leader, stands like the statue of the ghost he soon will be, just like his party. Straight in the middle of the frame, on the balcony, among those tense faces, a young tree recently planted. Forget the faces for a moment, just watch the tree.



Back to that balcony at the place de la République where all huge demonstrations have always started or ended. I manage to frame again the top portion of my old photograph. In between I have been in Japan, Korea, Bolivia, Chile. I have filmed students in Guinea-Bissau, medics in Kosovo, Bosnian refugees, Brazilian activists, animals everywhere. I covered the first free elections in East Germany after the fall of the Wall, and I sniffed the first moments of perestroika in Moscow, when people weren't afraid to talk to each other anymore. I traded film for video and video for the computer. In the middle, on the balcony, the tree has grown, just a little.

Within these few inches, forty years of my life.

5. Chris Marker

Whitechapel Gallery, May 2014

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **POLITICAL MYTH, SPACE, TEMPORALITY, AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF RESISTANCE**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the theoretical concerns that guide my research questions; the relationships between the multiple spaces and temporalities of political myths of the Polytechnic uprising and everyday political action. In this chapter I set out what I mean by these terms. I will discuss five critical and interconnected key concepts which underpin my analysis, defining each one as well as fleshing out its relationship to the others. First I discuss how I conceptualise invocations of the Polytechnic uprising as political myths. I then bring the concept of political myth into dialogue with literature on the social production of space and place and on the different conceptions of time that they bring into being. Lastly, I discuss how I explore political mythmaking as a site of the social and radical imagination, as well as performative practices of affective agency and forms of indirect resistance. As such, this project seeks to bring the inter-disciplinary field of urban studies into dialogue with political myth.

#### **Invoking the Past: Remembrance and Political Myth**

In this section I set out the conceptual framework that I draw on to explore and understand the invocations of the Polytechnic. Examining political myth allows for an interrogation of how participants in the commemoration intertwine the uprising with present political concerns and relate remembrance practices to everyday political action. The approach of much scholarship on political myth treats it as an object. Here I focus on political myth-making as collective and continual processes and on the people who are participating in remembrance practices rather than those who participated in the uprising itself, which distinguishes this thesis from other research on remembrance. I will first discuss how some historians and urban scholars draw on the memory studies canon to embark on similar projects considering the invocation of past events in urban public space. I also discuss the use of myth with regards to past uprisings and resistance movements. From here, I outline the concept of political myth that I am working with and why it is the most relevant and fruitful for this project.

#### *Remembrance and Urban Uprisings*

A recent book by the historian Kostis Kornetis is the first in-depth research focusing

on the generation of students who participated in the Polytechnic uprising, using oral history methods to explore the cultural and political currents of the anti-dictatorship movement. While his focus is on the concerns of the students during the dictatorship, he bookends his analysis with reference to my research topic - contemporary invocations of the Polytechnic uprising. In his conclusion he states:

Last but not least, the Polytechnic was *memorialized as the major act of resistance* during the seven years of authoritarianism, thus serving as one of the *founding myths* of the post-1974 Greek Republic. If the standard way for a society to overcome a traumatic period is through the homogenization of collective memory, in Greece this was done through the hagiography of student resistance and its epically bloody conclusion as a token of the Greek people's resistance to authoritarianism. In many respects, the Polytechnic was used to whitewash the lack of systematic dissent against the dictatorial regime of the Colonels. The relative consensus during the six-plus-one years of its existence was obliterated in this celebration and followed by collective amnesia. The current economic crisis, however, has generated a new trend: that of *complete dismissal of both the entire period of the transition to democracy and of the Polytechnic generation in particular*, blaming them for all later ills of Greek society. *This threatens the very foundations on which post-authoritarian collective memory has been constructed.* It remains to be seen in what ways the contestation of this hitherto *quintessential national lieu de mémoire* is going to affect the country's political culture and self-image in the years to come. (Kornetis, 2013: 327-8, my emphasis)

While alluding to the work of Pierre Nora and Maurice Halbwachs, Kornetis hints at two of the ways in which the uprising is invoked: by the state, through the institution of a national school holiday on November 17; and also by the public in their 'complete dismissal' of the *metapolitefsi* and the 'Polytechnic Generation' in the context of the current crisis. If Kornetis finds it useful to consider the Polytechnic in terms of collective memory and as a *national lieu de mémoire*, the question I address here is why I eschew these concepts, and instead frame my investigation in terms of remembrance practices and the spaces and temporalities of political myths.

Cities as sites of 'urban memory' have provided scholars from across disciplines with an empirical field of inquiry (See: Crinson, 2005; Crang and Travlou 2001; Jordan 2006; Legg 2005b; Srinivas 2001; Till 2005). Notably, Huyssen (2000, 2002, 2003) has argued that since the 1980s the 'focus has shifted from present futures to present pasts' (2000: 21). There are insights that I draw from this oeuvre, especially the general focus on the 'non-rational': imaginations, desires, and the palimpsest-like nature of cities. However, this scholarship draws on memory studies and has been heavily influenced by the work of Nora and Halbwachs, which creates a parallel between 'collective' and 'national' memory. Indeed, while memory studies is a heterogeneous discipline (see Till, 2006), collective memory has been approached within this work on the scale of the national. This is despite the fact that, according to Jay Winter, 'Halbwachs never intended his concept of *la mémoire collective* to be

translated as national memory. He meant instead the memories shared by different groups of people, whose sense of their past told them who they were' (Winter, 2012: ix).

More nuanced is work concerned with commemoration and urban space, which focuses on concepts of collective memory as 'embedded within and constrained by particular socio-spatial conditions' (Rose-Redwood et al., 2008: 161). Here, however, collective memory is still invoked in an overly static fashion for the purposes of my project, and would betray the diversity, heterogeneity and fragmentation of practices that I aim to illuminate. Even at the purported beginning of a 'third wave' of memory studies, its proponents 'have widely assumed the homogeneity of the commemorating groups and privilege tangible manifestations of memory' (Feindt et al., 2014: 25). Nas (1998) highlights the 'polyvocal' nature of 'urban commemorative symbols,' which have official meanings as well as informal references attached to them, 'enforcing, neutralising and even counteracting the original intention' (547). However, this tends to divide symbols along an unofficial/official binary, and I am interested in the multiplicity of collectivities who invoke the Polytechnic in the present as political interventions, and the diverse meanings of such invocations. Here, I am not homogenizing commemoration 'from below' but examining how different collectivities – who from the outside are named as simply 'the Left' – are heterogeneous, with different imaginations of political action.

While the Polytechnic campus itself could be considered a *lieu de mémoire*, understood as an 'embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists,' (Nora, 1989: 7) I follow those who argue that such a notion is grounded in a conception of time and history that is linear and progressivist (Feindt et al., 2014). The notion has further been critiqued as being 'tinged by nostalgia,' and written in response to the waning project of the *grande nation* (Assmann, 2013: 82). Assmann argues that an interest in the *lieux de mémoire*, places of memory, for Nora is a compensation – and a 'fake replacement' (Assmann, 2013: 83) – for the loss of the *milieux de mémoire*, authentic, embodied and embedded memory (Nora, 1989: 7). As we will see in the second part of this chapter, the idea of an authentic experience of historical time is indebted to the thought of Heidegger. While this project is interested in the creation of temporalities, it examines the temporality of each political myth on its own terms, rather than judging it on the basis of 'authenticity'. While I am interested in the way in which the Polytechnic uprising is invoked in the present by the state, and on the national level as having heralded a reformist moment of Greek

'democracy' (explored in Chapter Four), I focus mostly on the ways in which people who participate in everyday resistant political action invoke multiple Polytechnics, as political interventions on the present (Chapter Five to Seven). As such, the question is how to attend to the multifarious invocations, and the processes that produce them? This is where I turn to concepts of collective remembrance and political myth.

To re-iterate, this project explores invocations of the past in the *present*. As such I am interested in how people participate in remembrance practices that intervene in the *contemporary* socio-political situation: how and why is invoking the Polytechnic Uprising meaningful in the present, in relation to peoples' everyday political action? Collective remembrance, following Winter and Sivan, emphasizes activity and agency, and is a product of people who come together 'not necessarily at the behest of the state or any of its subsidiary organisations, but because they must speak out' (2000: 9). Distinguishing this concept from 'collective memory', a 'phrase without purchase', they argue that 'through the constant interrogation of actors and actions, we separate "collective memory" from a vague wave of associations which supposedly come over an entire population when a set of past events is mentioned' (2000:9). In their work on European remembrance and myth, Bottici and Challand build on this conception to draw distinctions between institutional, public, and pedagogical remembrance. Here, remembrance denotes a process, and as such the question of what role these forms play remains open (Bottici and Challand, 2013: 51). All three of the forms that Bottici and Challand delineate are important for understanding the variegated political myths of the Polytechnic uprising, as I discuss in the next section.

Crucially, this thesis is concerned with those who participate in collective remembrance practices in the present rather than the protagonists of the 1973 Polytechnic uprising. Here we must be attentive to the 'entangledness of acts of remembering' (Feindt et al., 2014: 43) as well as the fact that 'it is not possible to neatly separate remembering and forgetting. Every act of remembrance, whether individual or collective, necessarily involves selective, partial, or otherwise biased forms of forgetting (Assmann and Shortt, 2012: 5). The different invocations of the Polytechnic that I consider are connected to daily political activities and contestation of violent state practices. The invocations produce space, place, and temporalities, which aim to mobilise people in the present. As with contemporary Argentinian practices of crying '*Aparacion*' which 'resounds not only those disappeared during the military dictatorship of 1976-83, but also to those disappeared in recent times,' (Bell, 2014: 19), the focus here is on contemporary concerns with state violence: '[T]his is a

politics of the *present*, of present (in)securities, not a politics of memory' (2014: 21). As such, this thesis is not about the past; the people here are seeking justice in the present, and the question is how those who are politically active *today* draw meaning from and make use of the Polytechnic.

An assembled literature on the remembrance of uprisings shows that there are diverse disciplinary approaches to understanding the multiple contemporary invocations of contentious political events of the past. Notable work has been done on the remembrance of the 1976 Soweto uprising (Marshall, 2006) and the 1992 Los Angeles uprising (Gooding-Williams, 1993). Much of this work deals with contemporary memorialisation and monumentality, or with contestation over the representation of past events, and focusing on the original protagonists. Scholarship on the 1980 Kwangju uprising<sup>12</sup> exemplifies these tendencies, and I will look at two works in particular. Attending to the multiple invocations of the 1980 Kwangju uprising over twenty years, Linda Lewis's longitudinal analysis of the annual commemoration in Kwangju describes the 'changing character of May from lamentation to celebration' (2002: 109), alongside the shifting national and local political terrain in the 1990s. In examining the political implications of remembrance, she explores how the 'splits in the 5.18 movement mirror the fault lines in the national political discourse', with diverse remembrance practices reflecting the different political groups who have local differences regarding the narrative of the uprising, and the 'civic image Kwangju will carry into the twenty-first century' (110). In distinction to Lewis, the political groups I focus on *did not* participate in the Polytechnic Uprising itself. She does write about the ways in which 'other national social movements that have historically claimed 5.18 as part of their own *minjung* struggle narrative' participate in the anniversary. In particular, she considers how the student movement have been displaced to the margins, while the democratic labour movement have managed to continue participating in the official anniversary event by abandoning more militant tactics and slogans (156-161). Nonetheless, Lewis' primary commitments lie with the protagonists of the original 5.18 movement, 'whose personal histories are counterhegemonic, whose very bodies even offer a site for resistance to the imposition of a singular 5.18 narrative' (153), and the ongoing marginalization of this group.

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<sup>12</sup> The Uprising took place in Kwangju, South Korea, from May 18 – 27 1980. It began when students protesting against the Military dictatorship were killed by government troops, and citizens took arms, occupying and blockading downtown Kwangju. The uprising is also called the 'May 18 Democratic Uprising' by UNESCO. There is no official death toll, which numbers from approximately 600 to 2000 persons.



Empirical work on myth, remembrance, and contentious politics has frequently embraced a concept of myth that does not attend to its potential richness as a conceptual framework. Don Baker (2003) uses Cohen's (1997) framework of myth as one way of disentangling what he calls 'competing visions' of the events of the Kwangju uprising, from the viewpoint of non-participants. This framework delineates three different perspectives of historical events: that of eyewitnesses in contemporaneous reports; the accounts woven together by historians; and finally the lessons drawn by later generations 'to guide them in coping with problems they face in their own time' (2003: 89-90). Defining myths as narratives constructed out of the historical and eyewitness accounts of 'May 18,' Baker analyses them within a 'traditional Sino-Korean philosophy' of yin and yang.<sup>13</sup> While his analysis of the significance of myths in popular culture is fascinating, there is significant conceptual slippage in their analytical usage, interchangeable with 'depictions,' 'portrayals,' or 'interpretations' (91-106). Despite employing Cohen's concept of myth as a 'usable past' (2003: 104) Baker does not attend to the ways in which these myths are actually used in the present, and how they are meaningful for the people who create or consume them as popular culture. Rather he is concerned with myths that over-emphasise the yin or yang perspective, and posits that 'the best myth of May 18 would include the political ideals of the heroes ... [and] also the deaths of those who were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time' (2003: 106, my emphasis). In my research project, I eschew the aim of judging the 'correct' myth, and understand a plurality of political myths as subject to evaluation on the basis of the extent to which they open up, or close down, critique of the present socio-political situation and as a means for acting on the present (Bottici, 2007).

Similarly, Alessandro Portelli's work on the role of myth in the Italian communist resistance to fascism during the Second World War (2003; 2012) resonates with my project, as we will see in Chapter Seven. The Communist resistance and subsequent Civil War is frequently invoked in Polytechnic remembrance practices, and the protagonists of the Polytechnic uprising themselves drew on the Communist resistance. The aspects of Portelli's work that I critically discuss here emerge from his exploration of how two events become intertwined in a 'balanced system of inter-related myths, in which one narrative supports another' (2012: 219): the Massacre at Fosse Ardeatine, where 335 people were killed by German soldiers, and the story of

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<sup>13</sup> Yin and yang 'indicate more than the contrast of passive suffering with active resistance.' They are intertwined and 'define and create each other' (91). The 'yin' perspective focuses on the people of Kwangju as victims 'who were mostly apolitical until they were attacked by Chun Doo Hwan's paratroopers,' and the 'yang' focuses on them 'as heroes, idealistic political activists who risked their lives in a noble attempt to build a democratic and just society' (*Ibid.*).

Salvo D'Acquisto. His argument is summarized below:

While the anti-partisan myth of via Rasella was used to represent the Resistance as a sectarian, irresponsible and semi-criminal enterprise, the myth of Salvo D'Acquisto countered the narrative of the Resistance as armed struggle with a more acceptable image: resistance was all right if it was passive rather than militant, if it was carried out by authorised officials rather than insurgent guerrillas, if it saved lives rather than endangering them, and if it resulted in the sacrificial death of the hero rather than of Nazis. (221)

While I am in agreement with the use of oral histories to seek justice for those who have been marginalized and oppressed by the state, Portelli's use of the term myth is problematic, and this is where my critique lies. The term itself is not defined in his work, and I would argue that he is actually concerned with ongoing struggles over representations of the Resistance and their political implications, rather than with myth per se. His passionate and compelling accounts hope to rectify injustices endured by the anti-fascist communist resistance fighters, through delineating which memory is 'correct' and which is 'wrong'. In reference to his discussion with a retired *cabiniere*, he notes that 'the tension between the two stories of Salvo D'Acquisto - the "facts" and the myth - was made evident in an interview,' (2012: 216) and he identifies which parts of a person's narrative are 'false': 'I tried to point out that this version contradicts the one they just told me, in which he turns himself in voluntarily. They just couldn't understand what I was talking about. Not only are myths more necessary than history, but are not even required to agree with each other' (218).

Portelli makes an apparent connection between a 'wrong memory' and 'myth'. Not only is this equation of myth with falsity adherent with Enlightenment values, as discussed above, but he appears to discuss the different stories in terms of a binary of myth and counter-myth. Contemporary invocation of historical narratives is necessarily a more complex and messy affair, as we will see in the case of the Polytechnic uprising. The question that Portelli's interpretation of myth raises is whether it is possible to find justice through righting popular wrongs, and rendering them 'mythical'. He identifies the church and the state as leading proponents of propagating particular myths, and as such there is much at stake in the task of contesting such dominant narratives through oral histories. However, the role that Portelli assigns to myth is overly simplistic and fixed. He states that myth 'functions as an interchangeable set of stories that all support a preconceived conclusion: "The Communist partisans are to blame"' (2003:8). This poses the question: can myths and stories be interchangeable just because we do not agree with them? Portelli states that the myths he describes have been 'challenged, at least in terms of public

discourse, [and] alternative narratives have emerged. There is a whole series of misunderstandings which are politically motivated, humanly motivated, and of course, ideologically motivated' (2003: 8). Here Portelli again elides myth with misunderstanding and falsity, and as such rests within a widespread Western genealogy of myth that ends with 'the common view of *mythos* and *logos* as opposites, as false and true discourse respectively' (Bottici, 2007: 21).

While such work is clearly of critical importance, my project seeks to respond to the apparent gap in the literature on remembrance practices as political interventions in the present, employed by those who did not experience the original events. My research project covers two commemorations of the Polytechnic, those of November 2012 and 2013. Understanding the annual invocations of the Polytechnic uprising as processes and practices of collective remembrance *alone* does not fully address the questions I have set out. To attend to the changing meaning and content of the invocations during this period, which actively seek to intervene in the *present*, I turn to a philosophy of political myth.

#### *Political Myth: A Determination to Act on the Present*

Political myth (Bottici, 2007) is a fruitful philosophical construct to work with because the concept allows us to account for the ways in which practices of invoking the Polytechnic uprising are meaningful for people who are involved in everyday political action (Bottici, 2007). The starting point for the concept of political myth that I am using is a reworking of the genealogy of myth, as Bottici puts it, 'an attempt to recall the conceptual movement that gave birth to the view of myth as "untruth" and "unreal"' (2007: 81). Relegating myth to falsity, Bottici argues, is to take the 'point of view of a unique truth (sacred *logos*) and of an absolutism of reason (Enlightenment)' (81-82). The approach to myth which positions it in contradistinction to truth is widespread, not only in the social sciences, but also in contemporary theories of political myth (see Flood, 1996; Lincoln, 1989; Bell, 1992).

Tracing a different conception of political myth, Bottici draws on Wittgenstein, Spinoza, Sorel, and, most significantly, Blumenberg. Sorel's notion of myth as 'progressive' is contrasted with Cassirer's work, where myth is 'regressive'. Sorel's formulation of the myth of socialism defines myth as:

A body of images capable of evoking instinctively all the sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by socialism against modern society...the general strike groups them all in a coordinated picture and, by

bringing them together, gives to each one of them its maximum intensity; appealing to their painful memories of particular conflicts, it colours with an intense life all the details of the composition presented to consciousness. We thus obtain that intuition of socialism which language cannot give us with perfect clearness – and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously. (Sorel, 1908:113, my emphasis)

This conception of a 'body of images' is a crucial starting point to thinking about political myth as contrasted with language. Sorel argues that 'only myths could move man [sic] across the threshold between speech and action, by transcending politics based on rational calculation' (Tager, 1986: 629). This notion of going beyond an ideal of politics as rational is fundamental to further discussion of the role of affect in political action and subverts the Arendtian image of the political animal endowed by rational speech (1958). Indeed, as Benjamin noted in his 1928 essay on surrealism 'only images in the mind motivate the will' (Benjamin, 2005: 217). I will thus discuss the concepts of images and affect that have been useful in this project in the second and third parts of this chapter. The importance of considering political myth in relation to everyday political activity is that it helps us in understanding the importance of all that is not 'rational' about collective political action. As Bottici notes, myth is 'made of images, figures, and characters' (Bottici, 2007: 106).

This does not, however, mean that, following the self-representation of the Enlightenment, we must understand myth and rationality as being mutually exclusive. It simply means that the two categories must be analytically distinct if we want to capture the specificity of myth. Myth is not incompatible with rationality, but, at the same time, it does not coincide with it. (Bottici, 2007: 106)

The important thing here is not to view myths as irrational or in distinction to truth. There is no true or false political myth of the Polytechnic uprising. This standpoint is a continuation of Wittgenstein's (1979) critique of Frazer's view of myth in the *Golden Bough* as 'mistakes', in which he argues that 'there is a whole set of meanings and actions that human beings carry out in their everyday life and these meanings and actions do not rest on any expectation of truth, and do not therefore presuppose any theory' (cited in Bottici, 2007: 83-84).

There are three aspects of political myth that are productive to consider in an investigation into its relationship with everyday political action: political myth operates with figurative means;<sup>14</sup> it can deal with all sorts of contents (nothing is mythical per se); and it presents itself as a narrative.<sup>15</sup> (2007: 114) Furthermore it is narrative that provides not just meaning, but also significance, through placing events

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<sup>14</sup> For example, we can think of 'myth' as form of poetic expression that relies on figurative tools.

<sup>15</sup> Here, narratives are sequences of events, but it is how these narratives are 'acts of telling' and 'acts of interpreting' that is important. Bottici follows Wittgenstein here, but one could also look to Hall (1981). I will talk more about this in the methodology chapter.

in a plot (115). Stories of the Polytechnic can be invoked by synecdoche and can be narrativised in many ways. Political myths live out of kernels of the history of the Polytechnic uprising, but in order to function as political myths (rather than closed or sacred myths) they have to have *present significance*, and contain within their narrative a *determination to act*. A crucial aspect to understanding the specificity of the narratives of political myth, is that they form a *process*,<sup>16</sup> and that this process is inherently *plural*. As Bottici writes: 'To catch the intrinsic plurality of myth one cannot simply analyse single myths, that is, the stories that we can fortuitously collect or find in books. These are only the final products of myth, the reified traces of the work of myth' (2007: 99). Drawing on Blumenberg, she asserts that myth is 'best understood as a process that is, at the same time, an act of saying and an act of doing' (*Ibid.*). Furthermore, there are no single myth-makers: 'There are narrators, on the one hand, and receivers or potential re-narrators, on the other – without there being any possibility of tracing any sharp division between the two' (*Ibid.*). Bottici builds on Blumenberg's (1985) theory of myth as 'work on myth', which posits myth as a *process of the continual reworking of a basic narrative core or mythologem*, rather than as a product that is given once and for all. The same myth changes over time, as 'on each occasion, it is re-appropriated by different needs. In order to work as a myth, a narrative must always answer a need for significance. If it cannot do so, it simply ceases to be a myth' (Blumenberg, 1985 in Bottici, 2007: 7). Conceptualised as such, political myth helps us to unpack why the Polytechnic is still meaningful – significant – for different people, in different ways, in relation to the contemporary socio-political situation.

If myths are only political if they are meaningful and relevant to the socio-political situation in which they are produced, then a core question for my project, following on from Bottici, is why certain myths take hold, or reemerge as meaningful, to be worked on in new ways in the 'contemporary' time of 'crisis'. Referencing Marx's account of the Eighteenth Brumaire, Bottici argues that political myth raises the question of '*why* people needed to represent their action precisely in this way and *not* whether this served to conceal the real interests at state' (2007: 192, my emphasis). In Bottici's study, the question centres on why the French revolutionaries use Roman customs, and not Greek ones. Why 'could only the narrative of the Roman Republic provide significance to them in those particular circumstances?' (2007: 192) A constellation of images, ideas, and icons take the form of a narrative, on the basis of which it can be grounded and accumulate significance. Here there are a series of events that are cast

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<sup>16</sup> Rather than Lincoln (1989), Floor (year) and Tudor (1972) who all treat political myth as objects.

in dramatic form, and it 'is from the impression of being part of such drama that the typically strong pathos of a political myth derives' (196).

[Political myths] might be abstract models, but they are always at the same time a determination to act - they are narratives that prompt people to action precisely because they answer a need for significance. Political myths therefore cannot be falsified: the fact that what they contain has not or will not be realised does not diminish their power. This is a continuation of Sorel's thinking - political myths must not be judged as astrological almanacs, but as a means for acting on the present.' (183-4)

This research project proposes that the examination of political myths – how they are produced, circulated, and understood – provides a productive framework for analysing how and why there are multiple invocations of the Polytechnic uprising in the present, and the ways in which participating in their creation, sharing and interpretation is meaningful for people. Through being grounded in the present, political myths are narratives that, as Bottici notes, put people *within* the drama on the stage. To reiterate, there are a plurality of myths, and 'work on myth', and a myth is best understood as a process, a simultaneous act of '*saying*' and '*doing*'. To summarise:

A political myth arises out of a narrative because it (a) coagulates and reproduces significance, (b) is shared by a given group, and (c) can address the specifically political conditions in which a given group lives...A political myth cannot be falsified: It does not claim to describe the world; it aims to create its own world. If political myths are prophecies, then, we must add, they are self-fulfilling prophecies. (Bottici and Challand, 2013:92)

Political myth is situated – and is often entangled with – ideology, utopia and historical narrative, but differentiated from these forms, through being grounded in the present and in potentially incomplete narratives that respond to a present significance, impelling people to act in the here and now. The myths of the Polytechnic uprising live out of history, (Bottici, 2007: 200) as it is only when historical narratives come to respond to a need for significance in the present do they work as political myths. Although Bottici does not reference Walter Benjamin, I find that his preoccupation with myth resonates with my project. Joseph Mali describes Benjamin's fascination with Luis Aragon's novel *Paris Peasant*,<sup>17</sup> which he considered to 'demonstrate the latent mythology in the modern city' yet 'did not offer any critical, let alone theoretical assessment of "modern mythology"' (Mali, 1999: 174-5). As such, according to Mali, Benjamin proposed to interrogate mythology through inverting the romantic terms governing the entwinement of myth and history:

His call for the 'dissolution of "mythology" into the space of history' was an attempt

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<sup>17</sup> According to Kofman and Lebas, Lefebvre also cites this book 'in particular', 'whose mythologies for modern times could be constructed from threatened arcades ... and Lefebvre comments that the contrast between the pleasures and desires of the arcade and the functional and divided spaces in the streets must have inspired the surrealists (1973: 191 in 1996: 11). They also note that 'Benjamin had read Lefebvre' (Anderson, 1976: 37)

to invert the romantic terms by which the entwinement of myth and history has been commonly perceived. In other words he wanted to show that history was not really determined by certain mythical beliefs, images, and tales but rather that certain historical conditions of material and anthropological necessities determined these mythic forms and compulsions. (175)

In correspondence with Hofmannstahl in 1925, Benjamin writes that he had read Cassirer's *Die Begriffsform in Mythischen Denken*, and 'remained unconvinced that it is feasible not only to attempt to present mythical thought in concepts – i.e., critically – but also to illuminate it adequately in contrast to what is conceptual' (Benjamin, 1994: 287). Mali sees this as an implication that Benjamin intended to illuminate myth adequately by 'attending to the figural, material, and actual manifestations of myth in all spheres of life' (1999: 176). Interrogating myth as such requires eschewing the casting of myth as 'simply to be equated with delusion and misrecognition,' (Gilloch, 1996: 12), a notion I have already discussed in within the work of Wittgenstein and Bottici. Menninghaus sees Benjamin's concern here as with the 'dialectic of breaking apart and rescuing of myth' (Menninghaus, 1988: 323). Here, Benjamin 'does not advocate the one-dimensional negation of mythic forms, but demands critical redemption'. Gilloch considers Benjamin's ambivalence towards myth's 'positive and negative moments' as being 'intimately related to his fluctuating response to the metropolis, the home of myth' (Gilloch, 1996: 13). This ambivalence towards myth reminds us of how political myths are to be judged, according to Bottici – whether they open up, or close down critique; they are neither good nor bad per se. Indeed, I seek to explore the ways in which 'forms of mythic experience may be valuable,' and trace the 'positive and utopian moments that may be contained within mimesis, play, intoxication and intuition' that Benjamin emphasizes (Gilloch, 1996: 12). Furthermore, Benjamin's entwinement of myth and the city guides us to a central concern of this thesis: that political myths of the Polytechnic uprising are inherently intertwined with the city of Athens, the specific neighbourhood of Exarcheia, and the campus of the Polytechnic itself, and that the particular spaces, places and times that political myths of the Polytechnic uprising bring into being have to be attended to. That cities are sites of myth-making and rendered comprehensible partly through myth is evident in the Benjamin's many writings. Mali, for example, understands his Arcades Projects is to be 'an attempt to expose the "latent mythology" inherent in the social and cultural life of nineteenth-century Paris' (Benjamin, 1999: 834 in 1999: 168). I draw inspiration from Benjamin's fascination with the incommensurability of experiences, artefacts and representations of urban social life, and the ways in which 'temporalities and spatialities become not just media of truth but narrative constructions of modernist realities' (Keith, 2000: 413).

Having outlined a theoretical framework for understanding the invocation of multiple Polytechnics as remembrance practices and political myth-making, in the next section I discuss the ways in which I propose to explore the intertwinement of political myth and urban spaces and temporalities, through discussing Lefebvre's social production of space and contemporary work on relational place. I will also return to Benjamin's work to discuss its evocation of history and time, as this project is tied to particular urban locations in Athens as integral to political action: Syntagma square, Exarcheia, and the Polytechnic campus itself.

### **Political Myths, Space and Temporality**

The importance of space and place with regards to political action has a long history in urban geography and sociology; since 2011 the 'Movement of the Squares' has led many to reconsider the relationship between space and contemporary political action, particularly arguments around the post-political (see Swyngedou, 2014). Indeed, some state that 'arguably, the urban-based global movements of the 21st century have shown us something crucially important about the current human condition: "our condition is no longer post-political but pre-political and verging on the political"' (Catterall, 2011:497, in Madden and Vradis, 2012: 235). There has been a burgeoning academic literature focusing on the relationship between space and political action in Greece since the December 2008 events. This interdisciplinary body of literature includes work which specifically focuses on the December 2008 (see the edited collection by Vradis and Dalakoglou, 2011; Kornetis, 2010; Panourgia, 2010; Liakos, 2010; Stavrides 2010, 2011), as well as on the 'Indignant Squares' movement of Syntagma 2011 as a turning point in 'staging dissent' (see Kaika and Karaliotas, 2014; Leonitidou, 2012; Douzinas, 2011, 2013; Kioupkiolis, 2011; Korizi and Vradis, 2012). Furthermore there has been work on the urban nature of solidarity networks and 'vulnerable' groups during the time of 'crisis' (Vaiou, 2013; Drakopoulos, 2014; Athanasiou, 2013), as well as that of anti-austerity indignation since 2010 (Dalakoglou, 2012; Theodossopoulos 2014; Mazower, Herzfeld, 2012; Knight, 2015). I draw on the rich insights of these works in my research, as is evidenced in Chapters Four to Seven. I particularly draw on the attentiveness to political imaginaries and subversion of everyday spaces in Kaika and Karaliotas's work on Syntagma (2014) and Kallianos (2013); Theodossopoulos' work on anti-austerity indignation as a form of indirect resistance (2014); and Tsilimpounidi and Walsh's investigations of understanding the city *otherwise*, through images and stories (2012; 2014). I build on such research, in focusing on collective remembrance practices and political



mythmaking of the Polytechnic uprising and their relationship with everyday political action, which has been thus far neglected in the work on urban political action in Athens.

### *The Production of Space*

When the soft city's illusions, myths, aspirations and nightmares are played out as resistance, protest, dissent and non-compliance, then it becomes difficult to imagine how the city itself is not indelibly transformed by such practices. (Tsilimpounidi, 2012: 546)

If we take seriously the notion that the city itself is transformed by practices of political myth-making, then we need to consider how space is produced through social practices. How does Lefebvre's spatial triad help us to understand the relationship between political myths and everyday political action? I propose that the notion that spaces are produced at multiple registers allows us to be attentive to the similarly multiple registers through which political myths of the Polytechnic are fabricated and also points to the importance of the creation of different temporalities. This entails a Benjaminian approach to exploring the city, which I believe is complemented by Lefebvre's spatial triad. This is an approach which 'cautions us to consider the stories that make the city visible, and what sort of narrative forms make the city comprehensible'; It 'suggests a historical sensibility that is cautious about how time serves as narrative driver; a geographical disposition that understands how space serves as a narrative driver' (Back and Keith, 2014: 18). Indeed in these sections, I lay out how I propose to disentangle the different spaces and temporalities produced through practices of political myth-making. Following the discussion on how we could consider political myths as socially produced spaces, I explore the ways in which the political myths also construct different temporalities. Drawing primarily on Walter Benjamin's evocative concepts of dialectical images, montage, citation, and tradition (2003b,c,d) I discuss how these ideas are useful for understanding political myths of the Polytechnic uprising, which seek to intervene on the present.

The oeuvre of Henri Lefebvre (and his many translators and interlocutors) has influenced much recent work that seeks to explore urban political action in Greece (see Kallianos 2013, 2014; Vradis 2012, 2013, 2014; Kaika and Karaliotas, 2014, 2015). Indeed, Lefebvre's work on the production of space, the right to the city, and the urban revolution have 'become a standard reference for much radical geography,' (Elden and Morten, 2015:1). While I draw on his work, I follow Harvey's sentiment that 'it is not to the intellectual legacy of Lefebvre that we must turn for an

explanation ... what has been happening in the streets, among the urban social movements, is far more important' (Harvey, 2012: xii).

Lefebvre's theory of *l'espace* or social space 'encompasses on the one hand the critical analysis of urban reality and on the other that of everyday life' (Lefebvre, 1996: 185). He understands space as socially produced, through three dialectically interlinked dimensions or 'clefs/registers' (Rogers, 2002: 28): *espace perçu* (translated as spatial practices or perceived space); *espace conçu* (translated as representations of space or conceived space); and *espace vécu* (translated as representational spaces or lived space). This definition emerged from a critique of disciplinary specialism and the 'separation of space and time, materiality and meaning in analyses' (Shields, 1999: 156) as a way of 'discovering or developing a unity of theory between fields which are given as being separate' (Lefebvre, 1974: 19).

Stuart Elden challenges the 'accepted wisdom' that Lefebvre sought to reorient attention away from time and towards space, and argues that he did not 'replace temporal with spatial analysis, but thought the relation between space and time, and in the process rethought both concepts. It is crucial to remember that they must be thought together, and yet cannot be reduced to the other' (2004: 170). As Lefebvre himself states, '[S]pace and time appear and manifest themselves as different yet inseparable' (1991: 175). They cannot be conflated. What does this mean for my project? I propose to understand the plural political myths of the Polytechnic as processes which are brought into being *through* socially produced spaces, as well as contributing towards the production of spaces, fabricating temporalities and places. What Lefebvre means by production here, Elden notes, is 'broader than the economic production of things (stressed by Marx) and includes the production of society, knowledge, and institutions ... it needs to be grasped as both a material and mental processes' (Elden, 2004: 184). The three registers of this production of space, the spatial triad,<sup>18</sup> were formulated in response to conceptual binaries prevalent in philosophy. Lefebvre's triad is thus a critique of theorisations of space that do not distinguish between abstract and concrete space, or privilege one over the other. Instead of an opposition between 'our *conception* of space – abstract, mental, and geometric – and our *perception* of space – concrete, material, and physical,' (Elden, 2004: 189) Lefebvre argues that they must be thought together, and with a third term, the notion of the lived.

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<sup>18</sup> I prefer this term to Soja's formulation of a 'spatial trialectic' (1989).

*Espace perçu*, translated as *spatial practices* or perceived space 'embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation'.

*Espace conçu*, translated as *representations of space* or conceived space 'which are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relation'.

*Espace vécu*, translated as spaces of representation, or *lived spaces*. 'embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art' (Lefebvre, 1991: 33).

The understanding that the social production of space is a mental, material and social activity parallels Bottici and Challand's conception of political myths as operating on three levels, as 'cognitive, aesthetic and practical' (2013: 3). Here, space is at once perceived, conceived, and lived, and 'none of these dimensions can be posited as the absolute origin, as "thesis," and none is privileged. Space is unfinished, since it is continuously produced, and it is always bound up with time' (Schmid, 2008: 43). The material traces that social relations inscribe in space (Lefebvre, 1991: 129) are as important as social, political, and economic processes, and are as important as the imaginations, desires and lived experiences. Returning to my proposal of theorizing political myths through the spaces they produce, the question arises of *how* to explore spatial practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation.<sup>19</sup> If we take seriously the notion that Lefebvre's spatial triad is an ontological intervention that seeks to understand how space is *produced*, rather than how it can be *known*, following Pierce and Martin (2015), the 'challenge in applying the production of space to research is not per se that it is too conceptual, but that it offers so little assistance in constructing an epistemology of (social) space to match its ontological complexity' (8).<sup>20</sup> Lefebvre's 'silence, regarding an articulation of an alternative epistemological stance from which his challenging (social) space can be known' (7) has led many scholars to inventively operationalize the spatial triad. I do not wish to 'cleave' the different registers apart, and it is the spirit of the spatial triad I take forwards: the ambition of exploring all three 'moments' (Lefebvre, 1991: 40).

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<sup>19</sup> The multiple debates and disagreements amongst Lefebvrian scholars, whose political and disciplinary positions are incredibly varied, attest to Lefebvre's own position, described by Kristin Ross as a 'wayward, renegade Marxist' (1988: 4). His unique biography – akin to Castoriadis, I would argue – renders both his influences and his influence incredibly broad. Both Lefebvre and Castoriadis have a Marxian starting point, but emphasise the possibilities of lived experience, desires, imagination and the imaginary. As such, I find their ambiguous and bold theorisations suggestive for understanding contemporary political myths of the Polytechnic uprising and their mutually productive relation with space.

<sup>20</sup> The registers of Lefebvre's triad have been differentially emphasized by distinct groups of scholars: his materialist stance has been taken up by Marxist geographers, who take on the understanding of social urban processes in a materialist political economy (see Castells, 1977; Harvey, 1995). However, this tends to neglect the importance of experience within the triad. On the other hand, some posit that Lefebvre initiated postmodernism (Soja, 1989), 'construct independent spaces out of the three dimensions or moments of the production of space' (Schmid, 2008: 42; see also Peirce and Martin, 2015) and cleave them apart as a means of empiricising them. Both Marxist and post-structural readings depend on the elision of parts of the triad, overlooking phenomenological roots: 'Lefebvre's incorporation of affective experience into his critical theorization of space' is what makes it so difficult to ignore (Pierce and Martin, 2015: 7).

As we will see in Chapters Four to Seven, in order to move towards an understanding of political myths of the Polytechnic, the *spatial practices* of remembrance are as important as the *representations of the space*, found in images, texts, maps, and laws, which are 'certainly abstract, but they also play a part in social and political practice' (Lefebvre, 1991: 41). These representations 'give an image and also define a space' and 'emerge at the level of discourse, speech,' as well as maps, plans, and academic disciplines that deal with the production of representation (Schmid, 2008: 37). In turn, such representations of space are as important as the Polytechnic as a *lived space of representations*, created by and through the participants of the commemoration. These spaces of representation are 'redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual' (Lefebvre, 1991: 41). If we recall that political myths live out of history, we caution ourselves against Lefebvre critique of anthropologists who 'are students of such spaces, whether they are aware of it or not, but...nearly always forget to set them alongside those representations of space which co-exist, concord or interfere with them; they even more frequently ignore social practice' (*Ibid.*). Here the challenge as a sociologist using mixed ethnographic methods (as I describe in more depth in the next chapter) is to attend to the three registers and their material traces, bearing in mind that the spatial triad 'loses all force if it is treated as an abstract 'model' (40).

To be clear, I am more attentive to the spaces of representation in Chapters Six and Seven, and the production of counter-spaces, 'a process whereby groups create temporary and partial milieus to communicate and enact oppositional politics' (Dempsey et al., 2011: 205). Indeed, within the space of the Polytechnic during the commemoration, 'different social groups endow space with amalgams of different meanings, uses and values,' giving rise to tensions and conflicts (Routledge, 1997: 70). It is important to attend to how political myths operate through the contradictory spaces of the Polytechnic, produced through different social relations, practices, and imaginations: it is at once a space sheltering extremists; of everyday political organizing; and remembering dead heroes. Thus, Lefebvre's reflection on socio-political contradictions as coming into play *in space*, and in doing so becoming contradictions *of space* is highly pertinent (1991: 365).

These contradictions of space give rise to political myths which produce Exarcheia as a privileged *place* of political action, intertwined with the Polytechnic, as I discuss in Chapter Four. Why bring in place at this point in the discussion? Here I follow Jones et

al when they note that a focus on space (as in progress and dynamic) does not make place (as something imagined as more stable and particular) a redundant concept. Places, on a variety of scales, retain their potency in people's narratives, imaginings, and spatial practices (Jones et al., 2014: 4-5). There have been wide debates within geography about place, and I want to draw on recent work that brings together Lefebvre's production of space with relational place, as well as the work of Doreen Massey (2004, 2005). Featherstone (2008) argues that local politics are always constructed through relations across space, or 'place beyond place'. Thinking together relational place and Lefebvre's production of space, Pierce and Martin argue that such a proposition 'incorporates a radically hybrid epistemology for (potentially) critical geographical scholarship' (2015: 2). This resists seeing place as 'a specific form emerged from an apparent stopping of, or as one specific moment in, the dynamics of capitalist social space' (Merrifield 1993: 129).

So while the Polytechnic can be socially produced local *place*, this does not mean this place is fixed, as we will see in Chapter Four. Massey argues that a 'local politics of place that took seriously the relational construction of space and place ... would understand that relational construction as highly differentiated from place to place through vastly unequal disposition of resources' (Massey, 2004: 13). Escobar states that 'any relational notion of space and place ineluctably calls for a politics of responsibility toward those connections that shape our lives' (2013: 169), which Massey terms 'geographies of responsibilities' (2004). As such, considering relational place we are able to be attentive to the multiplicities of connections, and how people negotiate them, which reach beyond Athens and the Polytechnic campus. The ethics of such connectedness are also considered, so as not to fall into the trap of 'exonerating the local'. Pierce and Martin argue that 'placing' Lefebvre 'provides a methodological framework that embraces multiplicity' (2015: 17). Such a framework thus allows us to see how the Polytechnic as a constantly re-produced agonistically, meaningful for different people to diverse ends. This concern with practices of political mythmaking, and how they socially produce spaces and places, cannot be understood being attentive to the different temporalities fabricated, which I will now discuss.

#### *The Present, History and Tradition*

As we have established, the political myths of the Polytechnic work with core narratives of the 1973 uprising – an historical event – and contain within them a determination to act in the present. Political myths are always told from the

standpoint of the present (Tudor, 1972) and this is why they are to be understood as continual processes of ‘work on myth’ (Blumenberg, 1985) rather than an object. Furthermore, ‘it is in light of the continual change in their present conditions that human beings are impelled to go back to their political narratives, revise them in light of their new needs and exigencies through their reception, or, when this is not possible, dismiss them. (Bottici, 2007: 179). As we will see, different political myths of the Polytechnic create different relationships between the ‘past’ uprising and the ‘present’ and these relationships are premised on different engagements *with* and diverse understandings *of* time, history and tradition. In order to understand the content of political myths, how they are meaningful for people to both create and share, we have to consider what we mean by the ‘present’, time, history, and tradition. These are broad topics, but the concepts I am working with come out of the interplay with research informants during the fieldwork, and are thus narrower in scope. This approach is an attempt to engage with current concerns in the philosophy of history. As historians Bevernage and Lorenz have recently asked, ‘is distinguishing between past, present and future rather a matter of “observing” distinctions that are “given”, or does it involve a more active stance in which social actors create and recreate these temporal distinctions?’ (2013: 10) They argue that ‘fewer have paid attention to the ways in which the distinguishing of the three temporal modes can be analysed as a form of social action connected to specific social actors,’ (*Ibid.*). Attentiveness to the creation of temporalities as part of the remembrance practices and political mythmaking of the Polytechnic is integral to understanding how the invocations of the 1973 uprising are meaningful for people in relation to their everyday political action, and I will now outline the concepts that are most useful in this endeavor.

In order to understand the different political myths of the Polytechnic uprising, we have to take into account that they are not only specific *spaces*, which produce places, as we have discussed, but also different *temporalities* as we will see in Chapters Four to Seven. Chapter Five looks at how the institutions of the state work on political myths of the Polytechnic as an historical event, within a notion of time as linear and progressive. In Chapters Six and Seven, we explore how, through remembrance practices, participants work on political myths within an understanding of time as non-linear, which attempt to disrupt the present, and mobilise people in the present. Furthermore, because the uprising is commemorated annually, and calendrically organized to be on the same three days as the November 1973 uprising, it is considered by people to be a ‘tradition’. A crucial tension arises, both philosophically and practically, around modes of transmission and the nature of inter-generational

'passing on' the Polytechnic.

To think about how the political myths of the Polytechnic create different temporalities, as interventions in the 'contemporary' political situation, I follow Peter Osborne. He argues that 'the contemporary' is an inherently problematic concept. If the contemporary is a 'living, existing, or occurring together "in" time,' then we have to think of this as a '*differential* historical temporality of the present: a coming together of different but equally "present" times' (Osborne, 2013: 22). This notion of different and equally present times is crucial to understand the different temporalities (created by political myths) that co-exist agonistically within the three-day commemoration. The concept of the 'contemporary' for Osborne 'projects a single historical time of the present, as a living present,' (*Ibid.*) a fictional and speculative attribution of unity, that, following Heidegger, cannot be considered as a 'self-contained temporal receptacle for objects of experience,' without considering the past and the future. Empirically, there is no way of grasping this speculative totality. As such, Osborne considers the 'contemporary' to be a utopian idea, which can be a productive act of imagination, in the sense that it 'performatively projects a non-existent unity onto the disjunctive relations between coeval times' (23). He also sees the contemporary as a possible 'disavowal of the futurity of the present by its very presentness,' which 'functions as if the speculative horizon of the unity of human history had been reached' (*Ibid.*). The contemporary as such is an

*operative fiction*: it regulates the division between the past and the present, within the present. And it does so, in part, not simply by recognizing certain contemporaneities, but by projecting contemporaneity – the establishment of connections within the living present – as a task to be achieved. (23-24)

This bold assertion has purchase in the context of studying everyday political action in Greece, where the 'contemporary' situation changes constantly, the 'future' is uncertain, and the 'present' is perceived and imagined in different ways. As Osborne notes, the fiction of the contemporary is progressively contracting: 'the present of the contemporary is becoming shorter and shorter' (24). How can this notion of a contracting present aid our understanding of the multiple temporalities that are created through processes of political myth, in the *annual* contemporary Polytechnic commemorations? Rahman poses a provocative challenge to the common sense understanding of time that is worth considering in this regard:

What is 'our time', the time that is so familiar it requires little or no explanation? What are the contours of this shared and homogenous time-image which ... provide the common narrative structure for theorizing the political? (Rahman, 2015: 21)

Thus Rahman disrupts the teleological concept of time as linear and cyclical, and

always sequential (see Agamben, 1993). Here, time is a continuum of quantified moments – past, present, future, and spatialised in a straight line. As we will see in Chapter Five, this dominant notion of time as linear, and progressive is put forwards by the political myth of the Polytechnic uprising that is ‘worked on’ by institutions of the state, who invoke the uprising as a marker of national ‘democracy’ that belongs to the past, and part of the modern history of the Greek nation-state. Rahman argues that the common experience of homogenous time is one of the nation-state’s defining features. Within this temporality – which draws on Benjamin’s *Theses on the Concept of History*, as I will shortly discuss – succession and simultaneity are reductive and merely implies the ‘simultaneous experience by members of the nation-state of the same instant of chronological time’ (2015: 96).

The political myths of the Polytechnic arising through the practices of contestation of the state’s appropriation of the uprising are configured in a temporality that disrupts ‘homogenous, empty time’ (Benjamin, Thesis XVII, 2003b: 396). To develop a framework in which to consider these disruptions within a more complex understanding of time and history, I draw primarily on the work of Walter Benjamin, but also the dialogues that have been established between his work and that of Heidegger.<sup>21</sup> Benjamin’s critique of chronological progression is an attack against an understanding of historical time as ‘an advance through the stages of homogeneous time’ (Thesis XIII, 2003b: 394). This idea of homogenous time has an affinity with that of Charles Peguy, as Lowy notes, which is particularly pertinent to Greece, as an indebted country in thrall to various debtors and lenders. For Peguy, a concept of time proper to the theory of progress is:

Precisely the time of the savings bank and the great credit establishments ... it is the time of interest accumulated by capital ... a truly homogenous time, since it translates, transports into homogenous calculations ... [and] transposes into a homogeneous (mathematical) language the countless varieties of anxieties and fortunes. (Peguy, ([1931]1968: 127-131 in Lowy, 2005: 95)

This time of progress is ‘made in the image and likeness of space,’ (286). In other terms, the notion of space is the absolute, Cartesian space, which Lefebvre critiques in the *Production of Space*. Indeed, despite what some have termed as Benjamin’s ‘spatialised time’ (Savage, 2000: 40; Warf, 2008: 124) I would argue, following Beatrice Hanssen (2005), that (the intention of) his critique of homogenous time is actually diametrically opposed to such an aim. At issue in the present thesis is not the spatialisation of time, but on the contrary, the inscription of time in space, as Lefebvre

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<sup>21</sup> This section is regrettably short considering the vast amounts of scholarship on the topic. See Osborne, 1995, 2013; Caygill, 1994 and Buck-Morss, 1991.



notes:

Space is nothing but the inscription of time in the world, spaces are the realizations, inscriptions in the simultaneity of the external world of a *series of times*, the rhythms of the city, the rhythms of the urban population, and in my opinion as a sociologist, I suggest to you the idea that the city will only be rethought and reconstructed on its current ruins when we have properly understood that the city is the deployment of time, and that it is this time ... of those who are its inhabitants, it is for them that we have to finally organize in a human manner (Lefebvre, 1967: 72-73, my italics)

This research project takes seriously Lefebvre's idea that the production of space 'should never be dissociated from an analysis of the production of time' (Mendieta, 2008: 151). The concept of time that Benjamin proposes against a quantitative homogeneous time is qualitative, disjunctive, and experienced, 'not simply a measure by which the duration of a mechanical alteration may be measured' (Benjamin, 1916: 134 in Caygill, 1994: 11). As this project is concerned with how people construct different relationships between the past and the present – or *with 'history'* – Benjamin's reconceptualization of historical time is pertinent for thinking through these relations. Against a quantitative historicist conception of historical time as accumulative, he proposes the evocative concepts of *jetztzeit* – now-time – and past as *image*. Constructed as a critique of a 'historically determined reception of Marx,' his concept of historical time is concerned, literally, with a '*re-presenting* (*Vergegenwartigung*): the return of past time' (McGettigan, 2009: 25). Here, a revised historical materialism comes out of 'reading history as a negative totality, a "catastrophe" whose trajectory would be interrupted by revolutionary activity ... the continuum of history is to be broken' (26). Opposing the idea that time as a whole is composed out of abstract instants, in the concept of remembrance, Benjamin 'believes he has located a form of historical *experience* to which justice can be done only through a different set of ideas about historical time' (*Ibid.*, my emphasis). As he describes in Konvolut N of the Arcades Project:

History is not just a science but also a form of remembrance [*Eingedenken*]. What science has 'established', remembrance can modify. Remembrance can make the incomplete (happiness) into something complete, and the complete (suffering) into something incomplete. That is theology. In remembrance we have an experience that forbids us to conceive of history as fundamentally atheological, little as it may be granted us to write it with immediately theological concepts ([N8,1] 1999: 471).

While this project is not concerned with the theological *per se*<sup>22</sup>, it is concerned with the experience of remembrance practices. In Benjamin's late(r) works, the theological arises in connexion to /is intertwined with/ two other fundamental concepts,

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<sup>22</sup> For detailed accounts of Benjamin's relation to theology, see for instance: Tiedemann, 2005; Lowy, 2005:28. Osborne states Theology 'stands here for that moment of transcendence of the given intrinsic to history and politics alike. It can be no more opposed to Marxism than Marxism can be reduced to positivism' (1994:105).

*remembrance* and *messianic redemption*, both key to the alternative concept of history developed in the 'Theses' (Lowy, 2005: 27). The concept of remembrance at issue in this thesis is '(as) a socio-cultural experience [that] escapes positivist historicism's purview ... history's "original role" as remembrance operates as an exception, or counter-example, which reorients ideas about history' (McGettigan, 2009: 26). Here, the 'idea that the past does not have a final, irrevocable character but is instead open, subject to transformation in the present, is fundamental to Benjamin's concepts of history and redemption' (Gilloch, 1993: 195). According to Osborne, it is in 'reconnecting history to remembrance, against the "bad" modernity of historicism that the theological dimension of Benjamin's thought turns to the foreground' (1994: 105). Taking this conception of remembrance forward – escaping positivism, and counteracting historicism – allows Benjamin to 'relaunch' historiography as remembrance (Osborne, 1994: 82).

The concept of history that Benjamin constructs is considered to be 'infinite in every direction and unfulfilled in every moment,' (Benjamin, 1916: 134) – qualitative and discontinuous, it 'resists any bid for authenticity or fulfillment in the present moment' (*Ibid.*). Crucial to the concept of *Jetztzeit*, 'the present as now-time' (Benjamin, Appendix A, 2003b: 397) is the standpoint of its production, i.e. the dialectical image (Osborne 1994: 87). It is the 'task of remembrance to build "constellations" linking the present and the past' (Lowy, 2005: 95) through dialectical images:

It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, an image is that wherein what has been come together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural [*bildlich*]. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical ... the image that is read ... [is] the image in the now of its recognisability [*das Bild im Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*] (Benjamin, Arcades Project, 436 [N3,1])

Benjamin's notion of dialectical image is crucial to establish our concept of political myth as a consisting of *images*. Political myths have a 'condensational power' in 'their capacity to condense things into a few images or "icons",' which 'by means of a synecdoche, any object or gesture ... can recall the whole work on myth that lies behind it' (Flood, 1996 in Bottici, 2007: 181-2). Indeed, if political myths function solely through images alone, we can assert that political myths are only *political* if they contain a *determination to act* and are grounded in the present. The key to the importance of dialectical images comes from the position that 'political action (or at least the impulse to such action) is the supposed *effect*, not the medium, of the experience [of the image]' (Osborne, 1994: 88, *my italics*).

Dialectical images can help us understand how the creation, sharing and experience of political myths are meaningful for people. This follows Osborne who argues (against Adorno's critique that they lack mediation) that 'there is mediation in the experience of the dialectical image: a mediation between the lived historical present of the "now" and a specific past, via the perspective of history as a redemptive whole'<sup>23</sup> (Osborne, 1994: 88). Redemption in the *Theses* can be understood in a simultaneously theological and secular sense, according to Lowy, as reparation for the injustice and suffering of past generations and emancipation for oppressed people (2005: 32). Redemption is self-redemption; acting collectively (33). This hints at the ways in which practices of political mythmaking can be the site of utopian thinking, which I will discuss in the following section. In terms of the Polytechnic uprising, whose protagonists 'failed' to achieve their diverse demands and were defeated and oppressed – as had been the Communists in the Civil War – I will show that some people find its remembrance practices meaningful through the notion of this task of redemption, a secret pact binding past generations to the present, in Benjamin's terms: a weak messianic power. While I do not take on his theological language, I am concerned with the relationship between remembrance and the capacity to act collectively, which for Benjamin is the 'only possible' Messiah (Lowy, 2005: 33).

Having established the relationship between remembrance and collective action at the conceptual level, how are we to explore the fact that remembrance of the Polytechnic uprising occurs annually? To answer this question I propose to consider the concept of tradition is at play in the annual Polytechnic uprising commemoration. Wu Ming, an anonymous Italian collective who have produced highly influential texts such as *Q* (1999), have elaborated on the relationship between myth and contentious political action, which moves beyond the binaristic approach to *mythos* and *logos* as discussed in the previous section. Their stance is highly pertinent to my research project, and yet they position themselves as story-tellers, belonging to a 'permanent workshop on genre fiction and popular culture', rather than political theorists or social scientists (2009). Here, tradition is not necessarily conservative and the importance of myth-making is highlighted:

[W]e are interested in 'mythopoesis' ie the social process of constructing myths, by which we do not mean 'false stories', we mean stories that are told and shared, re-told and manipulated, by a vast and multifarious community, stories that may give shape to some kind of ritual, some sense of continuity between what we do and what

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<sup>23</sup> As Osborne remarks, the 'political argument implicit in Benjamin's presentation of now-time is ambitious, depends upon the *impossibility*, not the imminence, of a willed redemption' (1994: 88-89).

other people did in the past. A tradition. In the latin the verb 'trader' simply meant 'to hand down something', it did not entail any narrow-mindedness, conservatism or forced respect for the past. Revolutions and radical movements have always found and told their own myths. They often get trapped in the iron cages of their own myths: their traditions and rituals become alienating, the continuity between past and present was *imposed* on the people rather than being proposed. Radicals of all ages over-reacted to that situation by becoming iconoclastic, by trying to de-mythologise the imagery and discourse of the movement. By doing that, they simply replaced one alienated imagery with another. Iconoclasy soon became a new iconophilia ... [M]yths are necessary. We couldn't live together without stories to tell and listen to, without 'heroes' whose example we can follow or reject. Our language, our memories, and our need of forming communities are the things that make us human beings, and the stories keep them all together. There is no way we can get rid of myths, and why the fuck should we? Instead of wasting our time listening to some bullshitter who poses as the most radical of all, we ought to understand the way actual social movements want to fulfill their need for myths and mythologies, and help them keep mythologies lively, flexible and in motion.<sup>24</sup>

This eloquent quotation brings many concerns of this project together, crystalizing them around the ambivalence of the concept of tradition. The annual and recurrent nature of the Polytechnic uprising remembrance practices creates a central philosophical and political tension for people. How can remembrance practices and political myth-making mobilise people to act collectively if they occur every year at the same time? The Polytechnic uprising is invoked every November, and it has been institutionalized through a national school holiday. The calendar dates of 14 to 17 November each year see recurrent remembrance practices: the occupation of the campus; exhibition-making; discussions; pamphlet making; wreath laying; and an annual march from the campus to the American embassy. As such, many refer to these days as a tradition; not only the state, but also people who actively contest violent state practices. The dual understanding of tradition brought up in my fieldwork can be analysed through the prism of the productive tensions between Heidegger and Benjamin's consideration of tradition, which resonate with the tensions brought up in my fieldwork.

Walter Benjamin's critique of tradition is against the *normative forms* of transmission, rather than tradition itself, which is found in his early work on the *Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1916) alongside the opposition of the progressive view of history which regards the present as the untroubled heir of the past – an opposition which Heidegger also articulated in *The Concept of Time in the Science of History* (1916 in Caygill, 1994). Benjamin's critique rejects conceptions of tradition that are 'substantialist, essentialist, prospective, and cumulative,' as well as its retrospective

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<sup>24</sup> Wu Ming (2009) *Enslaved Ancestors, Technified Myths and the Summer of 2001*. Wu Ming Foundation. Available from: <http://www.wumingfoundation.com/english/wumingblog/?p=264> (accessed 13 May 2015).

fabrication (Simay, 2005: 141-2). First, rather than a product, he seeks to focus instead on the *process* of transmission, as does this project, through exploring remembrance practices and political myths. Secondly, the content of tradition does not resemble 'an immutable truth, [but] alters with time,' and as such he discredits 'all those representations that assimilate tradition with an intangible deposit and, therefore, also the institutions which claim to be the tradition's exclusive keeper' (2005:141). In connection with his conception of time, Benjamin criticises the cumulative understanding of tradition in which the continuity of history is realised through the successive integration of new elements within the movement of repetition. Integrating new elements into repetition and explicating the 'continuity of tradition within time' (*Ibid.*). Indeed, for Benjamin, tradition 'ruins all that it transmits'; it is inherently destructive. This fundamentally shifts the focal point of tradition from the past to the present. This conception of tradition sees it as a continuum that 'ruins all that it transmits,' (*Ibid.*). It is this destructive character of tradition which is seized upon by Benjamin's commentators.

The active locus of tradition is not to be found in the past, as the traditionalists like to repeat, but rather in the present. The authentic movement of tradition does not go from the past to the present, but inversely, from the present to the past (Simay, 2005: 141)

As such, the meaning of tradition for Benjamin changes 'according to the circumstances of its transmission and reception' (Caygill, 1994: 11) and the 'act of handing over *ruins* what it hands over ... yet without this destruction nothing would be handed over' (21). Caygill argues that for both Heidegger and Benjamin, tradition is the handing over, as well as the drawing of boundaries between 'past' and 'present':

Tradition is not only that which is handed over within a given time, but also the giving of that time itself in the distinction of past and present. Tradition paradoxically establishes the distance between past and present while overcoming it by delivering them to each other; it both founds and presupposes the time within which it takes place. (13)

According to Caygill, the distinction between Benjamin and Heidegger's concept of tradition rests on the question of an 'authentic' site or subject of tradition, and on whether tradition can be considered 'fulfillment *in* historical time' or a 'fulfillment *of* historical time' (10). For Heidegger, there is still the possibility of authentic site where tradition can be gathered, where past, present, and future can come together *in* time (13). As we have discussed in connection with Benjamin's concept of historical time, fulfilled time, or redemption, comes in the gathering *of* time and its Messianic disruption of temporal order. So, how can tradition allow things and events to be

revealed, through their gathering together in time? Whereas Benjamin sees 'no community or subject to give or receive,' Heidegger argues for an 'authentic historical subject who is the one capable of choosing its past,' through the active repetition of handing down (17). Furthermore, Caygill persuasively argues that this imposition of a subject on the site of tradition allows us to insert familiar tropes' (*Ibid.*) of the tragic hero or *Volk* as I discuss in Chapter Five. For Benjamin, the 'object of tradition is ineluctably inauthentic: what is "handed over" is never complete, never entirely there. The site of tradition is always one of ruination, a place of mourning. Those who gathered there did not do so in order to decide who they were and what they would become, but in order to mourn' (22-23). These tensions between modes of transmission will help us to think through the annual remembrance practices of political mythmaking.

Through annual practices of political mythmaking, I ask whether myth-makers retrospectively fabricate a continuum, albeit of resistance to state violence and oppression. In other words, in their attempts to contest the institutionalized transmission of the Polytechnic uprising and to turn tradition against itself, to 'reveal, restore, and rescue that which the linear transmission keeps betraying' (144), does the annual, possibly ritualized, nature of the remembrance practices re-enact the types of tradition that they are resisting? Simay argues that a 'double menace always weighs on "tradition"':

The first comes from the monolithism in which it can freeze; the second from the opportunism in which it can dissolve and lose its instance of convening. If, in fact, tradition is that modality of relation with the past that accepts the contestation which derives from it, then to be within the tradition does not mean to be guardians of a truth or a normative knowledge which in the present finds a moment of its historical deployment; it rather means to *feel questioned by it in its own mode of being and to be called to answer for it at any instant*. (155, my emphasis)

This is where the crucial issues which lie at the heart of the remembrance practices, come to the fore: the demands for social justice and liberation, and how these days are meaningful for people, in relation to their everyday practices of political action, as I will discuss in the following section. Through remembrance practices, do people answer the call – the demands – of the Polytechnic? If 'tradition is not an instance that can be claimed as an authority. We can only answer its call. Becoming an heir means honouring the *demands* of justice and liberation that the past pushes forward to the present' (154, my emphasis).

We can only pose this as a question, because, as Simay remarks, 'it is only when the exigency of justice will be entirely fulfilled that we could tell what this tradition was

and to whom it belonged. In the meantime the way we relate to tradition constitutes nothing less than its condition of possibility' (2005:155). Benjamin gives us further clues for this condition of possibility, with his insights into the role of technology, which destroys and frees objects from tradition. Here, 'technology succeeds tradition as the means by which objects are "handed over"' (Caygill, 1994: 25) and 'the audience are not potential participants in a religious rite, contemplating the play of presence and absence but are "able to take the position of a critic"' (Benjamin, 1935: 230 in Caygill, 1994: 27). What is at stake here is a 'new political configuration of the site of tradition,' which does not correspond to a subject nor become 'preoccupied with the tragic dialectic of authenticity and inauthenticity' (23). A further clue is given in the *Notes on the Theses*, where Benjamin comments that 'tradition as the discontinuum of the past in contradiction to history as the continuum of events,' and 'The history of the oppressed is a discontinuum.' – 'The task of history is to get hold of the tradition of the oppressed' (1974).<sup>25</sup> These ideas are taken up by Buck-Morss (1991) and Osborne (1994), whereby it is the *discontinuity* of tradition that can be passed down. This will prove crucial to the discussion in Chapters Four, Six and Seven, regarding diverse material practices.

In the next section I outline how I propose to explore the ways in which remembrance practices are meaningful for people, through thinking about concepts of imagination, subjectivity and agency, and forms of indirect resistance.

### **Political Myth and the Radical Imagination, Political Subjectivity, Affective Agency and Indirect Resistance**

Without cleaving the three poles of Lefebvre's spatial triad apart, keeping the conceptual focus on political myth as a process of what people say and do, as well as the focus on images, in this section I outline the concepts I find useful for analyzing how remembrance practices and political myth making are meaningful for people. First, I situate political myth as a possible site of the radical imagination, as well as one constitutive of the social imaginary, and I discuss the utopian possibilities of political myths of the Polytechnic for urban studies. I then consider how spatial practices of remembrance are meaningful in terms of political subjectivity and affective agency. Lastly, I bring these concepts into dialogue with resistance studies, to consider how remembrance practices and political mythmaking are forms of indirect embodied resistance.

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<sup>25</sup> Translation by Khatib S (2015). Walter Benjamin Archive, Ms 469; cf. Benjamin, Walter: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Hermann Schweppenhäuser; Rolf Tiedemann, vol. I.3, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974: 1236.

### *Situating the Social Imaginary and the Radical Imagination*

Political myths can contribute to the self-perpetuation of a given social imaginary, most notably in terms of the nation-state. Indeed, most work on political myth concerns nationalism and state-craft (Anderson 2006; Bell 2003; Esch, 2010). However, they can also be a site of questioning this same imaginary and the specifically political conditions of an instituting and instituted society: the site of radical imagination (Bottici, 2007: 225). This understanding draws on Castoriadis' concepts of the social imaginary and the radical imagination. The radical imagination in Castoriadis' work connects the idea of imagination and creation, and is a notion that 'contests the traditional understanding of the faculty of representation in human beings (Tovar-Restrepo, 2012: 35). The radical imagination is a faculty that precedes the distinction between 'the real' and 'the fictitious' and is defined as a permanent flux of representation, affect, and intention not subject to determinacy (Castoriadis, 1987: 274). Recent work in social movement studies takes forwards the radical imagination as the 'ability to imagine the world, life and social institutions not as they are, but as they might otherwise be ... it's about bringing those possible futures "back" to work on the present, to inspire action and new forms of solidarity today' (Haivan and Khasnabish, 2014: 3). Approaching the radical imagination not as an object that can be possessed, but rather 'a collective process, something that groups do and do together' (4) is critical to understanding how political mythmaking takes on quotidian importance in the lives of people.

I explore the political myths of the Polytechnic uprising first as a site of the construction of an instituting social imaginary, through the 'dominant' political myths that are worked on by the state, mainstream media, and academia (Chapter Four), and later as the work of a radical political imagination (Chapters Five to Seven). Here, following Bottici and Castoriadis, the work on political myths is radical because they can not only question the social imaginary perpetuated through the official Polytechnic uprising political myths, but they also can be the sites that 'institute a critical relationship with the discourses that are given [and] also what it produces' (Castoriadis, 1987). In this sense, in imagining the past, present, and future otherwise, I argue that political mythmaking engages with utopian urban politics and engage with contemporary work in utopian studies which follows Bloch's focus on 'concrete utopias' (1986), especially the work of Ruth Levitas (2010; 2013). Here the utopian is an 'orientation, or form of attunement, a way of engaging with spaces, objects, and practices that is oriented to the hope, desire, and belief in the possibility of other,



better worlds' (Cooper, 2013: 3). This focus on political myths of the Polytechnic and their potential utopianism is an engagement with the attempt to

encourage critical urban studies to attend more closely not only to what *is* – for example, through analyzing and understanding processes of capitalist urbanization, urban restructuring and impacts of crisis – but also to what *could be*: the potentialities for more socially just, democratic and emancipatory urban spaces and ways of living.' (Pinder, 2013: 30, my emphasis)

Drawing on Lefebvre's utopianism (see also Gardiner, 2013; Cunningham, 2010), Pinder sees this endeavor as involving a consideration to the conditions of everyday life under capitalism, as well as to 'spaces of desire, resistance, struggle, and possibility within them that point towards their potential transformation' (2013: 36). We must also, he argues, attend to the 'significance of the operation of transduction, which "goes from the (given) real to the possible" (Lefebvre, 2002 [1961]: 118, in Pinder, 2013: 42). As well as connecting to my earlier discussion on Lefebvre's spatial triad, these concerns also relate to concepts of affect and resistance.

#### *Political Subjectivity and Affective Agency*

Drawing on debates in cultural anthropology, sociology, and recent work around affect, I will outline how particular concepts that consider the connections between political subjectivity and affective agency help us to frame an analysis of participants' practices of mythmaking. Athina Athanasiou argues persuasively that 'current regimes of neoliberal governing through crisis management bring forth the (economized, but also gendered, sexed, and racialized) subject as a performative political arena of vulnerability and precariousness. Emergent subjectivities, affective communities, and spaces of non-compliance take shape' (Athanasiou, 2014: 72). How might we think through these emergent subjectivities and affective communities? Sherry Ortner offers a grounding, through a formulation that takes subjectivity to mean 'the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects,' as well as the 'cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on' (2006: 107). She argues that the question of subjectivity is important politically, as she sees it

as the basis of 'agency,' a necessary part of understanding how people (try to) act on the world even as they are acted upon. Agency is not some natural or originary will; it takes shape as specific desires and intentions within a matrix of subjectivity – of (culturally constituted) feelings, thoughts, and meanings. (110)

As such, the question here is to consider the ways in which the crisis has brought forth 'emergent subjectivities' as Athanasiou argues, and explore how this 'condition of subjection is subjectively constructed and experienced, as well as the creative ways in which it is – if only episodically – overcome' (111). I will examine such emergent

subjectivities and their creative potential through participants' practices of political myth-making and their desires, intentions, and feelings with which they are embedded.

This concern with political subjectivity as intertwined with the possibility to act, and political mythmaking, precludes that desire to outline or name collective identities. Political myths are *particularistic* in that they are not significant for everyone in the same way, and differ according to different conditions, and Bottici draws on Foucault to argue that 'myth can be one of the means through which a single narrative, which unifies all the various elements that constitute a common identity, comes to be recognized and accepted by a plurality of living, acting, narrating bodies' (2007 243). However, as has been discussed, I am drawn towards an expanded concept of subjectivities as 'complex structures of thought, feeling, and reflection, that make social beings always more than the occupations of particular positions and the holders of particular identities' (Ortner, 2006: 115). As such I build on Bottici's work to initiate an exploration people's experiences of participation in remembrance practices and political mythmaking in terms of subjectivity.

This entails an interrogation of the 'ensemble of modes,' (107) of subjectivity, and the consideration of remembrance practices as affective and embodied. By affect I mean the 'affectations of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained (Spinoza, 1996: 70). Affect here is located between bodies, in the moment of encounter. Having earlier discussed how political myths operate through the ability to *move* people – the determination to act – we can see how attentiveness to how participation in political mythmaking is affective and embodied might be theoretically useful. The 'affective turn' (Sedgwick, 2003; Massumi, 2002; Clough 2007, Stewart, 2007, 2011) has seen the concept having different forms, in relation to different disciplinary concerns. Here I'll discuss the concept in terms of questions of subjectivity and agency.

The notion of encounter in this discussion is useful, as we can think of the Polytechnic commemoration as producing spaces of encounter and coming together. In her work on affect and radical political agency, Susan McManus asks 'which encounters and what compositions or alliances entered into through those encounters, enhance or conversely diminish agency? The question is essential to an affective analysis of the dynamics of power and resistance' (McManus, 2013: 128). The 'pervasiveness of the ways in which contemporary politics mobilises, assembles (and disassembles) affective

states into anticipatory and agential formation,' (McManus, 2011: 2) necessitates attentiveness to affective politics. The importance of affect comes out in my fieldwork, where people express a breadth of affective registers – hope and fear, also rage, disappointment and so on – while also frequently invoking the spirit or the 'affective atmosphere' (Anderson, 2009) of the spaces and temporalities of the commemoration and annual 17<sup>th</sup> November march. Coming out of a geographical engagement with affect (Duff, 2010 see also Pile, 2008 and debates with Bondi and Davidson, 2011 and Lawney, 2011), Anderson's conception of atmospheres is that they "'envelop" and thus press on a society "from all sides" with a certain force' (2009: 78) and are the 'best approximation of affect – intensities that are only imperfectly housed in the proper names we give to emotions' (77). According to Anderson, 'atmospheres are the shared ground from which subjective states and their attendant feelings and emotions emerge' (79). My fieldwork took place two and three years into the Troika-imposed austerity measures – a very long time – and as such people were exhausted and ambivalent. McManus argues that the 'last best hope of the hope project in a fearful age might just be in identifying manoeuvres of affective ambivalence...in critical exploration of the political polyvalence of the affective register, identifying the ways affects can orient or dispose very different agential possibilities' (McManus, 2011: 3) which I explore in Chapters Six and Seven.

This draws on Spinozan *thinking-bodies* that resist bifurcation into thought and body, and self and other (2013:144) and takes the subject to be 'always in the process of becoming constituted through affective activity, through the myriad ways it is continually affected by, and affects upon other bodies in the world' (145). McManus argues that 'for Spinoza, bodies feel those changes in their *capacity to act*, and this inflection of affect into the passionate or feeling-experience of the subject is important in understanding the ethical and political significance of affective agency' (2013: 128). If feelings are a 'significant index of agential capacity, the "relative increase or decrease in the power of acting"' (Hynes and Sharpe, 2009: 9 in McManus, 2013: 147), then considering agency as affective, allows us to think through the connection between remembrance practices and *collective* action. Here Zournazi's observations on the potential of 'affective perspectives' is useful:

While the individual subject is the starting point, analysis of the subject's affective constitution directs critical attention outwards ... Affective perspectives, therefore, focus critical attention on mapping the particularity of our bodily encounters in ways that extend *beyond* the subject, towards the broader formations of our worldly possibilities. (Zournazi, 2002: 154, my italics)

Furthermore, an affective perspective to bodily encounters with regards to political myth-making of spaces and temporalities, reminds us that affect 'cannot be pinned down; talking about it brings it into language, and into space' (Kaasa, 2014: 185). If affect 'undoes bodies and spaces as individualized entities and shows them to emerge as durational, relational processes through which intensities course,' (Dawney, 2011: 601) then we can see how an attentiveness to affective encounters helps us understand the interplay between material practices of political myth-making and the production of spaces and temporalities, which I propose to be forms of indirect resistance.

### *Indirect Resistance*

In proposing that remembrance practices and political myth-making are forms of indirect resistance, I draw on the work of James C. Scott (1985; 1990), Sherry Ortner (2006), and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos (2014a and b). Scott defines everyday resistance as 'ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance.' Outlining the features of this form of resistance, he writes: 'They require little or no co-ordination or planning; they make use of implicit understandings and informal networks; they often represent a form of individual self-help; they typically avoid any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority (Scott, 1985: xvi). While Scott's seminal work expanded the domain of 'politics' to 'the politics of ploys' (de Certeau, 1984) embedded within the practice of everyday life, his theoretical basis has been heavily critiqued for not accounting for intersectional structures of power (Mohanty, 1991). Indeed, I have strived to neither reduce nor tame the complex, contradictory, and lived nature of resistance, which Routledge argues is frequently erased or generalized in theoretical accounts that transform its poetry and intensity into the 'dull prose of rationality' (1997: 68-69). Building on rich, ongoing debates in the social sciences since the 1980s, I also aim to avoid 'fetishising resistance,' (Kellner, 1995), as well as, following Abu-Lughod's pivotal critique, 'romanticising' it, 'read[ing] all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power, and the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated' (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 42).

I work with resistance as a concept that resonates with local meaning for the people I spoke to, and through which they narrate and negotiate their remembrance practices. I am attentive to the assertion, which Donald Moore confronts in his move from 'cites to sites' of resistance, that 'resistance is the default discourse of the left ... [and] its politics are opaque, they must be decoded by context' (Pieterse, 1992: 11 in Moore,

1997: 89). I attempt to think through Moore's question of how we can 'understand sites of resistance without losing sight of the grounded struggle of women and men' (1997: 88) using mixed ethnographic methods, as I discuss in the following chapter. Furthermore, he draws on Bell and Valentine, who hint at a Lefebvrian impulse, proposing that 'by reading resistance as spatial practice ... we can see how contested and embattled terrains can be reinscribed, redefined, remapped' (1995:230 in Moore, 1997: 88). Recent work (Rakopoulos, 2014; Theodossopoulos 2014a,b) on indirect resistance as ambivalent and ambiguous forms of action in relation to anti-austerity politics in Greek cities demonstrates that the complexity of these diverse practices poses a dilemma for social scientists:

On the one hand, I acknowledge that indirect resistance encourages a great deal of critical thinking that engages with the structures of power in creative ways ... and may even temporarily destabilize—as Greek indignation demonstrates—pre-existing political structures. Yet, on the other hand, I recognize that indirect resistance is often constrained by pre-existing explanations of causality in politics—including ethno-nationalist narratives—an observation that encourages us to depart from Scott's vision of subaltern discontent as an a "hidden" transcript independent of power-holders. (Theodossopoulos, 2014b: 489)

As is commonly stated, practices of resistance cannot be separated from practices of domination, following the Foucaultian tradition. However, in the editorial to the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Resistance Studies*, Vinthagen argues that the interdisciplinary field of resistance studies should attempt to go beyond this:

The concept of 'resistance' is meaningless and impossible to understand in isolation from those of power or domination. For two significant reasons, however, we need to break with Foucaultian tradition by shifting our focus from 'power/ (resistance)' to 'resistance/(power)'. First, since we know less about the resistance side of the complex power/resistance nexus, we need to pay more attention to it. Second, power can never be fully understood without relating it to resistance; failure to do so can lead to systematic distortions that exaggerate power and underestimate the potential of resistance. (2015: 7)

In this project I attempt to engage with this appeal, through exploring the dominant political myths of the Polytechnic, as well as the counteractive political myths that operate through and fabricate spaces, places, and temporalities that not only resist the dominant political myths, but create productive tensions between each other. This allows the fragmented and not wholly autonomous nature of resistance to come to the fore (Ortner 2006; Gledhill and Schell, 2012; Moore, 1998; Fletcher, 2007) as well as the 'many and constantly transforming figurative combinations' of indignation in contemporary Athens (Theodossopoulos, 2014a: 291). Hopefully evading 'naïve celebrations of the everyday' (Keith, 1997: 283), I hope to contribute to the de-pathologisation and de-exoticisation of indirect forms resistance in Athens

(Theodossopoulos, 2014a,b), eschewing the gas masks, rock-throwing, and bins-on-fire to focus on the 'local meaningfulness of resistance in "culturally intimate" contexts' (Herzfeld 1997, in Theodossopoulos, 2014b: 426).

There are myriad threads that I will empirically follow in the relationship between political myths – as socially produced spaces, places, and times, as well as sites of the radical imagination and affective agency – and resistance. Looking at political myths as forms of indirect resistance, I hope to emphasise how remembrance practices and political myth-making are meaningful in a *local* and *situated* way.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed the concepts that I find essential for making sense of the practices through which the Polytechnic uprising is invoked and the meanings, spaces, temporalities, and affects these practices produce. I have outlined a theoretical framework that proposes to look at the annual commemoration as diverse collective remembrance practices of political myth making. Political myth is here understood as a process, which takes the narrative of the Polytechnic uprising, and grounds it in the present, containing within it a determination to act. I propose that these political myths are socially produced spaces, in all three senses of Lefebvre's spatial triad, as well as local places. Furthermore I propose that the political myths forge different relationships between the present and historical time, and as such create distinct temporalities, which aim to mobilise people. Lastly I suggested that we could consider these practices of political myth making as meaningful for people in three inter-twined ways. Firstly, that political myths are a site of re-constituting or critiquing social imaginaries, and, as such, a site of possible urban utopianism. Secondly, through participants' narration and negotiation of desires, intentions and feelings regarding political myth-making we can discuss notions of political subjectivity and affective agency. Thirdly, I suggested that practices of political myth-making are forms of indirect resistance. In the next chapter I discuss how I approach these concepts methodologically, and outline the mixed ethnographic and audiovisual methods that I drew on in my fieldwork.

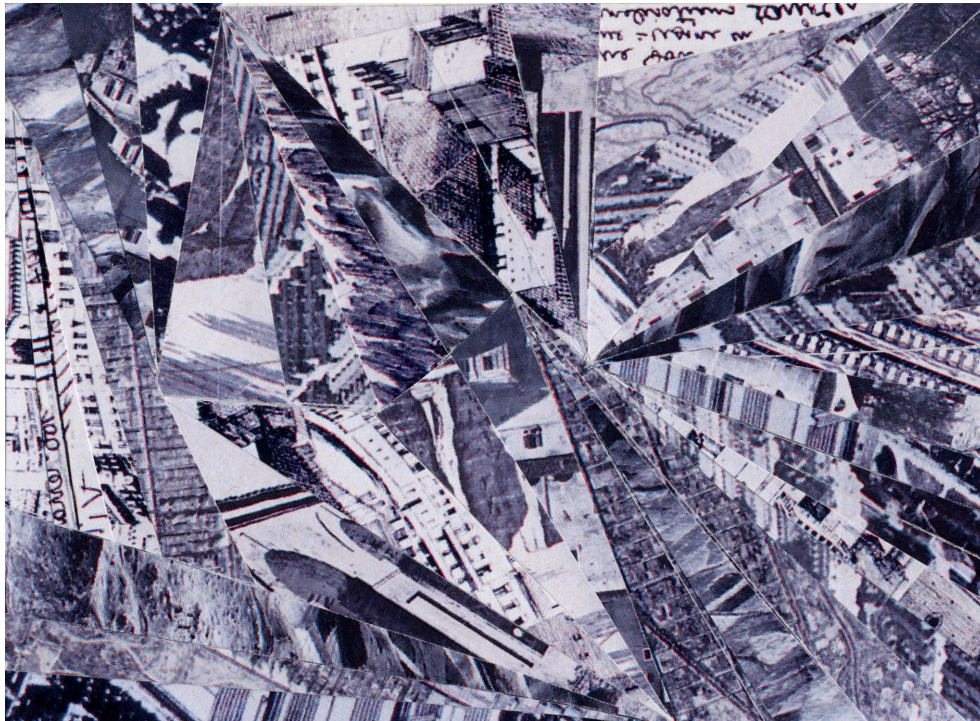
## CHAPTER THREE

### APPROACHING A 'SOCIOLOGY OF POLITICAL MYTH'

#### Introduction

The questions I ask of contemporary invocations of past uprisings are the same questions that people participating in the remembrance practices ask themselves: what is their relevance in relation to contemporary political action? How do remembrance practices of political myth-making give meaning and significance to present experiences and actions? This research project is centrally concerned with how a past uprising remains a 'resource' in present political struggles, and the processes through which this happens. This chapter considers the methodology I have developed to explore contemporary invocations of the Polytechnic uprising, as processes of political myth-making, and how such remembrance practices are meaningful in terms of political subjectivity, affective agency, and as forms of indirect resistance. I discuss why it is crucial to examine political mythmaking using mixed ethnographic methods, and how I have gone about this. I reflect on the kind of knowledge these methods produce, as well as ethical considerations regarding my role as a researcher, representation, and doing research with activists.

6. Urban studies collage







7. Sirens lino print

It was only upon finishing writing this thesis that I realized that the grounding points of investigation that emerged during my fieldwork in 2012 and 2013 were visible in the spring and summer of 2011: fragmentary approaches to urban studies; myth; story-telling. In the spring I participated in an exhibition in a building that was to be demolished imminently on the LSE campus. In one of the rooms, I found abandoned slides, now obsolete objects, belonging to an urban studies class. The first image above shows a collage I made using fragments of these slides. I turned them into a stop-frame animation, overdubbed with absurd quotes from grandiose urban studies lectures I found online. During the exhibition, the animation was projected in a room of the building, alongside the collages.

The second image above is a lino-print from the summer of 2011, when I stayed in Athens while everyone fled the heat. I arrived days after the occupation of Syntagma Square had been violently evicted, and stayed next to an open-air cinema that showed *The Third Man* twice a night for a month. I was captivated by the sirens in the National Archeological Museum, and I made a print combining them with the forms of the Athenian Polygatekia buildings – a distinctive urban form which allows each level to have its own balcony and piece of sky: a luxury in densely planned neighbourhoods. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the sirens' powerful is derived from their story-telling abilities, the 'counter-narratives' they offer to the male protagonist. Odysseus wanted to hear their song without being affected by it, so he had his crew tie him to the mast of the ship so that he would not be harmed, and filled their ears with wax so they would not hear. This thesis is mostly about exploring counter-narratives, which I examine in the form



of political myths. I came to realize the resonance between these two images and my thesis while I was writing my conclusion, and reflecting on my theoretical compasses.

### **Approaching a Sociology of Political Myth**

In Chapter One I outlined my intention to explore practices of invoking the Polytechnic in the present as enactments and engagements with the plurality of political myths of the uprising. As previously discussed, the prevalence or necessity of contemporary political myths responds to the 'need for a symbolic mediation of political experience' (Bottici 2007: 143). Crucial to political myths is this determination to act, in the sense that they address specifically political conditions in the present (Bottici, 2007:215). The consequences of defining political myth in this way are pivotal to my methodology. Political myths cannot be reduced to the written word; they are not merely to be found in the archive. The work on myth is constituted of its production, reception and reproduction; they are made, shared, interpreted, and re-made. Secondly, this is a process that can take place in multiple sites and formats: texts, images, sound, actions. Indeed 'all social activities and practices can become the vehicle for this work as long as they can host the work on a narrative that responds to a need for significance' (Bottici and Challand, 2010: 16). As I am interested in how political myth-making engages with and generates affect, I propose that a focus on the affective, somatic and becoming nature of subjectivity, agency and collectivity (following McManus 2009, 2011) is a way of approaching the question of significance. In the following sections I discuss how using mixed ethnographic methods attempts to attend to this affective understanding of subjectivity, which is 'located as much within the contours of our bodies as within the shifting parameters of our sociopolitical worlds' (Kleinman and Fitz-Henry, 2007: 64).

Political myths are to be examined not as *objects* but as *processes* of 'work on myth' or myth-making. These processes entail, over time, a 'constant reinterpretation of the same narrative core to adapt it to different circumstances. [They are] often conveyed by social practices that need to be analyzed using a *longue durée* perspective' (Bottici and Challand, 2013: 7). In my project the *longue durée* perspective comes from the people I spoke to, rather than myself. The people I spoke to during fieldwork have been politically active for different periods of time, and recount the different instances in which the uprising has been meaningful for them over the years, as well as in the present. I also draw upon texts that have been written about the uprising at different points in time, although I am primarily focused on how the political myths have been

articulated around it in the period since 2008 in Athens because of the resonance between the events of December 2008 and those of 1973.

The work on myth can be analytically distinguished into three levels, according to Bottici and Challand. They are present in narratives that provide a '*cognitive* schema through which people look at the world, a *practical* image of it, on the basis of which they act on it, as well as an *aesthetic* figure which mobilizes and evokes passions and emotions' (2010: 3). While appreciating this normative schema, it remains overly philosophical, and I focus instead on the sociological concerns I outlined Chapter One. The point of exploring how and why the Polytechnic uprising continue to resonate in the present is to find out whether political myths are a means for opening or closing the possibility of critique of the contemporary socio-political situation. According to Bottici, the 'task of a future sociology of political myth ... will be to spell out in what conditions political myths are respectively a means for liberation or for oppression' (Bottici, 2007: 259). I attend to these concerns, which are also concerns of the people I spoke to, but again, my research questions have a less normative stance. I propose that mixed ethnographic methods are uniquely suited to fully capturing the richness and texture of political myths and the nuanced ways in which they are meaningful for their creators, through being able to explore the experiences of participants.

### **Exploring Practices of Political Myth-making Through Mixed Ethnographic Methods**

The potential sources of the work on myth of the Polytechnic uprisings are innumerable, a fact acknowledged by all those who attempt to pin them down. My fieldwork started from the site itself, in the Polytechnic campus and in Exarcheia observing and participating in everyday life and political action in these spaces, as well as participating in the 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polytechnic uprisings in November 2012 and 2013, returning in the spring of 2014 in the run-up to the European elections. I limit the scope of my analysis of the 'work on myth' to the material gathered during this time. This consists of field notes, interviews, transcriptions of organized discussions, photographs, tweets, and sound recordings, as well as different kinds of texts and artistic interventions. I focus mostly on the three-day Polytechnic remembrance practices, situating them in the everyday activities of people in the Polytechnic campus, the area of Exarcheia, and other public spaces of Athens. In the following section I discuss ethnographic methods and in the subsequent sections the analysis of text and audiovisual materials.

### *Ethnographic methods*

There is a vast literature on ethnographic methods; here I focus specifically on how I draw on that from political ethnography, which aims to address the '*double absence*: of politics in ethnographic literature and of ethnography in studies of politics' (Auyero and Joseph, 2007: 2). Wolford suggests that political ethnography has a dual meaning: the 'political nature of ethnography as a method that is uniquely suited to examining and exposing the power relations that inflect all social life,' as well as the 'need for (and practice of) ethnographic investigations of politics, where elections and states are no longer the privileged site of political life, rather *people* are' (2007: 19). He argues that 'attention to location (rather than the local), to lived experiences (rather than rhetoric) and to (un)intentions (as opposed to simply action) will enrich our ability to understand and explain social movements' (*ibid*). These propositions are suited to my inquiry into remembrance practices of politically active people as experiences situated in Exarcheia and the Polytechnic campus. Furthermore, alongside participant observation in these physical public spaces, I draw on twitter sources, which are part of everyday political action in Athens and a source of work on myth. This is an attempt to account for the ways in which, as Keith puts it, the spatialities of the urban are 'pluralized' through 'recombinant forms of objects and cultures [where] the domains of the virtual sit alongside the more conventional realms' (Keith, 2013: 10).

Ethnographic methods are particularly useful in understanding the different remembrance practices that take place in the Polytechnic, as they tease out the specificities of the different articulations of 'work on myth' and address theoretical concerns of space, place, temporality, affect, and indirect resistance, as outlined in Chapter Two. Lisa Wedeen (2009) elaborates upon what emphasis on performative practices means for an interpretivist political ethnography. She states that practices are actions or deeds that are repeated over time, which are 'learned, reproduced, and subjected to risk through social interaction,' and are made 'intelligible to others in context-dependent ways'. She considers them to be 'dual' in that they are composed of 'what "the outside observer can see and of the actors' understandings of what they are doing"' (2009: 87). She considers that ethnographic work can productively draw on this dualism and the tensions this duality evokes, because in theory, 'the ethnographer is positioned both to register the categories a community uses (its "categories of practice") and to enjoy the distance necessary to develop relevant analytical categories' (Brubaker 2004 in Wedeen, 2009: 87). I developed my

analytical framework through the use of categories, concepts, and terms that informants themselves use. Concepts around space, place, myth, history, and affect emerged from people in conversation. Benzecry states that 'between sociologists' meanings and the significations structures of the locals ... is the attempt to communicate what kinds of choices we've made to be able to produce data, not in order to discount them or bracket them, but to understand them as the pulleys and wedges that actually allow for knowledge to be produced' (2015: 3). Emphasising remembrance practices as performative is one way of rendering intelligible how subjectivities come into being, at least in part, through performance, and enact that which they name (Wedeen, 2009: 87). In addition to performative practices, Biehl, Good, and Kleinman suggest that attending to subjectivity in ethnographic terms requires an attention to 'the concrete constellations in which people forge and foreclose their lives around what is most at stake,' and examining the complexities of 'lived experience within everyday worlds as well as within temporary spaces and transitions – moments of crisis and states of exception' (2007:5). I find this really useful in terms of being able to think about peoples' actions and words: what is at stake, and what kinds of affective registers are being expressed? Approaching questions of political subjectivity and agency through ethnographic methods has been critiqued for being 'both informed and hampered by a political/discursive culture that potentially obviates the expression and investigation of *process*' (Vidali, 2014: 15, my emphasis). As a way of avoiding measuring decisive stances of political statements, Vidali reformulates an 'ethnography of process', which I see as complimentary to an attentiveness to practices. This is a way of balancing the representation of ongoing and emergent experience with the use of keywords (both emic and etic) as a way of 'drawing attention to the dialogic and emergent nature of political subjectivity' (Vidali, 2014: 17). This is to say that I take into account what people say as well as what they do. Sherry Ortner sees such use of interpretive method as allowing for the 'complex structures of thought, feeling, and reflection that make social beings always *more* than the occupants of particular positions and the holders of particular identities' (2006: 115, my italics). As such, the representations I offer in this thesis are necessarily partial.

The idea of an ethnographic 'sensitivity' is important here, and implies epistemological commitments rather than 'reducing ethnography to the process of on-site data collection' (2009: 6). An ethnographic sensitivity has the potential to incorporate a multiplicity of voices and perspectives and to represent the diversity of individuals that participate in collective remembrance practices. Such a stance impels

us to go beyond the text, the spoken word, and the physical traces of myth and political action, although inescapably, the outcome of this research being a thesis, the word is still privileged. When doing research with participants who are stigmatized by the mainstream media, government, and police, attentiveness to what is *not* said is also crucial, for as Connerton states, if 'keywords provide a rich access to a culture's structure of feeling, the itinerary of its silences may also offer a fertile, if more intractable access to its preoccupations' (2011: 76). I rely heavily on fieldnotes, one of the primary tools of ethnographic research, and the way in which these notes are translated onto the page inevitably reflects my pre-occupations. I am attentive to the limitations of ethnographic methods, starting with the assumption that such 'inscriptions of social life inevitably reduce the welter and confusion of social life into words', constitute the very first act of translation (or treason) (Geertz, 1973:19). However, perhaps this 'should help us not to find how we can actually avoid committing it, but rather liberate us to understand how limited our understanding of that encounter is always going to be' (Benzecry, 2015: 3).

### *Interviews*

To understand how participants make, share, and understand myths, the interview necessarily forms a crucial part of the mixed ethnographic methods I use. I follow Pouliot, who argues for approaches that help to discern 'what agents think *from* (the background of know-how that informs practice in an inarticulate fashion) rather than simply what agents think *about* (reflective and conscious knowledge)' (2008:5, my emphasis). I approached my initial informants because of their participation in the Polytechnic uprising commemoration, which snowballed to interviews with others for their participation in political action in and around Athens, mainly Exarcheia. It is taken for granted by now that the interview is a 'contextual, improvised, and performative' mode of expression (Dillard, 1982:32). In my research, it also became a site in which political myths of the uprisings were enacted. Indeed, Dillard's description of the interview bears a marked resemblance to Bottici's description of how political myths respond to a need for significance: '[W]hen performed, the interview text creates the world, giving the world its situated meaningfulness. The interview is a fabrication, a construction, a fiction, an ordering or rearrangement of selected materials from the actual world' (Dillard, 1982: 148). As Denzin notes, 'every interview text selectively and unsystematically reconstructs the world, tells and performs a story according to its own version of truth and narrative logic' (Denzin, 2003: 81). Given this performative aspect, the interview allows for analysis of the

relationship between the political myths of the uprisings and contemporary political action, given that the work on myth consists of performing images and narratives.

The kinds of interviews I undertook varied from semi-structured to very informal and unstructured, more conversations as part of everyday observation of the spaces of the Polytechnic and Exarcheia. I relied a lot on these informal interviews, as the kinds of narratives that emerge from these scenarios are reflexive and vital to constructing the experiential meaning of events during and after the fact and 'the self-understandings of those who, on either side, participate in them' (Denzin, 2003: 11). Taking both the roles of interviewer and interviewee into account, Tsing (2005) asks 'what would happen if we thought of ethnography as a particular kind of encounter, that between self and other, between a teller of tales and a listener of stories?' (in Benezecry, 2015: 3) There are different power asymmetries at play in these performances. As Les Back cautions, there is 'a sleight of hand in the claim that the authenticity of a person can be rendered through a faithful transcription of their voice' (in Baker et al., 2012: 12). Drawing on Atkinson and Silverman's work on the 'emergence of the speaking self' within the 'interview society' (1997) he argues for drawing attention to the socially-shaped nature of these encounters, and here is where contextualising interviews within a broader ethnographic approach is crucial to my project (2012: 12).

### *Texts*

The written word is one of the traces of the 'work on myth'. I analyse multiple texts alongside ethnographic methods and visual analysis, as part of the production, reception, and reproduction of the political myths of the uprising. The texts that are incorporated into the project encompass a wide range of formats and come from a variety of different sources, chosen for their treatment of the Polytechnic uprising in relation to the 'present'. I draw on independent political pamphlets; blogposts; tweets; posters; artistic, literary, journalistic, and academic texts; transcribed oral history testimonies; history text books; and mainstream media sources. In the two chapters devoted to exploring what I term the "dominant" political myths of the uprising, which are worked on by the state and mainstream media, I additionally draw on governmental reports and political discourse.

As this project is concerned with issues of political subjectivity and affective agency and treats political myths as forms of indirect resistance that context state power, I necessarily prioritise texts produced by individuals and collectives, written with the

intention of sharing their perspectives. Aside from published historical, academic, journalistic, and literary texts, I draw on many unpublished works which are shared either offline or online, and are, in most cases, free. In Athens, I collected pamphlets concerned with the 1973 uprising that have been written over the past five years. All the materials were mainly collected from stalls in the Polytechnic campus between November 15-17 in 2012 and 2013. Almost all the groups who participate produce a text to distribute on these days; if they have a newspaper or magazine, it has a special section about the Polytechnic uprising and its relationship with the present. The importance of pamphlets as a fundamental yet disposable literature that details 'hidden' histories is noted by Herbert Pimlott (2012) and Nicholas Thoburn (2011). Independent texts about the uprisings written in recent years – including literary texts – are compelling because of the ways in which they invoke the narratives of the uprising as a theoretical, practical, and aesthetic means of intervening in the current political situation and connecting with contemporary struggles. I analyse how this 'work on myth' deals with issues of subjectivity, action, and violence. As I am concerned with who makes these texts, how they are made, and how this process is meaningful for them, I also analyse interviews with some of the authors of the pamphlets and literary and academic texts.

Guided by my research questions and theoretical framework, this ethnographic approach privileges texts written from the perspective of political participation, with the aim of understanding how people contemporarily invoke the uprising through their words as well as through deeds. This makes an important contribution to recent empirical literature on political myth, which tend to deal with national and supra-national themes with a sole focus on 'dominant' political discourse (see Person and Petersson 2014; Esch, 2010; Petersson, 2013), pointing to the disciplinary boundaries of philosophy and political science. In their empirical work on political myth, Bottici and Challand emphasize the importance of analyzing a variety of 'high' and 'low' sources because political myths pervade every aspect of social life, as well as the importance of visual material, which I will deal with in the following section (2010: 8).

In this research project, different texts are examined in terms of how they contribute to the 'work on myth': specifically, how they cite the Polytechnic and articulate the relationship between the uprising and the present. The key question, as outlined in the last chapter, is whether the work on political myth '*opens or closes* the possibility of interrogation of the existing state of affairs,' while acknowledging that political myths are 'always interwoven with other kinds of discourses' (Bottici and Challand, 2010: 21).

As the political myths of the Polytechnic could be called 'historical political myths' (Bottici and Challand, 2010) the 'other kinds of discourse' with which they are frequently entangled are historical narratives. These narratives consist of visible and contained forms, accounts of the past that reside in reputable and accessible archives. As such, part of the 'work on myth' of the uprising is easily locatable and formalized: the academic production of historical accounts of the Polytechnic and Greek history of resistance is already mired in contentious debate and ferocious revisionism (see Panourgia, 2010). These different accounts of the Polytechnic are neither pure myth nor pure historical events – they work as both. Where my project departs from that of a historian is that although I draw upon empirical 'evidence' of political myth – textual and visual artefacts, interviews, observation – I do not consider these to be narratives that are part of a 'rationalised memory' of the uprisings, but narratives which assert the uprising's 'capacity to address the present conditions, and to respond to the need for significance that they generate' (Bottici and Challand, 2010: 23). Political myths of the Polytechnic look to the past from the vantage point of the present. As such, I also draw on historical, academic, and journalistic texts as part of the uprising's 'work on myth'. As this project aims to analyse the multiple settings in which 'work on myth' can take place, I now turn to discuss how I am dealing with the audiovisual materials that I have observed, recorded, and collected as part of my fieldwork, and how I am analysing them.

#### *Audiovisual material*

There is a wealth of audiovisual material regarding the Polytechnic uprising. I draw on those made for the specific commemorations that I was present for, as well as those made in the time since the uprising themselves. These kinds of materials are important to analyse because images have a 'condensational capacity' (Bottici, 2007: 252) to convey the whole 'work on myth'; they can potentially act as 'more powerful conveyors of the work on myth than any explicit statement' (Bottici and Challand: 2010, 37). Guiding my inquiry here is Bottici and Challand's assertion that 'if an icon is an image that by means of a synecdoche conveys the whole narrative that lies behind it, the question emerges of where such narratives lie' (Bottici and Challand, 2010: 26). Here I rely on the narratives of the image-makers, as well as those who encounter them during the commemoration. I also draw on Walter Benjamin's method of dialectical images, montage and citation practices. I follow an ethnographic approach to analyzing audiovisual material, which is bound up with performative practices of political myth-making. This approach aims to engage with visual media and images



'not as preservational and objectifying tools, but as routes to multisensorial knowing' (Pink, 2006: 99). I will now outline some of the kinds of materials that I draw on, and how I am going about exploring their condensational capacity and how as an aesthetic level of the 'work on myth', they 'mobilize and evoke passions and emotions'.

There are many forms of image-based research, I differentiate between them using Jon Prosser's schema (1998 in Spencer, 2011: 420) and discuss how they are useful in exploring artefacts made in and for remembrance practices of the Polytechnic uprising. He suggests the categories of researcher-found, researcher-created, and respondent-generated visual data. I also discuss representation and visual research, which he considers to be a 'broader field of analysis' (Spencer, 2011: 420).

#### *Researcher-found and created material*

As part of my fieldnotes, I took photographs and recorded sound recordings at both sites, or relied on the documentation of others if it was an event in which I wanted to participate more fully, such as direct action or protest. Widely-circulated videos of the annual march as well as self-made videos about the Polytechnic commemoration hosted on YouTube are an invaluable source of the 'work on myth'. A well-known documentary is shown annually in the most widely-visited room in a Polytechnic building, organised by family members of those who died in the uprising. The film is a documentary made by Albert Coerant at the time of the 1973 uprising, which shows the only extant footage of tanks crashing through the gates of the Polytechnic. Participants in the remembrance practices frequently referenced this footage in interviews as a crucial resource regarding the facticity of the violence that night. I also draw on found (primarily online) audiovisual material relating to the commemoration. Graffiti and political posters on the streets of Exarcheia and the walls of the Polytechnic are drawn on as a resource for emphasizing different aspects of the spatial political myths of the Polytechnic.

#### *Respondent-generated visual data*

Throughout the thesis I draw on excerpts from the diverse pamphlets collected during the Athens Polytechnic commemoration – discussed in the previous section – which all use imagery in very striking ways. Self-made by different political groups on an annual basis, there are specific iconic images of the Polytechnic uprising that are repeated and juxtaposed with contemporary struggles. Some of these pamphlets were used by myself and, on occasion, interviewees as part of visual elicitation in

interviews, a means of discussing the political myths of the uprising – why they were chosen, and how people see these images as being relevant in the present.

For eleven years, on the Friday of the memorialisation, at 4pm, a film made by XAMAS, a student group from the Chemistry school, affiliated with the United Independent Left Movement (EAAK), student groups which are prevalent in many university departments and connected to *Antikapitalistiki Aristeri Synergasia gia tin Anatropi*, (ANTARSYA) The Front of the Anticapitalist Left, is projected in a lecture theatre of the Polytechnic. It is a collage of documentary and film footage, which traces the Greek resistance in the Second World War until the present. Every year 45-60 minutes of footage is added, showing that year's events. This year it was around six hours long, and went up until the eviction of ERT, the state broadcaster, which took place a few weeks previously. Aside from analyzing the interactive nature of this screening, aided by field recordings – where viewers chant, sing, and boo – I also interview the students who were responsible for adding material in the 2013 memorialisation.

#### *Representation and visual research*

Icons of the different political myths of the Polytechnic uprising that I explore are to be found in poems, films, songs, and other representations of the Polytechnic. From a sociological perspective, the importance of audiovisual methods is the way in which these approaches supplement traditional ethnographic methods and analysis of texts, and have the ability to evoke more nuanced textures and understandings. The complexity of the urban political practices that I am looking at cannot in any sense be 'captured'. However, by addressing the important role sound and the image play in the 'work on myth' of the uprisings, as well as social media, I hope to move towards an approach that treats these kinds of materials as ethnographic resources, with multiple layers, which are potentially 'thick descriptions' in themselves. This leads me to reflect on the kinds of representations that I myself produce, through 'writing' the political myths of the Polytechnic uprising.

The challenge is how to represent the spaces and temporalities of the political myths. I see this task as part of the project of writing about urban social life, with the central question being how to do justice to the ways in which the multiplicity of inherently urban political myths are not only 'constituted in imagination and different forms of representation [but] are also themselves sites of imagination and creativity' (Bridge and Gibson, 2010: 351). Here I turn to several figures whose work on myth and

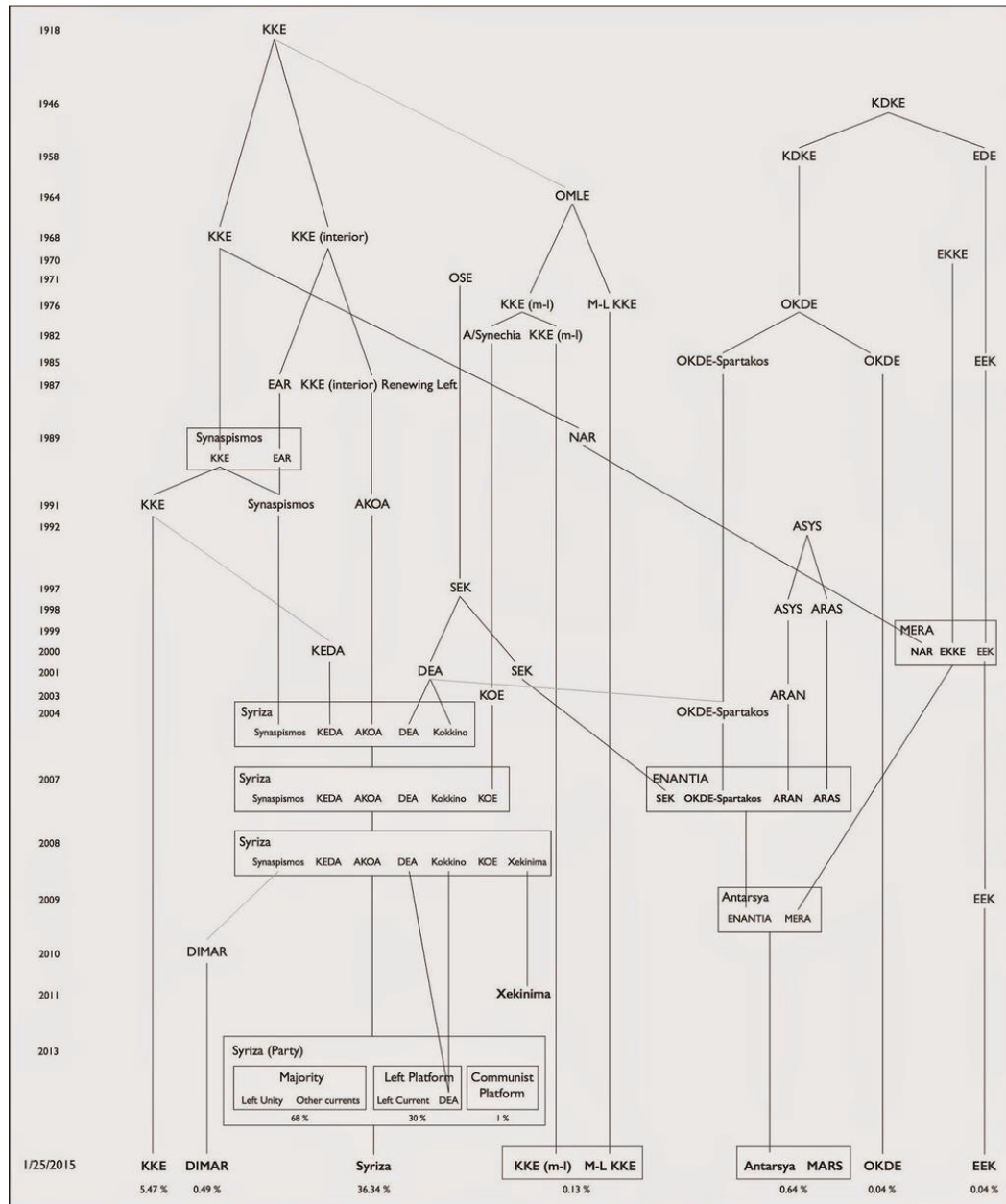
representations of urban life are instructive: Walter Benjamin, Italo Calvino, Georges Perec, Chris Marker, Deborah Levy, and Elena Ferrante. While I cannot hope to write like them, I am inspired by their creations. What links these representations is the vivid and lyrical way in which they attend to the multiplicities of scale and do not valorize a particular perspective: a situated ethnographic approach, perhaps. Back and Keith ask 'from what vantage point should we write' and how might these vantage points 'intersect with the research imagination' (2014: 16). Looking at urban political action in Athens through the prism of remembrance practices and political myths necessitates multiple vantage points; it requires disentangling the multiple histories and geographies that are invoked and fabricated, as well as an ethnographic approach to understanding how remembrance practices are meaningful for people. In looking at political myths which produce spaces and temporalities, the work of Walter Benjamin, who brings together work on myth, remembrance, time and experience of urban life has been influential as I have discussed in the previous chapter.

### **Reflecting on Methodological Choices**

I begin this section with an encounter during my fieldwork that raised some crucial questions about my methodological approach. This vignette illustrates crucial questions I want to address in this section: while I have discussed *what* this project seeks to explore, *who* I am talking to, and *how* am I going about it, I now turn to important questions of reflexivity, ethics, and the positioning of being a critical researcher 'in the field' and the ways in which this influences the research project.

On a cold December evening, I was in the Anarchist Archive for the second time, a basement five minutes walk away from the Polytechnic, with no sign on the outside apart from a door that is ajar from 5-7pm on Mondays and Thursdays, with light peering out from a window at pavement level. Once you walk down the steps, the walls are lined with old posters, some from previous Novembers, and shelves displaying old zines and pamphlets. There is a table, some sofas, and piles of books everywhere. I was sitting at the table, opposite Dimitris, a sixty five year old man, who had been part of the 1973 uprising. 'You have no method,' he said, pointing his finger at me and smiling. This was the second time he said this to me. The first was during a previous encounter in which it felt like I had been interviewed by him and the five others who were in the Archive that evening. They are part of a group who publish the monthly paper 'Route of Freedom' and organize an annual two-day event at the Polytechnic commemoration. They asked me with whom I had already spoken, so I listed the names of groups that people I'd spoken to affiliate themselves with, naming

them on my fingers, approximately 40, some of whom are in the diagram below, which is now outdated as I mention in Chapter 8: Popular Unity has formed from ARAN (ANTARSYA), Left Platform and the Communist Platform (SYRIZA).



8. Diagram of the Left, source unknown

'Do you have a bibliography?' I listed the authors who'd written about the Polytechnic that I could remember from the top of my head. They asked me what I wanted to learn. This question was repeated often, and also between them - 'What does she want to learn?' They asked what I wanted to get from an 'interview' with them. I said I was interested in people's experiences of going to the Polytechnic commemoration. I had said this on a previous occasion, and Dimitris had replied with incredulity, 'What,

you mean every year of 40 years?’ This time, Anna, a 60-something year old woman, said, ‘So you are going to hear all the different versions and then decide which one is true?’ To which I said that I didn’t think there was one truth, that I was interested in all the different perspectives. ‘Just as there is not one truth, there is not one lie,’ she replied. Dimitris asked me what my method was. I said ‘hanging around and talking to people’. To which he responded, smiling, wagging his finger at me, ‘You have no method!’ Leonidas, in his mid-thirties, suggested that I make a sample, to which Dimitris replied on my behalf, ‘She has a sample! It’s us! The people who go to the Polytechnic, have the tables, who participate in the events and discussions.’ We concluded that I’d write some questions in an email, send it to them, and they would discuss them collectively, and then with me. I told them I was particularly interested in the process of writing a new text every year for the Polytechnic uprising commemoration, and in the email I sent them this part of their text from last year I found interesting:

Despite all this, a bunch of ‘unrepentants’ continued to give blows against oblivion and distortion, representing the social dissenting position that used to exist in the 73 revolution. Maintaining the flame, still burning, those blows produced two of the highest moments in this long-term trajectory ...

I bumped into Dimitris at the local laiki (fruit and veg market) on the Saturday morning. He told me to come by the Archive on the following Monday evening at 5ish. As I was a bit anxious about going, and not sure how casual this arrangement was, I put it off and turned up at 7pm, which is not, strictly-speaking rude behaviour. Dimitris was sat down with a print-out of my email, and said sternly: ‘Why are you late? What were you doing? We had an appointment!’ Then he started to talk about his participation in the commemoration and how he writes about it every year, and we spoke regularly. I tell this story because I want to illustrate the ways in which doing fieldwork was sometimes inherently uncomfortable. This being my first big project, I learnt as I went along because of the generosity of the people I spoke to. I was interested in doing ethnographic research, and yet I was embarrassed about it in my first encounters. Furthermore, the approach I described was not deemed a method. This made me feel like a really bad social researcher, but it also points towards the currency of different methods in the eyes of different participants. Whereas I could hang around with people of a similar age, Dimitris commanded a regular appointment in the Archive, and I respected this. In retrospect, the moments that make me cringe when I remember them are important experiences for reflecting on power relations in doing research and ethical questions that I will discuss later.

Doing this research project in the city that I was supposed to grow up in, and in my third language, has proved extremely challenging and complex.<sup>26</sup> While this thesis is not auto-ethnographic, I have often reflected on my desires and ambitions behind doing it – did I hope to find out how it would have been to grow up in Athens? – and my almost insurmountable doubts in my ability to do it. I often considered myself to be the ‘wrong person’ to be doing this project. Not fully Greek, but then by the same token, not fully anything: Greek name, French passport. I grew up in South East London, almost by accident – we were supposed to stay for just a few years before going to Greece – and I first heard about the Polytechnic uprising not from my Greek father, but from my French mother. My Greek grandfather had told her about it in the 1970s before he died in 1980. He was too old by 1973 to participate in the uprising, although he supported the occupation, as many did, by collecting money and medical supplies, which were handed through the grills of the university campus gate. It was only while doing this project, that I discovered that my grandfather had been imprisoned on the island of Makronisos<sup>27</sup> for being a Communist. I stumbled across my grandmother in a black and white photograph from a ‘private collection’ in Neni Panourgia’s ethnography of the Greek Left, *Dangerous Citizens*. She was standing in a group of women, the photograph entitled ‘Union of Democratic Women in 1966’ (2009:129). I am unable to ask my grandmother about any of this, as she passed away in 2000, and no further information emerges from my uncle or father.

Thus, unexpected, through the process of doing this project, whilst finding out about peoples’ relationships with geographies and histories of resistance, I also unearthed glimpses of my own family’s histories. Nevertheless, not being ‘Greek enough’ was a constant concern, and an anxiety at odds with my alienation towards nationalism and the notion of belonging to a nation. The visibility of being a researcher, and having to account for ‘where I’m from’ was a source of negotiation with participants, some of whom would accept ‘south London’ as an adequate response, others willing me to be ‘more Greek’. This sense of the context being familiar but also strange placed me in a liminal position, which was a useful perspective to some extent, in being unfixed. However, my constant unease with telling other people’s stories, and not feeling like the right person to tell these stories, led a Russian-German friend to point me in the direction of Kimberly Lau’s (2002) article, which consists of three inter-weaving fragments, ‘This Text Which is Not One’, a beautiful meditation on auto-ethnography.

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<sup>26</sup> All translations, unless noted, are my own.

<sup>27</sup> The island is infamous for its brutality, and the poet Giannis Ritsos wrote many of his poems there, some of which can be found in *Diaries of Exile* (2013). I had read about imprisonment on Makronisos in Polymeris Voglis’ 2002 book *Becoming a Citizen*.

She discusses the problematic notion of authenticity, and suggests that 'one's sense of authenticity or inauthenticity necessarily derives from an imagined community of one's own, a group of people who are somehow "really" Indian or Japanese or Chinese in the fixed (and fictive) sense of ethnicity' (2002: 248). I found this useful in navigating my perceived cultural inauthenticity, but I remained troubled by the exercise of representing others, a question that haunts all 'researchers' and strived throughout to present their words and practices with care and respect.

This research has been made with politically active persons who are in different groups, organizations, assemblies, coalitions, and parties with whom I share many political and ethical affinities. I have anonymised all participants, and received informal consent for their participation in my project. However, despite the content of this thesis and my position, I feel uncomfortable with the role of 'activist-scholar' (see Routledge 2009 and Juris 2007). I will try to unpack this here as a way of illuminating the kind of knowledge I am producing in this thesis, as well as the kinds of claims to knowledge I can make as an urban sociologist, based on my fieldwork. First, I want to be clear that rejecting this role is not a dismissal of the rich body of literature by scholars I admire who identify with it. Indeed, I agree with many tenets of this literature, namely the notion of the 'ethics of reciprocity' (Taylor, 2014). During my fieldwork this often took on a practical angle, where I provided graphic design assistance. These skills were not used as a way of gaining access. Neither do I see such acts as absolving my interloping role as a researcher, for, as Roseneil (1993) argues, the problems of objectification are not eliminated through participation in immediate reciprocation. I definitely would not want to benefit from the 'kudos for being an activist within academia,' and its attendant REF impact factor (Gillan and Pickerill, 2012: 135-6). This inclination is mainly because I understand a lot of social research to be actively contributing towards specific political struggles; their focus does not by any means have to be conducted *with* social movements. Furthermore, my dis-identification with this role does not preclude what I consider to be the ethical responsibility of academic research and public sociology more generally and the question of *how* the kinds of knowledge produced within universities has to be shared outside of academia. Of course it is not enough to talk only amongst 'academics' within journals no one can access, akin to obscure cultish rituals. While the immediate audience of this thesis is urban sociologists, I hope to fashion something out of its parts that might be interesting to a wider audience. While I intend to share the product of this research with participants, I do not consider it to contain anything that

they do not already know: that would be condescending. It is based on a limited duration of fieldwork, and the kinds of claims that I make are modest and hardly revelatory to participants. As such, the question of why they got involved in my research in the first place arises. If we agree that 'academic knowledge has a particular role alongside and interacting with activist knowledge,' then perhaps a more general notion of reciprocity provides an 'ethical justification for activists to behave as research subjects' (Gillan and Pickerill, 2012: 137).

During my fieldwork, one of my informants put me in touch with Loic, a French filmmaker making a documentary about 'Europe during the crisis', through documenting everyday life in Athens. Our mutual participant said, 'You're doing the same thing, you're both French. You should talk to each other.' While no one hearing my English accent would identify me as French, and no one could call this thesis an artwork, we were both producing representations of the city and its inhabitants, and this is what brought us together in the eyes of the person who put us in touch. Spending time together was interesting and allowed me to reflect on our different processes. One night, sitting in the occupied park in Exarcheia (which I discuss in the following chapter), we became captivated by an old man playing the bouzouki. He was perched alone on a nearby bench, cigarette between his lips, as he crouched over the instrument, performing a melancholy song. Loic whipped out his camera (which he always carried) from his bag, and began to film the old man. I was shocked by his candid behaviour. 'Shouldn't you ask him first if it is ok to film him?!' I whispered, paralysed by the ghost of informed consent and intrusion. 'Come on!' he replied, 'If I ask him, he will stop playing. It will ruin the moment, and it will be gone. I'll ask him later.' Thirty or so minutes later, the old man looked up at us and smiled. Of course, he was happy to have been documented, although he wanted to know when he could see the film. It was interesting to see how people received us differently: he had funding to employ and pay people for assistance, and was a confident man. Being a young woman who was (most of the time) identified from without as a foreign researcher 'facilitated access to certain kinds of information and forecloses access to other kinds' (Schatz, 2009). For instance, I was able to talk to members of diverse political groups, because I was not actively part of one in Athens, although I was always asked for my connections to groups in the UK. On the other hand, 'Greekness' was often explained to me by male informants. With regards to Loic, I was more attuned to specific practices, such as the elastic nature of time, and time-keeping in relation to appointments, which he would often complain to me about. I still think that Loic is a better ethnographer than me, though. He operated in a less stilted fashion; he was



always following new leads, and took advantage of situations in a way that was sometimes opportunistic, but not necessarily unethical. He is still in Athens, and his film is unfinished, but parts of it have been shown at film festivals.

The starting point of my fieldwork itself was twofold: hanging around in the space of the Polytechnic campus and surrounding Exarcheia and approaching people through existing networks. Who did I want to talk to? Everyone, really. However, as people sought to help me, they would ask for more specific details. It is a prime example of the problematic nature of prescribing a vague subject-position as a way of entering into 'the field.' I began by asking to meet people who 'normally go' to the Polytechnic during the annual commemoration events. Katarina told me:

I am confused in terms of what you are looking for, because looking for people who have been in the Polytechnic or the demo of the 17th of November is quite loose. It could be anyone, more or less. Then there is the generation gap. If you interview someone who was young during the Junta you'll get absolutely different answers from interviewing people of our age or even youngsters ...

Things brings to the fore the plurality of political myths of the Polytechnic uprising, and how for those who attend the commemoration it might hold 'absolutely different' meanings. Furthermore, here Katarina refers to the annual march, which is massively popular in relation to the three-day remembrance at the Polytechnic campus. The initial interviews that took place were necessarily quite superficial and related to generalities. Over time, as I became a slightly more familiar presence in specific social spaces, assemblies, demonstrations, discussions, and social events in the Polytechnic and Exarcheia, the kinds of interactions became more nuanced. During my fieldwork, I felt keenly that the role of observer and observed were not neatly assigned. Within the context of contentious politics in Athens, I was told frequently that if I looked 'more suspicious' (I took this to mean being a man) then I would have found myself in trouble for talking with people from so many different political groups/affiliations. The prevalence of 'undercover' interlopers necessitates such valid suspicion amongst political activists of people who 'drop in'. Furthermore, the timing of my presence at the research site, because of my focus, overlaps with what is informally described as the '6 weeks of action/riots' and as such the mobilization of riot police and global media attention was on standby.

Relatedly, I would often be tested on my knowledge of and participation in different social movements and important political events in Europe, as well as my ties to

political groups in London, and, once, my position on Northern Ireland. In this way, people could position me, as an initial step in our encounters and an important way of establishing trust. As Routledge states, this relates to ethical questions of affinity and mutual solidarity: '[I]t is the conducting of action with others – in demonstrations, blockades, street theatre, etc – that forge bonds of association crucial to the creation of common ground' (2009: 86). The fragmented nature of political group meeting, discussing, and acting in the same area – Exarcheia and its environs – meant that over time as I was 'visibly' spending more time with people and spaces associated with specific groups, I became more associated with them by others, which necessarily has an effect on the kinds of material I 'collected'.

I consider the research informants as 'experts' and this project attests to 'diverse forms of knowing' (Kindon *et al.*, 2007: 13). They are experts in the sense that they can be described as 'militant ethnographers' (Juris, 2007), individuals who are highly politically and intellectually engaged in embodied political action as part of everyday life. All the people I spoke to are involved in theorization and practice: there is not necessarily a division, as per Juris' definition of militant ethnographers. They are highly self-reflexive in the midst of ongoing change. As such, I see my research project as acknowledging the entangled nature of 'expert knowledges' and 'popular epistemologies' – a 'theoretical register that brings together everyday lived experience, movement activism and its knowledge politics' (Oldfield, 2014: 2082). Oldfield argues that paying attention to activist knowledge, or 'knowledge practices', 'builds a rubric to "recognise, build on and engage with" knowledge that works in and between overly simplistic binary notions of the academy and activism, social movements and everyday experience, without reifying or erasing these markers' (Casas-Cortes *et al.*, 2008: 27 in Oldfield, 2014: 2082). Schatz brings up the question of how to draw the line between 'expert' and 'non-expert', and posits that 'how best to draw this line is a matter of some debate, but ethnographic inquiry recommends attention to this sort of epistemologically fresh thinking' (2009: 11). I definitely place myself as a non-expert, and appreciate that my research encounters were 'entangled within broader powers of association and intellectual production,' (Routledge, 2009: 84) as well as the privilege I benefited from, including my mobility, and my scholarship – exacerbated by the fact that many of the informants, as well as my friends and family were (and remain) unemployed.

There were moments when my status as a researcher clearly prohibited certain kinds of access and relations. One such moment was when Maria, after telling me about a

great archive of literature about the Polytechnic in her social center (steki), said: 'But it's not for academic purposes, it's for revolutionary purposes, so I don't think you can use it.' I didn't take offence at this, but understood it as explicit acknowledgement of the different statuses of diverse knowledge production and the differential forms of access those statuses entail. I don't consider this as shocking as the fact that most academic research is inaccessible to the public. Another episode has stayed with me from spending time with a visiting Italian woman, who identified as an anarchist. She had participated in the December 2008 occupation of the Polytechnic campus, and returned for the 5th anniversary of Grigoropoulos' death. Although she would also exchange materials – stickers and pamphlets from Northern Italy, as I had brought from London – new people that we met responded to us in strikingly different ways. I was always up-front about being a researcher, and as such my role as a researcher was never forgotten. I was often teased for it, for example Tassos, a prominent anarcho-syndicalist who is followed by thousands on Facebook and Twitter and who provides round-the-clock commentary and political analysis, tells me at the Polytechnic commemoration shouting out in front of his self-described *companeros*, 'I've found another specimen for you!' In these moments, not only is my subject-position as a researcher made explicit, but also the ways in which people perform their political subjectivity and how this performance is tied to specific spaces and social relations. As Herzfeld remarks, the

spatial organization of social relations also has consequences for the distribution of social knowledge, particularly with regard to the classic distinction between insiders and outsiders ... Within a given physical space, with all its implications of belonging and habitus, it is relatively easy to discern the signs of discomfort or acceptance of the admission of strangers to cultural secrets – to the spaces, indeed, of cultural intimacy. (Herzfeld, 2011: 324)

Clearly, being a researcher in the context of Exarcheia and the Polytechnic campus is an inescapably uncomfortable position. However it produces frictions that can potentially elicit relationships, which are negotiated over time and involve mutual learning. It is worth considering the ethnographic encounter, as Benzecry does, as an 'exercise in miscommunication, in which: a) total control about what is being communicated is impossible; and b) understanding "what is really going on there" is more horizon of intelligibility than a potential to be fulfilled' (Benzecry, 2015: 3). These negotiations are moments of intersubjective encounter, and it is through these intersubjective ethnographic encounters that theoretical notions of political subjectivity and affective agency are fleshed out, narrated and negotiated.

I was often asked for my 'conclusions so far' – which while being anathema to an inductive ethnographic approach – engendered crucial opportunities to critically

reflect on the research process in itself, as well as to directly acknowledge the dialogic nature of ethnographic approach. While my methods were not explicitly collaborative, in terms of drawing on collaborative storytelling (Nagar, 2013) or methods from participatory action research (Cahill, 2007), I do consider social research as an inherently collaborative endeavour. As Spencer notes, 'reflexively, the research traces a journey for the researchers as they navigate between their assumptions, theoretical literature, and the empirical data' (2011: 56-57). The process of reflexivity continues throughout the project, up until the final days of editing: navigating not only between my assumptions, the theoretical literature and the empirical data (*Ibid*) but more importantly, the question of the ethics of representing people.

Ethical challenges 'do not stop once we insert our own analyses,' as Gillan and Pickerill argue, in relation to research 'on and with' social movements (2012: 33). They point out that 'we must make choices about what we report, in what terms we report it, and what we leave unsaid ... moreover we must choose which audiences we wish to address' (*ibid*). As with all research based on fieldwork, there is a lot of material that I do not include in this thesis. There are specific kinds of material that I have chosen not to note down, nor include here with regards to political praxis, which I regard as an ethical decision, because I do not want to disclose any information that may harm participants. Furthermore, while accounts of reflexivity are often restricted to discussing issues pertaining to the space and temporality of 'the field', most of my labour as a PhD student has been related to the process of writing. The following empirical chapters have been written and re-written countless times, and I am still wary of not having provided enough contextualization for the accounts of people's words and actions. The interweaving of different voices, descriptions of actions and words, with analysis, is hopefully an approach that does not do violence to those I spoke to, and constitutes representations that they will recognise.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### POLITICAL MYTHS OF EXARCHEIA AND THE POLYTECHNIC: EXCEPTIONAL SPACES OF CONTENTIOUS POLITICS IN ATHENS

#### Introduction

The Polytechnic campus is at once a site of higher education, everyday political organization, remembrance practices, and political mythmaking, of the narration and negotiation of resistant subjectivities, of desires, dreams, and conjuring ghosts. The campus is situated adjacent to, and considered by many people I spoke to, and much academic scholarship to be part of, the neighbourhood of Exarcheia. The premise of this chapter is that the importance of invoking the Polytechnic cannot be understood without taking into consideration the fabricated geographies and histories of its invocation, which are political myths in themselves. Whereas in the following chapters I analyse the remembrance practices of political myth-making *within* the commemoration, and in this chapter I situate these practices. Here I explore how Exarcheia and the Polytechnic are produced as exceptional spaces of contentious politics. I describe the ways in which the Polytechnic campus acts as an everyday resource for political action, and how its location, as well as the Academic Asylum Law, which ostensibly protects the space of the university from police and military intervention, are crucial to its continuing importance. Inherently tied to the production of the Polytechnic and Exarcheia as exceptional spaces of contentious politics, I argue, is the calendric invocation of the Polytechnic uprising and participants' engagement with the commemoration as a tradition.

Remembrance practices of the annual commemoration contest people's perceived museumification of the Polytechnic uprising by the state, and people of different ages, socio-economic backgrounds, political imaginations and involvement in contemporary political action come together over three days in November. This coming together falls on the same days every year, November 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup>, and in this chapter I argue that in order to understand how these three days in November are meaningful for people – to be discussed in Chapter Six and Seven – we have to situate them within the spaces and histories of Exarcheia and the Polytechnic, fabricated as privileged sites of everyday political action.

I take a Lefebvrian approach, as outlined in Chapter Two, to show how the spaces of Exarcheia and the Polytechnic are socially produced. Over the course of this chapter I hope to do justice to the palimpsest-like nature of this part of Athens; although this

trope is 'inherently literary,' it can be fruitfully evoked as a way of exploring the 'configurations of urban spaces and their unfolding in time without making architecture and the city simply into text' (Huyssen, 2003: 7). I describe some of the geographies and histories of Exarcheia produced in academic representations, everyday ethnography, political pamphlets, and poetry. I then discuss how the Polytechnic is crucial to everyday political action, primarily through the introduction of the Academic Asylum Law (AAL). I discuss how the AAL exceeds its legal function and is integral to the social imaginary of Exarcheia, as well as how it enables specific kinds of organizing and occupation. Finally, I discuss the annual Polytechnic occupation practices, and the coming together over three days during the Polytechnic commemoration. Here the discussion centres on how these remembrance practices contribute to the production of Exarcheia and the Polytechnic as spaces of contentious politics. Furthermore I explore how participants experience the specific calendric invocation of the Polytechnic uprising as an affective space (Anderson, 2009), and reflexively engage with notions of 'tradition' and critique normative modes of transmitting the Polytechnic uprising (Benjamin, 2003d).

### **The Social Production of Exarcheia**

In this section I discuss the geographies and histories of the Polytechnic and Exarcheia as shared with me during my fieldwork, as well as representations of the area in poetry, film, and academic texts. It is a hard place to describe. To begin, I draw on the descriptions of others, as scholarly representations that contribute towards the political myth of Exarcheia as a 'radical' or 'anarchist' neighbourhood. Three Greek sociologists describe Exarcheia as being:

both an area for entertainment and nightlife – frequented by many Athenians – but [it] also carries vivid political symbolism. If visitors and inhabitants are not directly involved in the area's politics, most are at least aware of this contentious symbolism (Iakovidou, Kanellopoulos and Kotronaki, 2010: 145 in Kanellopoulos, 2012: 173).

Since December 2008, there has been a burgeoning literature in Greek and British and American academia on the relationship between Exarcheia and contentious politics, following the events which are commonly referred to as 'December' (Astrinaki, 2009) but which have been widely described in the mass media as 'riots', and in academia an 'urban social movement' (Petropoulou, 2010), a 'rebellion' (Mentinis, 2010), a 'youth movement' (Sotiris, 2010), a 'revolt' (Vradis and Dalakoglou 2011), an 'eruption' (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou) and an 'explosion' (Bratsis 2010) (see Vradis, 2012a: 57). The streets of Exarcheia and the Polytechnic

are repeatedly referred as 'symbolic' in this literature, with varying degrees of intensity:

For years, Exarcheia has had a symbolic meaning for the antagonistic movement; there, any clashes or the very presence of police has been treated as an intrusion on to 'a ground occupied by the antagonistic movement.' Exarcheia can stay alive as long as its people can stay there. The murder of a place's people means the death of the place itself. Therefore, the murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos was interpreted as a murderous attack against the entire neighbourhood. People are gathering at the [Exarcheia] square, the reference point of the neighbourhood and the entire city, but also at the Technical University [Polytechnic], the reference point for every emergency (Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou, 2011: 40).

The importance of the 'site of the uprising,' and its 'spatial legacies,' is attested to by Vradis and Dalakoglou, who state that the 'site of the ignition of the revolt was equally important to the breathtaking speed with which it spread' through grassroots media (2011: 78).

Perhaps most importantly, there was the political symbolism associated with the location of the murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos. Exarcheia is adjacent to the Athens Polytechnic, the epicentre of the anti-dictatorial student uprising of 1973 and the place where acts of political dissent and unrest in the country's postdictatorial era (1974-present) have been centred since. (Vradis and Dalakoglou, 2011: 78).



9. Solidarity concert with Berkin Elvan and Alexis Grigoropoulos

'Exarcheia is a myth,' Antonis tells me during the winter of 2013, as we are sitting around a small table on the pedestrianized pavement, in one of the many cafes in Exarcheia. We are on the street where Alexis was killed by a policeman on December

6<sup>th</sup> 2008. The place where he was shot is a memorial, at a junction between two streets, as can be seen below. During my fieldwork, this was the site of solidarity concerts for the Turkish boy Berkin Elvan who was put in a coma during the Gezi Park protests in 2013 and died the following year. His image can be seen in the poster above the performers in the image above.<sup>28</sup>



10. Alexis' memorial by Tzortzis Rallis

Antonis is twenty-one, a year younger than Alexis would be, and he was not in Athens during the time of the riots. He became involved in everyday political action after the Syntagma occupation in 2011. He is active in a small anarchist group, and refugee support work. We spent some time walking the streets together, reading posters. I bump into him at the Sunday *laiki* (market) handing out anti-voting materials. Exarcheia is palimpsest-like in its layers of meaning, and people negotiate and narrate different relationships with this neighbourhood, as I will try to elucidate. The built environment of Exarcheia bears many traces of important moments for people: November 1973, December 2008, but also the 1944 *Dekemvriana*. Sitting in Exarcheia square, Antonis point out the 'oldest building in the area' from which Iannis Xenakis, the internationally-renowned musician, shot at British officers who were going up Stournari Street by the Polytechnic. People tell stories about this neighbourhood all the time: fragments of their experience, what they've heard, what they've read, attesting to its porosity. A key concept of Benjamin's urban writings, porosity understood as the 'lack of clear boundaries between phenomena, a permeation of one

<sup>28</sup> The home of the Turkish political refugees who organized and performed at this concert is bugged and they have been regularly tortured in the Turkish embassy.



thing by another,' pointing to the 'significance of what is hidden' (Gilloch, 1996: 25). As Gilloch puts it, 'what is concealed is the key to the interpretation of the urban setting' (*Ibid.*).

In academic texts, representations of Exarcheia as an exceptional space of contentious politics is presented as intertwined with the Polytechnic. As editors of a popular anthology 'Revolt and Crisis in Greece' (2011) as well as the 'Occupied London' blog<sup>29</sup> and a recent 'Crisis-Scape' workshop that was hosted in the Polytechnic itself,<sup>30</sup> Vradis and Dalakoglou have produced ethnographic representations of Exarcheia that are central to its current international renown. For them, this territory has 'from the dawn of the democratic era ... found itself holding something of an exceptional status,' in relation to contemporary political action. This period is evocatively described by Antonis Vradis:

[T]he city saw prolonged periods (spanning over at least three decades) of remarkable concentration of its world-renown skirmishes between youth and police. These would often culminate in larger-scale unrest; riots or urban revolts — but one thing would almost never change: nearly without exception, *every single one of such instances in Greece's post-dictatorial era took place in the central Athens neighbourhood of Exarcheia* ... In the years and decades that followed [the metapolitefsi] the small Athenian neighbourhood would play host to unrest of all different shapes and sizes: commemorative/ritualistic riots on anniversaries of the [1973] uprising; at times weekly (perhaps even more regular) skirmishes between youth and the police that came hand-in hand with the growing of a counter-culture also partly tracing back to the 1973 uprising. Last but not least, the revolt of December 2008 would break out from the heart of the neighbourhood. (Vradis, 2012a, my emphasis)

This condensed history of Exarcheia portrays a neighbourhood of continuous agitation between young people and the police. This only one reading of Exarcheia, but it is a predominant representation that is often offered for scholarly consumption, as can be seen in this reductive, somewhat caricaturist portrait:

Tensions increased with the general hysteria over terrorism since 9/11, when heavily armed police forces were moved into the area. The anarchists reacted to this police presence with rage, often attacking police vans on Saturday nights with Molotov cocktails, oranges, empty beer cans and stones (Iakovidou et al, 2010: 146). Authorities and the mainstream media characterised Exarcheia as a notorious ghetto of extremists. This tension was largely shaped by the spatial dimensions of the neighbourhood and the struggle for its control ... it is striking that the inhabitants of Exarcheia and those who went there for fun were mostly unaffected by the overall situation (Kanellopoulos, 2012: 173)

It is interesting to contrast this description with the one found on the American embassy, proffered as advice for budding tourists:

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<sup>29</sup> See From the Greek Streets, <http://www.occupiedlondon.org/> (Accessed August 15 2015)

<sup>30</sup> Crisis-Scape conference, May 2014, and presentations can be found online <http://www.crisis-scape.net/conference> (Accessed September 27 2015)

Demonstrations also occur annually on November 17, the anniversary of the 1973 student uprising against the military regime in power at the time ... University campuses are exploited by anarchists and criminals as refuges. Demonstrators frequently congregate in the Polytechnic University area; Exarcheia, Omonia, and Syntagma Squares in Athens ... U.S. citizens should be aware of demonstrations and avoid areas where demonstrations are underway, as even demonstrations and strikes intending to be peaceful can become violent ... travellers should avoid Exarcheia square and its immediate vicinity at all times.<sup>31</sup>

I am interested in what these representations omit, and how my thesis contributes yet another account of the area, with its own omissions. In both these descriptions of Exarcheia, we find a homogeneous group – ‘the anarchists’ – and the image of an enclosed neighbourhood, both invoking the ‘two extremes’ discourse that I will discuss in Chapters Five and Six. Here, the violence of Exarcheia is akin to a war-zone, in the midst of a battle over the ‘control’ of its ‘spatial dimensions’ – what are these spatial dimensions? Iannis Kallianos has made a map of the area, which notes the ‘major points of disorder and surveillance’. The density of these nodes, and their relationship to one another is one way of telling the more recent story of Exarcheia’s ‘long radical tradition,’ which sees a causal chain between the proximity of the Polytechnic and law school, and the fact that the ‘relatively cheap housing allowed students, intellectuals, radical political groups, bookshops, and affordable eateries to thrive in the area’ (Vradis and Dalakoglou, 2011: 79). Indeed it is home to hundreds of independent book publishers and shops (Kretsos, 2011). Exarcheia has been described as a scene ‘in the sense that many inhabitants shared anti-establishment values and norms, and attracted many others who sought to move in that milieu’ (Johnston and Seferiades, 2012: 151).

11. Exarcheia



<sup>31</sup> U.S. Travel Advice, Greece: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/greece.html> (Accessed July 12 2015)



12. Posters of Exarcheia, Tzortzis Rallis

The walls speak in Exarcheia. Exploring the layers of posters that cover the walls transcends a desire to read the city-as-text (Cresswell, 1996) because of the importance of the practices of poster-making and dissemination themselves as part of everyday political action. There are new posters on the walls almost every day, with the layers so heavy in some spots that they are almost peeling off the walls. These posters share upcoming demonstrations, events and meetings, as well as symbols of solidarity and the communiqués of various groups. I frequently see research participants pasting posters. While much of this information is also shared on Facebook, Twitter, and Indymedia, there are also many posters that do not make it online. Reading them next to each other on the walls and pillars of Athens is a stimulating experience, as one attempts to read while walking, taking in the rhythms of images and texts alongside the rhythm of walking, creating new arrangements of meaning. Putting up posters combines the speed and cheapness of new technologies of digital image-making and printing, with older modes of flour paste, brushes, and companionship whilst pasting the walls. Groups have different and identifiable aesthetics, and I discuss the posters made expressly for the period of the Polytechnic commemoration in Chapters Six and Seven, and posters that subvert the language of the 'two extremes' public discourse in Chapter Five. The importance of these posters has not gone unnoticed; in 2013, following the demonstration on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, the *Monades Apokatastases Taxes* (MAT) – Units for the Reinstatement of (Public) Order, or riot police – went to Exarcheia following clashes with protestors, and tore down posters. The news spread on twitter alongside with reports of police brutality, as can be seen in the tweet below:





**risinggalaxy** @risinggalaxy · 17 Nov 2013  
Μεσολογίου και Τζαβέλα, Εξάρχεια. Τα ΜΑΤ παράγουν πολιτική για την ακροδεξιά σκίζοντας αφίσες. #greece #17NGR

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13. Mesologou / Tzavela Street, Exarcheia. The riot police produce policies for the extreme right through tearing down posters @risinggalaxy, 17 Nov 2013

Aside from the multi-layered posters, the walls and buildings are covered in diverse kinds of wall writing, which has intensified since 2008 (Avramidis, 2014). The richness of this visual realm has been recently popularized in a photo gallery on the Guardian's website.<sup>32</sup> Distinguishing between different kinds of mark-making, including tags, slogans, murals, and graffiti, is a question of 'neither the means nor the aesthetics of the pictures, but the topics, the intentions of the agents and their potential audiences' (Avramidis, 2012).

14. Exarcheia



<sup>32</sup> See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2015/jun/17/greek-graffiti-in-pictures> (Accessed September 5 2015)



15. Exarcheia

Political wall writing has transformed the city into a 'platform for negotiation and dialogue' (Tsilimpounidi and Walsh, 2010: 111) and initiates 'public discussions' through the 'surprising interventions in our daily urban visual experience,' which 'remap the city' (Avramidis, 2014: 188). Walking around the city, I find that the most powerful 'tags' are of one or two words. If you look up, you can sometimes see the words 'WAKE UP' writ-large in English on tall buildings.<sup>33</sup> The Greek word for 'I'm being tortured' - *βασανίζομαι* - is found on street corners, on the sides of buildings, in the same font. The word 'mistakes' - *λάθος* - is scrawled in almost illegible large font. There are many slogans and images that are inventive and humorous whilst commenting, from many angles, on the contemporary socio-political situation: counter-memorandum, anti-fascist, in solidarity with migrants and refugees, and so on. These images and texts, and the practices of writing and painting them, affects everyday experience of the city and arguably 'contests the dominant media representations of 'crisis' and actively produces counter discourses through visual culture' (Karathanasis, 2010: 178). The walls of Exarcheia are open to all who want to inscribe them, and these practices are integral to the production of Exarcheia as a privileged site of contentious politics, as a place where people can 're-image and re-imagine the city' through the materialization of their 'alternative sociopolitical ideas and images ... through counter-practice on the public walls' (181).

<sup>33</sup> I think of these inscriptions as Benjaminian, referring to awakening: 'whereas Aragon persists within the realm of dream, here the concern is to find the *constellation of awakening*' (1999: 458 [N1, 9]). Referencing Proust, Benjamin attempted to place awakening in a classical dialectical structure (Auerbach, 2007) 'is awakening perhaps the synthesis of dream consciousness (as thesis) and waking consciousness (as antithesis)? Then the moment of awakening would be identical with the "now of knowability" in which things put on their true - Surrealist - face. Thus in Proust, the importance of staking an entire life on life's supremely dialectical point of rupture: awakening. Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* begins with an evocation of the space of someone waking up (Benjamin, 1999, 463-464 [N3a, 3])





16. I'm Being Tortured, Patision

The importance of the streets of Exarcheia in relation to contentious politics has been well-documented in the works of geographers: in this densely populated neighbourhood, the streets intersect every 45 metres (Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou, 2011: 36). A line of riot police constantly protect the border with the neighbourhood of Kolonaki, which hosts many banks, international retail chainstores, expensive cafes, boutiques, restaurants and bars, as well as embassies, and is the main route to the Parliament. The line of riot police, with shields, guns, and batons are usually drinking frappe and smoking cigarettes, and are even there on Sundays. Some say that they are there because of the nearby PASOK offices. Since 2008 when many of the businesses' fronts were smashed. Running another border of Exarcheia is Patision, the so-called 'radical avenue,' described as 'the stage where the "battle" is always being waged' (Kallianos, 2013: 555). The main entrance of the Polytechnic where the gate was crushed is located here. Kallianos writes that 'Patision, apart from being a significant geo-strategic junction in the urban territory of Athens, is also a symbolic space for those who participate in social struggles' (*Ibid.*). Political myths of the Polytechnic uprising contribute towards the production of such symbolic spaces, as I discuss in Chapters Five to Seven. The image below is a still from the film '*Testimonies*' and shows Patision filled with people on the first anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising, in 1974.



17. Still from 'Testimonies' documentary (Kavoukidis, 1975), showing Patission and the Polytechnic in November 1974

Patission features in the poetry of Katerina Gogou (1940-1993), an artist and actress who lived in Exarcheia in the 1970s and 1980s and documented the tensions between anarchist currents and the 'Traditional Left' in lyric prose. Gogou has been 'omitted from the literary canon by historians of modern Greek literature,' despite her popularity (Demetriou, 2015: 69). The description of everyday life in Exarcheia in the poem below, evoking torn down posters, up and down Patission, the fetishisation of the 'subversive' music of Mitropanos, snitches and patrol cars<sup>34</sup>, still resonates today.

Our life is pen knives  
 in dirty blind alleys  
 rotten teeth faded out slogans  
 bass clothes cabinet  
 smell of piss antiseptics  
 and moulded sperm. Torn down posters.  
 Up and down. Up and down Patission  
 Our life is Patission.  
 Washing powder which does not pollute the sea  
 And Mitropanos has entered our lives  
 Dexameni has taken him from us too  
 Like those high ass ladies.  
 But we are still there.  
 All our lives hungry we travel  
 The same course.  
 Ridicule-loneliness-despair. And backwards.  
 OK. We don't cry. We grew up.  
 Only when it rains  
 We suck secretly on our thumb. And we smoke.  
 Our life is  
 Pointless panting

<sup>34</sup> The suspicion that one encounters as an outsider doing research, as discussed in the previous chapter, is explicit in Exarcheia, for good reason.

In set-up strikes  
Snitches and patrol cars.  
That's why I tell you.  
The next time they shoot us  
Don't run away. Count our strength.  
Let's not sell our skin so cheaply, damn it!  
Don't. It's raining. Give me a fag.

This poem was published in her 1978 collection, published in English translation in 1983 entitled *Three Clicks Left*, which gives us an insight into Exarcheia after the Polytechnic uprising, a 'vitriolic depiction of an Athens not proper to leftist heroics and the republican triumphalism of the time' (libcom.org, 2010). As Taxikipali describes the context:

The end of the 1970s was a time when the initial post-junta revolutionary chic was giving way to more substantial and contradictory urban cultures and movement, with many workers breaking free from the unions and the left, mass factory occupations, the first occupations of universities and a ferocious armed struggle against unpunished agents of the junta, with the far-right responding with bombs in cinemas, squares and leftist offices. It was this era with the increasing disillusionment of Athens radical youth with the classic leftist currents and the first experimental steps towards anarchism ... (Taxikipali, 2010)<sup>35</sup>

This period of the 1980s and 1990s saw Gogou and many others participate in the squats and social centres (stekia) emerging in Exarcheia (Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou, 2011:37). These occupied buildings are often named by their urban locality and the names of strets, e.g. Lelas Karagianni (1988), Kerameikou (1989), Villa Amalias (1990), Mitropoleos (1990), Villa Varvara (1994), Skaramanga (2009) (Tavernaraki, 2015: 101). One of the longest running social centres in Athenian history, Villa Amalias, was closed down abruptly in December 2012 by the police, with several arrests made. A re-conserved neo-classical building, it was noted by people who have been active in the 'antagonistic movement' for more than the past couple of years to have been an important cultural, social and political centre, hosting regular concerts, and a print press run by Rotta collective. I have been to some concerts there, and its dark sweaty social space reminded me of squat gigs in London. Its eviction was seen as part of wider oppression of political contestation. As Dalakoglou writes:

Rotta printed many of the political posters that cover the walls of central Athens. Allegedly, to stop the posters' print press was a main objective of the authorities during that operation. More recently, the antifascist squatters have comprised a protective element for the migrant communities in the neighborhood who have been attacked by the neo-Nazis. On January 9, 2013, the squatters reoccupied the building for a few hours before police special forces re-evicted the building, arresting the ninety-two occupiers and charging them with felonies for having their faces covered; allegedly none of the group had covered faces. (Dalakoglou, 2013: 285)

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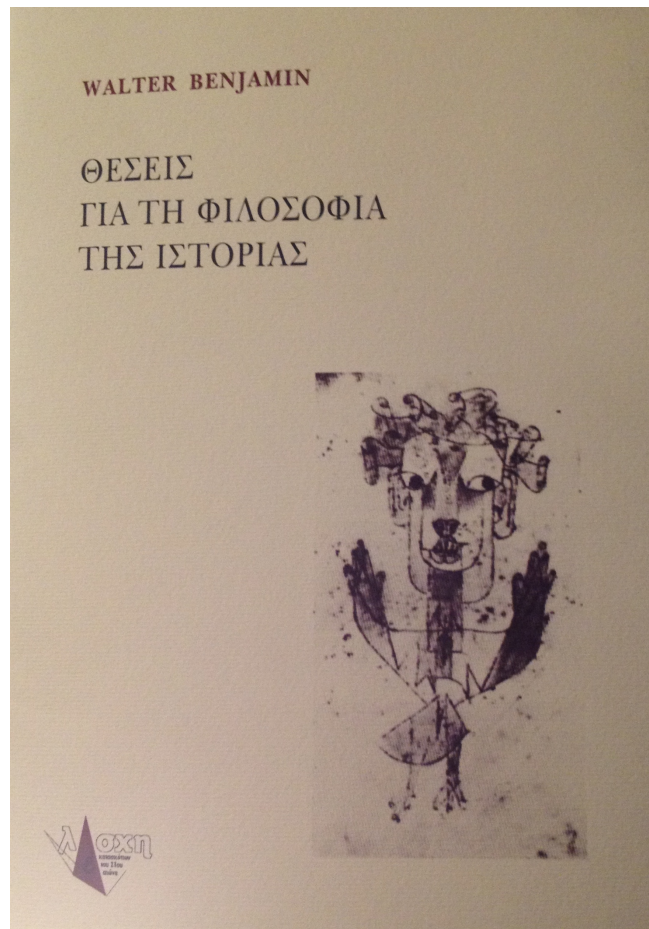
<sup>35</sup> See <https://libcom.org/history/katerina-gogou-athens-anarchist-poetess-1940-1993> (Accessed September 5 2015)



Skaramanga, Lelas Karagianni and the *Anotati Scholi Oikonomikon kai Emborikon Epistimon*, (ASOEE) –School of Economics and Business – squat were also evicted in January 2013. These evictions demonstrated the state’s ‘zero tolerance to the voices of resistance. Though the municipal authorities once again renounced any responsibility by declaring that this was an issue held by the state police, they willingly decided to reclaim the buildings once they were evicted’ (Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou, 2013: 7). These raids were considered a major defeat amongst anarchists and autonomous groups.<sup>36</sup> While Lelas and the ASOEE centres were re-occupied, people who were active in Amalias still mourn the loss of the space, and continue to raise money for the trials of the arrested, and debate the possibility of another occupation. ‘Why is so much importance attached to a specific building?’ Giorgos asked me. Giorgos, a graphic designer and graffiti artist, was active in Amalias, and occupied the Polytechnic building in December 2008. ‘Why can’t they just occupy another one?’ This question remains unanswered. There are still several social centres in the area, with different political orientations. All host regular discussions and meetings, some hold regular soup kitchens and activist archives and lending libraries. One of the most ‘open’ is *Steki Metanaston* (Migrants Centre), an old neo-classical building with colourfully-painted walls, which is hosts language lessons and is open every day for people to hang out, drink and talk. *Steki Metanaston* is found on a street that leads off from Exarcheia square, a small triangular patch of land that is simply known as the *plateia* (square). The *plateia* always has people sitting around, or playing in the small playground, watched over by a statue of Eros and banners with political slogans. There are four *peripteros* [kiosks] at the corners of the *plateia*, one of which sells the regularly-published zines and pamphlets. I picked up a Greek translation of Benjamin’s *Theses* here.

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<sup>36</sup> See <http://www.libcom.org/blog/battle-squats-athens-11012013> (Accessed September 5 2015)



18. Klee's Angel of history in Exarcheia

The plateia, bordered by cafes, bars, and restaurants, is a place of visibility that is the focus of much attempted surveillance: there are no CCTV cameras, as they are knocked out immediately after their installment. There are many tensions over this space, especially in terms of police raids, drug gangs, and drug-dealing, which are intertwined in people's narratives. Although it is considered to be a police-free space, over the course of my fieldwork, there are increasing police raids. On November 26, 2012, a young Albanian man was shot here, and rumours circulated around the circumstances. In the spring of 2013, I attended public assemblies that began to be held on Thursdays in the plateia, followed by a demonstration, which walked around the perimeter of Exarcheia, verbally and physically expressing 'ownership' of the area. 'We don't want to be a trapped neighbourhood,' Tassos tells me, as we march. I see many informants during this convivial weekly demonstration, although there are tensions over which strategies should be employed to 'protect' the area, with some groups discussing the use of arms.<sup>37</sup> In his ethnography, Vradis recounts how a local taverna-owner initiated a local campaign for 'drug-dealing to be moved off the square,

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<sup>37</sup> The theoretical discussion of violence as a tactic is continually discussed informally and in private meetings amongst different groups. In October 2013 French situationist Raoul Vaneigem talked at the Polytechnic on the issue of violence and tactics regarding the revolution of everyday life.

but also essentially for other users to “regain” their right to use this space’ (2012: 153). Elena, a now-retired long-term resident of Exarcheia, who participated in the Polytechnic uprising and is an active member of SYRIZA as well as volunteering in a local soup kitchen, complicates the picture. She tells me:

Who owns the plateia? The movements? The public? Who is the public? Will you tell the Albanians to go away? It is very localized, but also global – who’s funding the drugs? Why is the police covering them [drugs mafia]? Everything is political in Exarcheia.

This hints at the ‘global sense of place’ (Massey, 1994) and the intertwined nature of Greece’s socio-political situation with global flows of migration and trade. This can sometimes be obscured from academic representations of Exarcheia, as well as from some narratives of Exarcheia residents, for whom the political is intensely local. Many of my interviews took place around the square, most particularly in the occupied former cinema VOX, which looks onto the square. One Sunday morning, I met Andreas, for a coffee and interview in a café simply known as *Cafeneio*, an important site of conviviality for many politically active people in the area. We met very early, and it is the only time I’ve seen the plateia almost empty of people. A film crew arrive, their subject a young man with short hair and a neatly-trimmed beard in a smart suit, is standing in front of plateia. He is Gabriel Sakellaris, the then-mayoral hopeful for SYRIZA in the local Athenian elections. ‘This is the only time he can come here,’ Andreas says, and laughs.<sup>38</sup>

VOX is a self-organised anarchist café and library. It hosts political discussions and meetings, as well as French and Spanish lessons. The building often protects people following clashes with the riot police, closing down the shutters. It is also home to the Exarcheia Self-Organised Health Structure (ADYE), which is run by volunteers and donations. ADYE provides free primary healthcare, immediate help, and psychological support, ‘without discrimination,’ in the centre of Athens. It is ‘open to the local community of Exarcheia; doctors, psychologists, nurses, pharmacists, but also to any other resident who would like to help.’ It has been open since June 2013, sees about ten patients a week, and has been created through a general assembly of residents, social projects, and collectives that live and act in Exarcheia. It is one of many such local initiatives, organised by different political groups, which have been crucial since the crisis, as unemployed persons, migrants and refugees do not have healthcare insurance. Their approach is outlined in their manifesto, which reads:

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<sup>38</sup> Sakellaris is now the government spokesperson and deputy minister for Alexis Tsipras

The main political conviction of its participants is being able to provide solidarity reciprocally, rather than egoistically or philanthropically, given the fact that we are all potential migrants, homeless, unemployed, precarious workers without access to healthcare services. We believe that self-organized health structures are not solely a response to problems in provision of medical care, filling the gap left by the State. Therefore, what we apply in practice is the way we would like to see healthcare in the society we are envisioning, a society of true solidarity and humanity. We perceive the project of the Exarcheia Self-Organized Health Structure as a living cell of social resistance and emancipation against contemporary barbarity, thus we collaborate with people's assemblies and base unions. (ADYE, 2013, their translation)

One evening, sitting on a bench outside VOX, I heard some people singing further up the pedestrianized street, which leads from the plateia. I saw Loic, the French filmmaker walking past speedily, and he motioned me to join him. We walked a little more up the street, to find around twelve people of diverse ages in a circle that almost congested the street. A fifty-something woman handed me the lyric sheets, and we started singing. I soon discovered that this 'street choir' made a point of only singing songs in the public spaces of Exarcheia. The night I first joined them, they were on Themistokleous Street to aurally ward away drug dealers. While some might argue this constitutes a political act, other Exarcheia residents did not see the group as 'political' enough; 'They're only singing,' Elena tells me. On another evening, we sung songs outside the National Archaeological Museum, which is next to the Polytechnic. One of the singers pointed out to me the balcony from which Albert Coerant filmed the tanks going through the Polytechnic gates. 'Most people don't know, but look over there at that building, that building there! From that balcony there, is the only place the journalists were, and they were the only ones who filmed the tanks going into the columns of the Polytechnic. And there was a student there, [*she points at the Polytechnic*] who had his arms around the pillars, and the tanks came crashing in,' she told me, in-between songs.

Several members of the street choir are also long-term participants in the self-organised Navarinou Park, referred to as *parko*. Parko is a few minutes walk away from the plateia; it was intended to be a yet another car park, but it was occupied by 'residents and enthusiastic supporters' in March 2009 and has since seen its saplings grow to full olive trees:

The park is a space for creativity, emancipation and resistance, open to various initiatives, such as political, cultural and anti-consumerist ones. At the same time, it aspires to be a neighbourhood garden which accommodates part of the social life of its residents, is beyond

any profit or ownership-driven logics and functions as a place for playing and walking, meeting and communicating, sports, creativity and critical thinking. The park defies constraints relating to different ages, origins, educational level, social and economic positioning. (undated, their translation)<sup>39</sup>

Every Sunday people meet to garden. There is a playground area for children, benches and a mosaic chessboard. There are regular film screenings and discussions. Throughout the day and night there are people talking, drinking, smoking, playing music; it is a convivial public space. There have been attempted police raids, but they have been kept at bay. This park has been the focus of academic research in terms of the way it represents collective re-appropriation of urban public space, (Arampatzi and Nicholls, 2012) and porous space that 'hints towards a different imaginary of emancipating autonomy' (Stavrides, 2014: 210). As a public space it is convivial in a different way to the plateia. It is sheltered by small trees, and on three sides is bordered by roads, which have cafes and bars on the other side, but is noticeably less dense. There are many different solidarity initiatives that have emerged since the crisis, including the 'Potato movement', which cut out middle men between farmers and consumers (Rakopoulos, 2014a,b). In his work on the cultivation of new modes of solidarity and experimental consumption, Chatzidakis argues that the 'new politics of time and space [of the crisis] stretched the Athenian antagonistic movement to its limits. The utopian "here and now" which had inspired ... experimentations with doing things differently, was soon confronted by the "here and now" of the crisis ... a pragmatism, an urge to attend to people's immediate needs' (2014: 33). A few streets up from the parko, is the Skoros anti-consumerist collective, who struggle with the pressures of providing 'solidarity for all', bristling against the ideological disinclination towards becoming charity, in the face of extreme hardship and poverty. Furthermore, as Chatzidakis notes, solidarity as a discourse has proliferated during the crisis, and while 'Solidarity is our weapon' is a popular slogan of the autonomous and anarchist movements, it is clear that it is also mobilised from different sites of radical imagination. Here we can recall Golden Dawn's solidarity trading initiatives 'From-Greeks-for-Greeks- to 'so-called "fascist rice" (rice circulated in solidarity trading networks by right-wing producers) and "blood strawberries" (named after the racist shooting and injuring of migrant strawberry pickers by their bosses)' (Chatzidakis, 2014: 38).

Exarcheia is also produced as a site of alternative consumption (Chatzidakis et al, 2012; Chatzidakis, 2013) through a night-time economy of bars and tavernas, and of

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<sup>39</sup> See Navarinou Park <https://parkingparko.espivblogs.net/englishfrench/about-the-park/> (Accessed August 2 2015)

young people who come to hang out and drink cheap bottles of beer from the *peripteros* (kiosks) on the pedestrianized golden-lit streets, or in the parko or plateia. It is not only young people from other parts of Athens who pass through Exarcheia to consume its radicalness: people from across the world visit, a sort of 'anarcho-tourism' or 'thanato-tourism'<sup>40</sup> in which people travel from afar to witness a stone being thrown, a ritualized practice in itself. Researchers (such as myself), journalists and artists also form part of this current of 'thanato-tourism', especially around December 6<sup>th</sup> and elections (but less so for November 17<sup>th</sup> because it lacks novelty). Some people are employed during these period as 'fixers' for journalists, and I meet several international individuals who are temporary residents of Exarcheia during my fieldwork. The international glare on the more spectacular – yet everyday – occurrences in Exarcheia: clashes, molotovs, bins on fire, is a regular source of humour and irony.

The different kinds of contestation over public space that have manifested in the area during the crisis have been 'rendered as formative everyday collective action', considered to 'challenge the normative ways of using and conceptualizing spaces' (Kallianos, 2013: 549). Such practices have led some to view Exarcheia as a heterotopic neighbourhood, a 'counter-site' or 'a kind of effectively enacted utopia' (Foucault, 1986: 48). However, I follow Vradis who argues that 'though such a view is widely held inside and outside the neighbourhood, a "heterotopic" schema does not suffice for us to understand the Exarcheia condition' (Vradis, 2013: 206). The production of Exarcheia as a privileged place of contentious politics in academic research often omits the everyday racist violence that takes place in this 'radical' neighbourhood, as in the rest of Athens. I will never forget the night that I was sitting in parko with Sotiris, as per many nights, who is in his mid-thirties, has been unemployed for many years and 'volunteered' at VOX and ADYE. That night, as many others, Laurent joined us, but this time he was holding his face, confused and agitated. Laurent is from Senegal and has lived in Athens for several years. He is an Exarcheia resident, a regular at VOX, parties on the Polytechnic campus, the plateia, and the parko, and I got to know him during my fieldwork. He was bleeding from the mouth, having been punched in the face in the plateia. It happened so quickly, he said, that he did not know who had hit him. He told us that he had asked everyone around him who did it, and no one replied. The following day he had his teeth repaired in ADYE. Sotiris has known Laurent for a long time. 'Racist attacks and mafia killings: that's Exarcheia

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<sup>40</sup> See Kallergis, (2013)

now,' he tells me. A recent initiative, which allows people to submit reports anonymously online, has sought to interactively map everyday racist incidents<sup>41</sup> to combat the fact that many are not reported, or are dismissed by the police. The ambition behind the map was to make salient the 'flow of information that washes over people,' or 'figures and numbers buried in long reports.' The Crisis-Scape research group initiated the project and wanted to 'create awareness through visual representation' by 'trying to involve more people in gathering information, to hopefully become a tool for solidarity networks; everyone becomes a witness, and can put forward what they see happening in public places' (Brekke, 2014). In the following section I move from discussing Exarcheia in general, to how the Polytechnic itself as a campus is intertwined with the production of Exarcheia as a privileged site of contentious politics.

### **The Legacy of the Polytechnic: the Academic Asylum Law**

In examining the relationship between Exarcheia and the Polytechnic campus, I do not intend to reproduce a genealogy of Greek student politics (see Kornetis, 2013; Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou 2011; Sotiris, 2015), but tease out the importance of the Polytechnic in the production of Exarcheia as a counter-space. There is the annual commemoration, which sees the Polytechnic occupied, as I will discuss in the next section. Until August 2012 there was one long-running social centre, a small building on the campus that hosted different groups and weekly meetings, actively connected to other social centres, and organized action in solidarity with migrant workers who traded on Stournari (the street connecting the square to Patisision, which also borders the Polytechnic campus). Until April 2013, the Polytechnic was also the base of Indymedia, which the rector, put under pressure by the Greek government, shut down on the evening of April 11<sup>th</sup> 2013.<sup>4</sup> The rector went on trial for hosting it, and the site itself temporarily relocated to another domain. A statement by the Athens Indymedia Collective calling for a demonstration stated that 'the means of counter-information are our own means; they are the voice of our own struggles that show us the way for the world that we want.'<sup>42</sup> The importance of media networks such as Indymedia is multifaceted. Being locally produced and circulated, yet open to a global audience, it potentially strengthens solidarities on multiple scales and also plays a 'vital role in constructing and reinforcing a sense of place and place-based collective imaginaries' (Stephansen, 2013).

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<sup>41</sup> See <http://map.crisis-scape.net/> (Accessed September 5 2015)

<sup>42</sup> See <http://325.nostate.net/?p=7745#more-7745> (Accessed September 5 2015)

The Polytechnic functions as a working university: the architecture school is still based on this campus. The Gini building is most frequently used on a weekly basis throughout the year for different kinds of political organizing; open meetings, evening discussions, and assemblies of different groups: anti-detention centre groups; anti-fascists; unemployed workers union, and so on. There continue to be frequent occupations of the buildings of the Polytechnic related to political issues. There is also a self-organised café. The most recent occupation at time of writing was in December 2014 undertaken in solidarity with hunger strikers. The hunger strikers were protesting against the prison conditions and the lack of opportunity to study at university.<sup>43</sup>



19. Polytechnic gates, November 2013: The light of the uprising will shine forever

The Academic Asylum Law is crucial to the ability of the Polytechnic campus – and other Greek universities – to be spaces of everyday political action as described. This section follows Valverde’s call to urbanists to bring socio-legal concerns to the foreground of accounts of everyday urban life (2012; 2014). The Academic Asylum Law has ‘protected people,’ Dimitris from the Anarchist Archive tells me.

The Polytechnic is a strategic place and area. It’s a building that, if people decide to demonstrate, this building can protect people. With its fences, and buildings. So all these years, this building has been used by the people, to demonstrate, demand ... or not demand things. And a place to confront the cops ... their plan is to take the Architecture school away, to make it into a museum, take the fences down.

<sup>43</sup> <http://en.contrainfo.espiv.net/2014/12/15/athens-communicue-of-the-occupied-polytechnic-school-11-12-2014/>



The slippage between the Polytechnic as a 'building' and as 'buildings' is interesting – for the campus comprises of buildings, but is often considered as a singular place. The Academic Asylum Law (AAL) – officially, Law 1268/1982 – is the ostensible legacy of the Polytechnic uprising, which 'forbids the police from entering university grounds, thus giving power to students to protest for their rights and aims to protect academic freedom, free expression, freedom of research and dissemination of ideas' (Kremmyda, 2013:19). According to Tsilimpounidi and Walsh, the 'asylum space as a moral symbol has capital, as it translates into a space where authority is not practiced as oppression' (2012). Established by the socialist government of PASOK in 1982, negotiated at the same time as Greece becoming a member of the EU in 1981, the AAL prohibits the police or military from entering campuses, with rare and bureaucratic exceptions granted by university authorities themselves (Vradis 2012: 230) or if a 'life-threatening crime is being committed (Mantanika and Kouki, 2011: 484). The role of the AAL in the annual commemoration of the 1973 uprising is very important, and was 'key in the non-intervention policy of police at "commemorative riots" of November 17<sup>th</sup> through the eighties and nineties, while also contributing significantly to the days-long occupation of all three central Athens university campuses during the events of December 2008'<sup>44</sup> (Vradis, 2012a: 230), as participants who were part of these occupations attest to.

The AAL was abolished on August 24, 2011, by the then-education minister Diamantopoulou,<sup>45</sup> amidst media portrayal of universities sheltering extremism, (Gropas *et al*, 2013) and accompanied by privatization laws enforced by the troika, which caused protest across Greece.<sup>46</sup> Some voices from the 'antagonistic movement' stated that the AAL abolishment marks the 'end of metapolitefsi'.<sup>47</sup> The autumn and winter of 2011 saw many raids on universities. During the 2012 commemoration, university campuses including the law school were locked up for the duration of the events, in order to prevent their occupation. All the students I speak to discuss their rage and indignation at the abolition of the AAL, and also how they contest it, which is highlighted in pamphlets of both 2012 and 2013:

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<sup>44</sup> The Polytechnic, ASOEE and the Law school

<sup>45</sup> See <http://www.enetenglish.gr/?i=news.en.article&id=628>

<sup>46</sup> 'The bill introduced tuition fees and allowed for autonomous administration of universities. Free education is to be guaranteed only for three years, with fees to be imposed for further years of study. Non-academics and individuals external to universities will be permitted to run institutions that will be assessment-based, with funding based on orientation to industry. Existing national pay scales will be abolished and replaced by productivity-related pay scales.' (Roberts, 2011) see also Contra Info (2011, August 24)

<sup>47</sup> <http://en.contrainfo.espiv.net/2011/08/24/greece-the-%E2%80%98metapolitefsi%E2%80%99-has-legally-ended/>. See also Manidakis (2012); Voglis (2011); Papadatos-Anagnostopoulos (2011, 2012); and Spourdakis 2010.

We will safe-guard the asylum and the subversive meaning of November. The only viable answer is the voice of the students, of their general assemblies, of their common struggles – FUSE pamphlet (2012)

The Polytechnic asylum was and constitutes the cradle of the [2008] uprising and the popular struggle, and through this workers and youth can coordinate and rally the masses and their protests away from the eyes and control of the state and its mechanisms. Moreover, within this the dictatorship struggle and popular demands for democracy from the days of the 73 uprising of students and workers was established, and to date the asylum has contributed to mass youth movements against all attacks that accept this (Student Movement [2006/7], December 08).

It is a strategy then, the choice of every government to de-legalise and taunt in every opportunity, and with every means, the role that the asylum plays. Meaning: the asylum of ideas, struggles, free politicization, inside the Greek university, promoting it as asylum of the unlawful and a sanctuary of criminality. – RAPAN SAFN (2013)

It is clear that the AAL exceeds its legal function and is an important constitutive element of the social imaginary of Exarcheia as a protective space for political action, enabling practices of occupation, and creating spaces of experimentation and imagination, which have been important during pivotal moments of resistance for people I spoke to. It is to be 'safeguarded' by students. The second excerpt above shows the government strategy and discourse, as interpreted by the authors of the pamphlet, constructing the Polytechnic as a 'sanctuary of criminality'. People tell me that when contentious events exceed what is 'tolerated' by the state, riot police intervene. Over the years the AAL has been violated and revoked and on numerous occasions, as Dimitris notes: 'Although it is a law, when the state cannot afford the situation, they override it, like in 1995.' Here he uses '1995' as shorthand for the 17<sup>th</sup> November commemoration of that year when there was a mass occupation of the Polytechnic campus, with clashes between the police and protesters, which were broadcast on mainstream television news. Conversely, in 2013, on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising, at which point the AAL is ostensibly 'abolished,' the police 'would not dare' to enter the Polytechnic, says Irini, despite the 'illegal' occupation by ERT, and notwithstanding newspaper reports to the contrary, when ERT broadcast from within it.<sup>48</sup> From their experiences over the years, it is well-known that the AAL is negotiated by the State: perhaps this contributes towards to the social imaginary of Exarcheia, which serves to contain contentious politics. In his

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<sup>48</sup> I discuss the ERT occupation, their invocation of the Polytechnic uprising, and their broadcast from within the Polytechnic during the 2013 commemoration in Chapter Six.

ethnography, Vradis argues that the neighbourhood has been significantly influenced by the AAL, and that the law is a central tenet – the ‘only tangible and explicit element’ – of his concept of the ‘spatial contract’ (2012: 230). This spatial contract conceives of the ‘concentration of mass violence in Exarcheia through time ... as the spatial articulation of a certain form of consensus between Greek authorities and their subjects’ (*Ibid.*). Such theorization emerges out of a dissatisfaction of notions of a Foucaultian heterotopic imagination of Exarcheia (Chatzidakis, 2013), and takes into account the role of the state in controlling and containing ritualised rioting (Vradis, 2012a).

There is also the question of *who* the AAL is for – or in the case of the hunger strikers of 2011, who it is *not* for. In January 2011, three hundred migrants began their hunger strike at the law school, asking for the ‘legalization of all migrant men and women [and] the same political and social rights and obligations as Greek workers.’<sup>49</sup> The ‘high symbolism,’ of the space of the law school, Mantanika and Kouki argue, was reflected ‘by simply looking at both corporate and state television and press coverage, which persistently focused on the location of the hunger strike, rather than the substance of its demand’ (2011: 484). This hunger strike has been noted by Douzinas (2011) to be an important moment of contemporary resistance. Tsilimpounidi and Walsh consider the hunger strikers to ‘link their struggle with earlier acts of resistance evoking feelings of empathy and solidarity; [and] they also question the essence of a juridical system which refuses to recognise them as human beings and visible citizens’ (2012: 87).

Through the use of the AAL, the hunger strikers not only connected to different moments of resistance, but they also attracted mass attention. A popular centrist newspaper *Ta Nea* stated that ‘for the first time in Greek territory foreigners occupy a university at the expense of the educational process, transforming it into the base from which they will project their demands’<sup>50</sup> (Mantanika and Kouki, 2011: 484). Thirty four university professors publicly denounced the occupation as ‘an abhorrent abuse of the sacred and public space of the Law Faculty and as a contributory factor to the collapse of a democratic institutions in a country already deep in crisis,’<sup>51</sup> demanding the removal of the migrants. Figures from the ‘popular Left’ began to

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<sup>49</sup> Statement of the Assembly of Migrant Hunger Strikers on 23 January 2011, see <http://hungerstrike300.espiivblogs.net/2011/01/23/statement-of-the-assembly-of-migrant-hunger-strikers>

<sup>50</sup> ‘Aparadekth Praktikh’ (Unacceptable Practice), *Ta Nea* online, 25 January 2011, <http://www.tanea.gr/default.asp?pid=2&ct=1&artid=4614795> (accessed September 15 2015)

<sup>51</sup> ‘Epistoli Paremvasis gia ta Gekonota tis Nomikis apo 34 Panepistimiakous’ (Letter of Intervention Concerning the Law Faculty Incidents Signed by 34 University Professors), *Ta Nea*, 28 January 2011, <http://www.tanea.gr/default.asp?pid=2&ct=1&artid=4615467> (accessed September 15 2015)

worry that 'such an "occupation" could endanger academic asylum and affect domestic movements hosted there'<sup>52</sup> (Mantanika and Kouki, 2011: 484). Those who were there in solidarity with the hunger strikers were criminalized, with the latter 'perceived as victims of extremist groups that used them in order to create social unrest and for their own interests'<sup>53</sup> (487). The public discourse shifted to focus on the illegal status of the migrants, and the rector of the law school revoked the university's asylum on 27 January, expelling the migrants from the space. By this point, many were in solidarity with the hunger strikers, and they moved to a small private building, Hypatia. Mantanika and Kouki argue that this move managed to 'transform a small private building in a hardly visible corner of Athens into a broad platform of mobilisation and generate a new urban point of reference ... This network of support created a site of resistance that would keep on growing once its location began to disperse to hospitals around the country' (2011: 485).

Many people I spoke to consider their participation in solidarity with the hunger strike as an important moment of resistance, narrated within the demarcated time of 'crisis'. This episode brings tensions to the fore with regards to my theoretical concerns: it provokes us to ask which forms of indirect resistance are permitted, and who is allowed to participate in the production of Exarcheia as a privileged political site? It is clear that non-'Greek' practices are not eligible to be protected or to claim the right to freedom under the AAL in this 'space constructed against hegemonic structures, where learning and research would take place without censorship' (Tsilimpounidi and Walsh, 2012: 88). Indeed, the question here is 'not whether there must be asylum or rule of law, but who would have access to those values within the context of a democratic country' (Mantanika and Kouki, 2011: 488). One could argue that the institutional negotiations of the AAL enabled the hunger strike to engage 'more widely with debates on immigration and human rights across Europe' (Tsilimpounidi and Walsh, 2012: 82). Costas Douzinas spoke at the occupation in Hypatia in February 2011, and at Syntagma in June 2011, remarking that his friends found his optimism excessive:

Where did I base my optimism? Meeting people at the Hepatia hunger strike, in Syntagma [2011] and the other occupations up and down the country, I was reminded of the scary and thrilling days of 1973. The occupations at the Law School and the Polytechnic in Athens started the process of decay and eventual overthrow of the

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<sup>52</sup> Ch. Papachristou, 'Asulo' (Asylum), Ta Nea, 25 January 2011, <http://www.tanea.gr/default.asp?pid=2&ct=8&artid=4614790>

<sup>53</sup> 'Domestic groups and little extreme groupings that dogmatize either on the left or on the right exploit this situation so as to create a confrontational climate and they think that this way they create a migrant movement . . . and they hope they will achieve also other things by feeding hate and debate. But it would be better not to challenge, as they are now doing occupying the Faculty of Law . . . they will be the first to lose if control is lost', Ant. Karakousis, 'I Proklisi tis Nomikis' (The Challenge of Faculty of Law), To Vima, <http://www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=380446>

military dictatorship ... there is no immediate comparison of course between the ridiculous Colonels of the 1970s and the democratically elected government of 2011. But the will to resist and the determination to bring the country back from the brink are similar. (Douzinas, 2013: 5-6)

Occupation practices, here connected to the will to resist, are intrinsically associated with the Polytechnic uprising, demonstrating the potency of political myths of the Polytechnic. I argue that the AAL is an icon of the Polytechnic, in the sense that it condenses the narrative of the uprising within it, and is invoked as a means of acting on the present. In the case of the 2011 hunger strike, xenophobia, racism, and fascist tendencies emerged in mainstream discourse. The forced eviction of the hunger strike instigated new strategies, and created a network of support. Similarly, the 1990 Polytechnic occupation's 'hostage-like situation' forced a part of the anarchist movement to 'develop different strategies from those of the singular scheme of police-state-banks vs. society, leading to a renegotiation of the tactics of violent confrontation. Thus a number of social centres (*stekia*) were established at universities and in neighbourhoods' (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou, 2011: 106). These centres and squats continue to be an important facet of Athenian social life and politics, as I described earlier. The new solidarity network that emerged out of the hunger strike fed into the June 2011 Syntagma square occupation, which in turn led to local initiatives and assemblies across Athens.

I have described here how occupation practices are crucial to contentious politics, and the production of Exarcheia as an exceptional space of contentious politics. Now I will introduce the annual occupation practices of the Polytechnic, which are not only central to the production of Exarcheia, but also constitute pedagogical and experimental practices. Additionally I am interested in how participants affectively experience the space and temporality of the annual commemoration.

### **The Tradition of Annually Occupying the Polytechnic**

While the practices over the three days in November are commemorative in form, participants reiterate that they are not a celebration, distinguishing their practices from the ways in which the uprising has been folded into a patriotic curriculum and state-sponsored rituals of remembrance, as I will discuss in Chapter Five. For participants, this is a time for reflection, and for remembrance that is intrinsically connected to the present. People take the time to tell me the story of the Polytechnic uprising, an outline of what happened, and how it is significant and how remembrance practices are meaningful for them now, in relation to the contemporary socio-political situation. The calendric invocation of the uprising itself has taken on its own

importance and multiple meanings since the first commemoration in the 1970s. As Vradis notes, these commemorations ‘turned into fresh riots’ in 1974, 1980, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995 and 2006 (2012: 14). In this sense, to situate the annual Polytechnic invocation is to find ourselves in a terrain which bears the traces and ghosts of many past struggles and within a temporality marked by different ongoing political actions.



20. Polytechnic commemoration 2013

As I explore in the next three chapters, the act of occupying and inhabiting space over the three days is an embodied practice through which people engage with different stories of the uprising, the annual march, and remembrance of political myth-making. People tell me stories about memorable moments they have had through participating. Every year on the night before the Polytechnic opens to the public, different student groups break into the university campus to claim space, fighting over where they will exhibit self-made posters, banners and pamphlets relating to the uprising. Rooms and corridors are taken over, and the passageways between the buildings are lined with tables, themselves covered with ephemera. Centred around the events of the uprising, the different ‘exhibits’ are commonly bound by its core narrative, which is the starting point for interrogations and visual and textual description of the chronology of those days’ events. These artefacts are exhibited alongside other images and texts



concerning specific contemporary socio-political concerns that the different groups want to discuss.



21. Polytechnic commemoration 2013



22. Polytechnic commemoration 2013

The pathways between buildings are lined with tables, which are occupied by different political groups, covered with posters and pamphlets. Groups of people hang around and remain until the early hours of the morning. Over the three days, many people pass through: families, school groups, people on breaks from work, elderly people. The people that I talk with are those that stay, and the act of staying there over those three days is important to them. There are continuous discussions and embraces amongst people who know each other, friendly interactions between strangers, exchanging of materials, singing and chanting, as well as tense moments of engagement. There are open and closed political meetings, film screenings and talks. These remembrance practices are striking in their heterogeneity, creativity, playfulness and transience. I argue that these practices and representations constitute the Polytechnic during the days of the commemoration as a counter-space. Here, the occupation – although largely symbolic, as many do not stay overnight – produces a ‘common field that offers an alternative to the kind of “temporal and spatial shell” solicited by capitalist urbanisation’ (Lefebvre, 1991: 384 in Vasudevan, 2015: 326). Vasudevan sees occupation practices as prefiguring ‘a critical “pedagogy of space and time” through which the forms, contours and imaginaries of a radically different city,’ can be ‘assembled, shared, conceived and contested’ (Lefebvre, 1991: 334 in Vasudevan 2015, 326-327). Natalia, a masters student in her late 20s who is active in ANTARSYA first participated in 2006. She tells me about her experience of participating in the Polytechnic commemoration:

My first Polytechnic anniversary, I was 17 or 18, it was pretty interesting. Three days before 17<sup>th</sup> November, 3 o’clock in the morning, we enter, and we place all the specific posters, tables, so every party has its own place. And it’s pretty interesting, because many times, parties fight between themselves, about which party will have more space. It’s not very polite ... I was with EAAK. RAS-EAAK.<sup>54</sup> It’s all the same, pretty much [all the EAAKs]. There are some differences, but we’re pretty much the same. And the other parties are the youth party of the KKE, KNE, and also PASP. Fighting amongst us, anarchists and also some smaller left wing parties. So many times we fight, even with fists, which is not ... I don’t like it, and I was pretty shocked the first time. And then I got used to it, which is not good, because you get used to something you don’t like.

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<sup>54</sup> RAS-EAAK is the Risospastiki Aristeri Syspeirosi (RAS) Radical Left Coalition, which is part of the national network of Eniaia Anexartitis Aristeris Kinisis (EAAK) United Independent Left Movement, in universities.





23. Polytechnic commemoration 2013

I hear similar stories from many people, as these practices happen every year. Most of participants' first time of participating in the occupation – as opposed to the annual march on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, or visiting the campus – tended to be in their first year of university, when people first join a student political group. In this sense, the occupation practices can be considered pedagogical, as people learn not only tactical skills, but, as Natalia says, 'through occupying, I learned more about all the significant and important anniversaries and movements that we do and have'.



24. Chronicle of the uprising poster, 2013

As November approached in 2013, there were specific forms of political contestation taking place. University workers had been on strike since September over the mass redundancies that were being imposed by the government, part of a new iteration of austerity measures, whose burden fell most heavily on administrative university staff.<sup>55</sup> In solidarity with these redundancies, all universities of Athens affected by the proposed cuts were occupied by students and classes cancelled. There were also weekly demonstrations on Thursday afternoons in the centre of Athens. I spent time with a group of chemistry students who were occupying their campus that I met at the Polytechnic commemoration.

<sup>55</sup> See The Economist (2013) Stalemate. Available from: <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21591234-university-staff-have-been-strike-13-weeks-without-end-sight-stalemate> (accessed 22 October 2015).





25. Banner painting in the Polytechnic, November 17 2013

Standing behind the table covered in posters and pamphlets, they were shivering. A group of fifteen young men and women, they belonged to a student political group – ‘revolutionary, anti-capitalist, left-wing’ – which has sections within the different schools (departments) in universities across Greece. As Panagiotis Sotiris has recently described, the ‘main decision body is the general assembly. That is the main organ of decision-making. It is the assembly, for example, that decides on an occupation or strike. It is exactly the strong tradition of the assembly as the main decision process in the student union that enables the radical left to take the initiative in important student movements’ (2015). I speak with two young women more than others, Sofia and Ero. This is their second year coming to the Polytechnic commemoration. This year is different; they say they are disappointed, but also angrier. ‘People are staying at home, they don’t want to have an uprising.’ These students are amongst the youngest that I speak to, at 19 and 20, and tell me about the different struggles they have been involved in since they started university. They were at ERT every day while it was occupied from June until November, which was exhausting. They regularly participate in anti-fascist demonstrations, and recounted, in visceral detail, the large demonstration following the murder of Pavlos Fyssas on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013 in Piraeus. They make a distinction between those who stay at home, and those who come out to the street. They assert that they feel a

responsibility to come to the Polytechnic, in that it is part of the fight against the privatization of education, state violence in the form of the deepening austerity measures affecting their families and communities, and police brutality. They have been occupying their chemistry school for twelve weeks, in response to the proposed cuts to administrative staff across universities, and they invite me to visit. They narrate their actions as part of the recent history of struggles around education, and highlight the specific years that are important to this history, a specific kind of knowledge, which is shared amongst participants. (Kallianos, 2014).

Participants tell me stories about the occupation so far, how it can be scary at night-time, ghost stories, and the duties of taking care of the building. Ero says, 'The others don't realise that if you occupy a building you have to stay overnight.' She describes her feelings at the beginning of the occupation: 'We wondered if it would last until 17 November. We didn't think it would, it's unbelievable.' Her comments highlight the importance of 17<sup>th</sup> of November as a marker of calendric time. Many stories of ongoing political action are brought into the commemoration of the Polytechnic, and are told from different perspectives, from people who express different imaginations and desires of political action. I argue that the Polytechnic commemoration produces a space and calendric temporality which engender a specific kind of storytelling, whereby there is a pause to reflect on the past year and intertwine it with the Polytechnic uprising and the previous Polytechnic commemorations.

The significance of invoking the Polytechnic uprising annually stems partially from exposing the ways in which the state has continued to suppress the commemoration itself over the years. However, most important is how remembrance practices intervene on the present, and how they are connected to the wider and everyday political struggles regarding austerity measures, state violence and racism, and privatization of education. As one pamphlet proposes:

All the years that followed the November uprising are marked in one way or another, by the Polytechnic commemorations. These characterise and are being characterised by the conditions in which the social movement is to be found. – FUSE (2012)

This sense of years being 'marked' and mutually imbricated with the socio-political conditions illustrates why exploring remembrance practices as political myths of the Polytechnic is pertinent, as it points to the ways in which people explicitly aim to act on the present. However, while I explore political myth-making within the

commemoration in later chapters, here I am concerned with the calendric coming together itself. I will now discuss how the commemoration is meaningful both as an affective space and time, and how participants critically engage with the tensions that emerge from the commemoration as a tradition.

A starting point is the insight of Irini, which is expressed by many others over the three days, that the space and time of the commemoration creates a 'collective spirit'. I recently asked Irini how I should describe her, and she laughs as she tells me to write that she is 'a precarious worker, victim of the crisis'. We went to many demonstrations during my fieldwork, which she covers in English on twitter as a citizen journalist for online radio and social media outlet Radio Bubble, tweeting to over 3,000 followers.<sup>56</sup> When I ask her how she feels about the Polytechnic, she says:

I don't have any feeling about it. Why would I feel something? It's just a space. But when there is the commemoration, there is a spirit there, a collective spirit. *That* is what might trigger the symbolic imagination. It's the collective spirit – yes. This is symbolism *within* austerity Greece, so whatever people say is related to that.

The spatialities and temporalities invoked through the Polytechnic are intrinsic to political myth making. The resonance of the calendric invocation of the Polytechnic has changed since 2009 – the first commemoration following the murder of Alexis – and 2010, the beginning of the 'crisis'. There is so much at stake within the current situation, living through the violence of austerity. What does coming together in remembrance of the Polytechnic mean for participants, under these circumstances, with the crisis in its fourth year, when there are weekly if not daily political actions that many participate in?

As Ero, one of the chemistry students, tells me, 'The whole reason why these days are so important is because you can come here and talk to people. It's all about interacting with people: how can we make people see that another world is possible?' The notion of 'making people' envision utopian possibilities reminds us that participation in remembrance practices is grounded in contemporary and future-oriented political action. On a table around the corner, I speak with Konstantina, a twenty-one year old philosophy student who is active in an anarcho-syndicalist group and a squatted social centre in her neighbourhood, at the table of the newspaper she's involved in writing. She tells me, 'It's not a celebration, we try to remember and inform people. We do not have freedom, so we cannot celebrate it.' The importance of remembrance practices for many participants is due to the interaction with 'visitors'

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<sup>56</sup> I have her permission to reproduce tweets in this thesis.

and crucially other participants who hang around for the three days. The debates, assemblies, and organised discussions during these days centre around current political concerns and actions. Over the three days, many speak of the importance of sharing ideas and stories, communicating not only with visitors, but also with each other; it is a space in which people belonging to different generations and different political groups come together. Many different kinds of stories are being told in and through the remembrance practices. 'It is a pity to remember it only once a year,' Konstantina continues, 'especially as now, the fascists say that no one died. We have to fight that. This event tells the truth about how government has been operating over these recent years. People can study and find things that they haven't looked for.' Looking around us as she tells me this, we take in the scene, to comprehend her statement. We can observe many conversations taking place at once, independently-produced materials clutter tables, posters and banners everywhere. Here, the informal opportunities for people to talk to each other are ripe, and the commemoration allows for different experiences to be shared about the contemporary political situation.

Hundreds of people who participate in different leftwing, anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups come together over these days on the campus. Each year there are thousands more who join for the annual march to the American embassy, as I describe in Chapter Five. The affective atmosphere of the commemoration is palpable, and is discussed in more detail in relation to different political myths in Chapters Six and Seven. The changing resonance of the Polytechnic uprising commemoration is related to the contemporary socio-political situation of the year itself. The different generations that people belong to situate the ways in which they narrate their experience of the annual commemoration. Irini narrates her position as a critical outsider, in the sense that she is not in a group, but active in different assemblies and the unemployed persons and precarious worker's union, and was in a large anti-authoritarian group for a year or so before May 2010, an important date for anarchists and anti-authoritarians.<sup>57</sup> Irini first went to the Polytechnic commemoration in 1995 and comments on its waxing and waning resonance:

The commemoration started becoming popular again in 2009 after Grigoropoulos death. Before then it was a little *ugh* dead. Even among activist circles there was a debate: should we carry on like this, marking the event? But after 2009 [laughs] no, people started

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<sup>57</sup> On the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2010, there was a nation-wide strike contesting the first Memorandum, with massive protests. Three bank workers died in Marfin bank, when a makeshift bomb was thrown into the bank, which had no fire escapes and the back doors locked. Anarchists were widely blamed. This led to a stop in the 'amorphous' meetings in the Polytechnic, where anyone could turn up, and fragmentation of different groups with some blaming others. Theodoris Sipsas was imprisoned in December 2010 on no evidence, and is still awaiting trial as of September 2015.

taking to the streets, exactly because they found ... you know, junta is all about state oppression, police oppression and all that. And we've been experiencing that anyway, so it's easy to make the reference.

All the people I spoke to have been going to the Polytechnic for different number of years; for some it is their first or second time (as with the chemistry students we heard from earlier). For those who have been going for around ten years, the events of 1995 are particularly memorable because of the occupation of the Polytechnic campus following the 17 November march. This year the 'besieging and eventual arrest of 530 young people - a large majority of whom were school students, were all aired on live television channel' (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou, 2011: 106). Some people were in the 1973 uprising itself, such as Dimitris and Elena.

When I ask people to tell me about their experiences of the Polytechnic, I am interested in how the story connects the teller to the wider political and social context, as well as other people who they have participated in political action with. The 'first time' of going to the Polytechnic is narrated in different ways: people cite political events that are important to them, and link them together with the Polytechnic uprising itself and annual commemorations. The vivid storytelling is imbued with the feeling that the 'first time' of going marks the beginning of engagement with political action and organising. The space and calendric time of the commemoration engenders specific kinds of storytelling, interlinking people's individual biographies of political action with the annual commemoration, which I argue narrativises a collective subjectivity of indirect embodied resistance. People of all ages participate in remembrance practices, and how they narrate their experience of the Polytechnic in the present is necessarily shaped not only by their current political participation, but their personal histories regarding the Polytechnic commemoration. The act of storytelling is a way of transmitting the Polytechnic's contemporary importance within the current political situation, as well as its personal and collective significance. This resonates with Benjamin's notion of storytelling:

It is not the object of the story to convey what is happening per se, which is the purpose of information; rather, it embeds it in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening. Thus, traces of the storyteller cling to a story the way in which the handprints of the potter cling to a clay vessel. (Benjamin, 1999b: 156).

Aphroditi is in her mid thirties and is active in a coalition of radical leftwing groups called ANTARSYA that participate in elections, receiving 1% in the national election of January 2015. She has been involved in political action since she was 16, when the

government changed laws regarding university entrance. This period of 1990-1 is also memorable for many of her contemporaries, as schools across the country were occupied in response to proposed educational reforms (Sotiris, 2015; Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou, 2009). By the time she started university, Aphroditi says she had 'already had *our* experience of the Greek Left.' The first time she participated in the Polytechnic commemoration, she remembers Bill Clinton visiting, a week before or after 17 November. She says it was 'like being in a demonstration for two weeks, like hell. I was with my older sister, the police struck her really hard, one of the first times. I remember it vividly, 1998 sticks out – the communists tried to break the police line. There was a lot of tear gas. It was memorable, as demos weren't so big then.' She continues:

The Polytechnic lost a bit of its character in the 90s, they [the commemorations] were merely symbolic, not valid any more. Because we had democracy, money, etc. But I don't think it ever stopped, or managed to not be important for Greek students. It's a decisive thing where people learn to organize, have assemblies. Having the ability to decide for ourselves, it became a given to us generally – the feeling that you can discuss and decide for yourselves, you can go outside and say you don't want the government to pass this or that, is a very important social practice for someone in the left movement, and still is. Being a part of history, Polytechnic has a specific role to play in all of this. Recent ones have been bigger, because in the last three or four years *everything* has been bigger. We *feel* it in a different way. It is something that is not just a Leftist thing now, it's about people's demands and needs. People receive you differently. Five years ago friends and family looked at me different, they found it more just ... There was a time when participating wasn't mainstream, you were looked at differently. No one would say you were stupid, but that it was of *past* importance, not the *present*. That's not the case any more. All this came to justify why we've been shouting all these years, and now we can say – *that's* why.

Aphroditi saying that 'we feel it differently' relates to how the commemoration as an affective atmosphere has changed in the 'contemporary' of the crisis. She has considered herself a 'Leftist' for a long time, and here describes how she felt others perceived this identity with slight disparagement, but that the affective agency generated by the commemoration now exceeds such prescribed political collectivities. All of participants share different experiences of how attendance has changed in recent years, and the changing atmosphere, especially since the beginning of the crisis. The way in which they interpret these changes relates to how long they have been going to the commemoration, their participation in political action, their desires



for bigger groups of people gathering, and their imaginations of the future, regarding political action. 'After 2008 people were boiling, so the attendance went up. It went down for some years before that ... It's a different world inside the Polytechnic,' Irini tells me. 'Every action has more political weight now'. This weight, this resonance, of the Polytechnic, which has multiple affective registers, is narrated by participants in different ways. For example, in November 2013, Irini tells me that if ERT had not been there, occupying part of the campus, and broadcasting from within it, 'it [the commemoration] would have been dead'.

The annual intergenerational coming together and storytelling that takes place through remembrance practices bring up questions of tradition. How might the commemoration of the Polytechnic uprising go towards enacting different modes of transmission of the uprising? In Chapters Six and Seven, I explore how remembrance practices which invoke the Polytechnic uprising aim to destroy certain kinds of tradition, associated with the dominant political myths as I discuss in Chapter Five, of the Polytechnic being 'dead'. When talking with people about their experiences of the Polytechnic during the remembrance practices, I am interested in how these practices and their narration negotiates the relationship with the past and the future. Some people describe their practices as rejecting or engaging with instrumental uses of the uprising, and others attempt to invent different modes of transmission, all in order to restore the 'subversive force' of the Polytechnic. The question of whether the annual invocation of the Polytechnic uprising has become a normative mode of transmission in itself is posed especially, I have found, by those who have been going for more than the past five years.

A central argument of my thesis, and a central tension for the participants of the Polytechnic commemoration, is that they talk about it as a tradition, whilst also critiquing normative forms of transmission. They explicitly question *whether* it is possible for the subversive aspects of the past – the Polytechnic uprising, or the Resistance – to be retrieved in the present. Within this critique, it is *types* of tradition, not tradition as such, which are sought to be destroyed. The stories that participants tell, and the remembrance practices that they participate in, attempt to destroy different traditions that have been instituted. Here, the traditions not only relate to statecraft (Connerton, 1989; 2011), in terms of the national school holiday and curriculum, but also the mainstream media representations, as well as the work of the 'Polytechnic Generation'. Furthermore, the different collectivities that co-exist in this agonistic, convivial commemoration themselves have different imaginations of

political action. That is to say that people – while participating in remembrance practices and political mythmaking – critique other remembrance practices and political myths, and in doing so narrate political subjectivity and distinct imaginations of political action, as well as generating different affective atmospheres. As such, participants see *each other* as being traditional; I am often told of the discrepancies between the words and deeds of different groups: ‘You’ll see that they say X but they don’t act as such’ or, scathingly: ‘They see it as a celebration.’ This hints at the ways in which the commemoration brings together people caught up in complex entanglements, and who have distinct perceptions of their relations with regards to contemporary political action and negotiation of political myths. This alludes to the heterogeneity of anti-austerity resistance in Greece, as Theodossopoulos has argued (2014b). Alex, in his late twenties, is unemployed and involved in a radical left coalition group, affirms this, but also tries to speak on behalf of other collectivities at the same time:

It is not an ‘event’. It is a political struggle, not a celebration. I’ve been coming for 10 years. I was a student of NTUA [Polytechnic] in engineering. I graduated in 2008. What’s changed? I grew up. It’s a different perspective. OK, I do the same thing every year but I don’t get bored. In the beginning I wanted to represent my group, talk with other political groups. You’ll see everyone has their own interpretation but we all agree that it was a political struggle for freedom of speech.

The idea of an agreement on the nature of the political struggle of the Polytechnic uprising was not one I heard widely voiced among different participants. However, I argue that it is in the embodied coming together that the fragmented constellation of groups ‘agree’. Andreas is in his late 30s and has been going to the Polytechnic for twenty years. He is active in Exarcheia in different solidarity initiatives and an anarcho-syndicalist group and newspaper. He acknowledges the importance of coming together, but is also left wanting more:

The problem is that every year it is just to say ‘We’re here.’ It’s insular, looking-inside, selfish, perhaps solipsistic? The first 20 years yes, but *now*? We don’t talk to the public. We should do something so that the children don’t just learn from state education and TV. It has become something holy. We should *actually* occupy the Polytechnic, and do workshops.

While I contend that the act of saying ‘We’re here’ constitutes a form of indirect resistance, and as such is important for participants, it is also clearly not enough for Andreas and others. The apparent insularity of the commemoration is here connected

to the attempted museumification of the uprising by the state and mainstream media, which I discuss in the following chapter. The distinction between the symbolic occupation of the Polytechnic during the days of commemoration, and an *actual* occupation is made clear here. Connected to the critique of the commemoration as irrelevant and insular, is the way in which some participants consider the different invocations of the Polytechnic in the annual commemoration as instrumental uses of the past. As Irini tells me:

The revolt has been idealized, as every revolt has been idealized. It's not just a commemoration, but about exploiting symbolism. It should be about clearly seeing the dynamics: the struggles then, and now. Which is to say that things have changed. We have to find new ways of doing things. Not forcing the present to be interpreted by the past...We can't get rid of them, they're like ghosts, haunting us.

This notion of *forcing* the present to be interpreted by the past and exploiting symbolism is in tension with how many participants see their involvement in remembrance practices. Looking at these tensions through the lens of Benjamin's critique of tradition, we can see that the subversive force of the uprising has been deprived through normative modes of transmission and continuity: by the State, the Polytechnic Generation and the Traditional Left. As the philosopher Simay remarks, this is the 'double menace,' that 'weighs on tradition: the first comes from the monolithism in which it can freeze; the second from the opportunism in which it can dissolve and lose its instance of convening' (2005: 155). Indeed, many participants explicitly state that their aim is to disrupt these normative modes of transmission. The popular slogans that can be read across different pamphlets, and are shouted on the streets - notably 'Uprisings Do Not Enter museums' and 'The Polytechnic Lives!' - can be read as a critique of progressive history consigning the uprising to the past. These are the epistemological starting points for different political myths that seek to mobilise political action in the present.

Through the telling of stories of political action *in* and *through* the Polytechnic commemoration, connecting different moments of contentious politics together, the question is whether the storytellers retrospectively fabricate a continuum - albeit of resistance to state violence and oppression - which is 'not solely the mark of the storyteller, [but] also characterises a type of historic construction which makes tradition an instrument at the service of the dominant class' (Simay, 2005: 142). In their attempts to destroy 'what is destructive' and to turn tradition against itself, to 'reveal, restore, and rescue that which the linear transmission keeps betraying' (144),

does the annual, repeated nature of invoking the Polytechnic uprising re-enact the types of tradition that participants are attempting to resist? This is where the importance of the ethical impulse that lies at the heart of remembrance practices and the Polytechnic political myths – created and shared during the annual commemoration – come to the fore. The diverse demands for social justice and liberation take on different forms, and as such are heterogeneous and antagonistic. I argue that the coming together during these days are meaningful for people because there is so much at stake, and as such, participants answer the call – the demands – of the Polytechnic uprising. Indeed, tradition cannot be authoritatively claimed, rather we can only answer its call, and become an heir through ‘honouring the demands of justice and liberation that the past pushes forward to the present’ (Simay, 2005: 154). Here, to be ‘within the tradition does not mean to be guardians of a truth or normative knowledge which in the present finds a moment of its historical deployment’ (Simay, 2005: 155), but to feel questioned by the Polytechnic uprising in its own mode of being.

My concern here is not to judge whether experiences of tradition can ever be ‘authentic’ as Heidegger posited, and Benjamin disregarded entirely. It would be easy to judge all acts of transmission of the uprising as opportunistic. As we will see in the following chapters, everyone considers themselves the heirs of the Polytechnic uprising, and why not? As has been shown, and I will demonstrate over the next three chapters, diverse actors find meaning in participating in the commemoration the Polytechnic uprising, as all are impacted by contemporary social injustices. I argue that remembrance practices, of which storytelling and political myth-making are a part, are meaningful for people because they continue to be questioned by the demands of justice and liberation from the uprising. Furthermore, storytelling allows for different kinds of knowledges, practices, and artefacts of urban political action to come to the fore.

In this period of ‘precarious intensity’ (Athanasίου, 2014) where there is a tension between the differential terms of precariousness and the struggle to reclaim the terms of a livable life without erasing vulnerability (2014: 76) the fundamental question for people, is how they can ‘continue to fight’, in the face of everyday state violence as experienced in Athens. In other words, how can people maintain the capacity to resist? (Caygill, 2013) During the commemoration, disappointment with the lack of mass contentious political action, as part of an ensemble of fears, rage, and anxieties, comes up frequently. Andreas tells me, ‘Every year there are discussions about how to

make it better, make it more relevant somehow. It never changes. It is redundant.’ Outside of the commemoration, I see Andreas often on the streets of Exarcheia, at other discussions and demonstrations or having a coffee in VOX. He expands upon the relationship between coming together, the presence of ‘We’re here’ and the affective atmosphere.

It lets off steam once a year. *[Makes the motions and sound of turning off a pressure cooker]*. Lets off pressure. It allows people to say, “I did something”, and the rest of the year they do nothing ... The event is not something that can bring something new. It cannot play a role to create something new. It is a meeting point.

While Andreas critiques the notion that anything ‘new’ could come out of the remembrance practices of the Polytechnic, I argue that this presence, and the affects it generates, are important. The annual invocation of the uprising creates a space and time for, as Andreas puts it, letting off steam, sharing stories, and coming together. These remembrance practices, of which political myth making are part, also create meaningful moments of affective encounter; spaces and times to share fears, desires, hopes, and ambivalences – a collective pause for reflection, as I have previously stated. I analyse the specificities of these affective encounters in more depth in relation to participants’ capacity to act in Chapters Six and Seven. Dimitris elaborates on this understanding of the commemoration as a meeting point. Anarchist Archive, the group he works with, has an exhibition room in the Polytechnic during the commemoration, which hosts discussions, film screenings.



26. Anarchist Archive room in 2013 Polytechnic commemoration

I spent some time at the Anarchist Archive, as described in Chapter Three. Dimitris, Anna and Alex talk about how they use the space and time of the commemoration to discuss issues that they feel are pertinent that year. Dimitris tells me:

It has become a time and a place of meeting for people, socially. *It's the place to be.* A lot of generations come again and again; people you don't see everyday: the elderly, children, but you see them those days.

On the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary they produced a text in their newspaper called 'Polytechnic: A short history' that recounts certain commemoration events over the past 40 years. What impressed me is that it is written entirely in the present tense. This makes each event seem as if it is currently happening and is of contemporary importance. The text begins by saying that 'the day of the Polytechnic, for the fighters remains a day of memory *where fighting people give their own presence*, it is a day of struggle against oblivion' (my italics). I found out that it had been written by Alex, who is twenty years old. He had reconstructed it solely from stories he had heard, apart from the more recent commemorations. 'It was written vividly!' Anna tells me, chuckling. Talking with them about this text, Anna says:

The struggle against oblivion is against another kind of history, written by the state, about such events – revolts, the Polytechnic, many other historical events. We have to be in contact with the past. We can learn many things. It's important to remember, not only the good, but the bad, the mistakes. It's *our* history.

This notion of contact with the past is related to the struggle against other kinds of history-making, as well as those who only remember the 'good'. Anna also powerfully reclaims the uprising as personal and collective history, a form of belonging shared by all participants of the commemoration, whose biographies are intimately and politically intertwined with histories of resistance.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored the ways in which Exarcheia and the Polytechnic are produced as exceptional counter-spaces of contentious politics. These political myths bring people to the area, such as myself, as I reflected upon in Chapter Three, to consume and reproduce different representations of Exarcheia, as well as constitute it as a counter-space of representation that can offer alternative ways of living, learning, and acting collectively. As I proposed in Chapter Two, political myths contribute

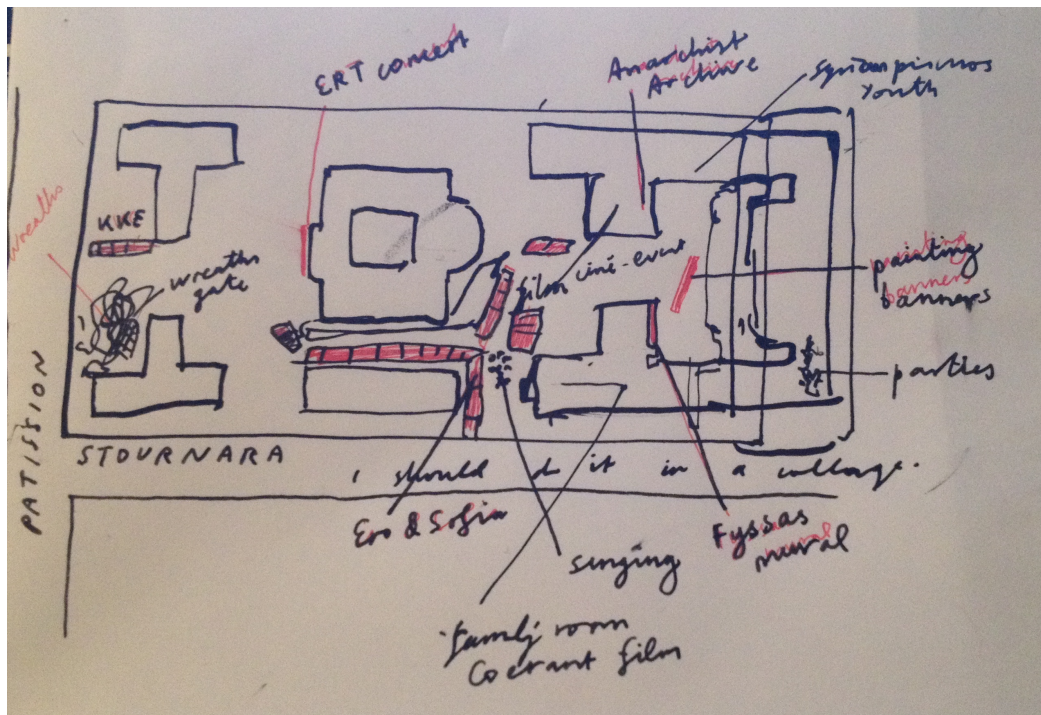
towards the different registers of the production of space, and here I have been attentive to Lefebvre's spatial triad, as an attempt to acknowledge the entangled relations and contentious practices that produce Exarcheia and the Polytechnic campus. I have analysed different representations of Exarcheia, in academic texts, poetry, and the everyday spatial practices of people who live and frequent the neighbourhood, to understand how its spaces are produced through social imaginaries of solidarity and resistance, desires and artistic production. Political myths of Exarcheia as a radical neighbourhood are not unproblematised by its residents. As I have shown, it is not isolated from the quotidian racism of the city in general. Furthermore the apparently 'contained' nature of the area's radicalism has been beneficial for policing and media representations.

I have demonstrated how the Academic Asylum Law and annual commemoration of the Polytechnic uprising are integrally intertwined with political myths of Exarcheia, which constitute it in the social imaginary as a radical neighbourhood. Furthermore, through introducing the annual commemoration, this chapter has contextualized the remembrance practices and political myth-making that I analyse in the following chapters. The importance of the annual Polytechnic commemoration for participants is connected to the ways in which it is an affective, inter-generational coming-together, where people share stories and participate in remembrance practices and political myth-making.

The repeated act of coming together in the same space is considered a tradition, and is critiqued by participants themselves, concerned that it perhaps replicates the dominant modes of transmission that it seeks to disrupt. However, if we consider the diverse demands of people, regarding questions of social justice and freedom, it is clear that they are 'answering the call' of tradition through these practices and honouring the demands from the past that press upon the present.

I have shown that the Polytechnic commemoration produces a counter-space that acts as a resource for people who participate in everyday political action, through the sharing of stories and pause for reflection. Furthermore I have introduced the notion of political myth-making as part of remembrance practices, which I explore in the following three chapters. This chapter has sought to situate remembrance practices of the Polytechnic uprising, which are not enacted inside a vacuum; they are meaningful in relation to the everyday political action of their participants, which is, in

many cases, very localized, but is also harnessed by the state, and mainstream media, as I will discuss in the following chapter.



27. Map of Polytechnic campus



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE DOMINANT POLITICAL MYTHS OF THE POLYTECHNIC UPRISING: HEROES, DEMOCRACY, AND MAINTAINING THE EXTREME CENTRE**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the dominant political myths of the Polytechnic uprising. Naming them as such is not an attempt to taxonomise political myths, but an attempt to disentangle the multiple Polytechnics. Having situated the Polytechnic campus in Exarcheia in the previous chapter, here I identify the dominant political myths that are produced through official remembrance practices, a process and definition which emerges from people who actively contest them through their own remembrance practices. The sources of these political myths are slippery, as there is no single myth-maker, but the different images constitute important aspects of the dominant social imaginary of the contemporary Greek nation-state. In this chapter I explore how this set of political myths reproduces the uprising as non-violent, heroic and 'democratic', intertwining the uprising with the metapolitefsi period. These political myths legitimise different state practices, which come to the fore in the remembrance practices of wreath-laying, and the annual march.

First I discuss the political myth of the uprising as ushering in the Third Hellenic Republic, which was instituted in 1974 after the fall of the dictatorship. This myth, recounted through people's experience of Greek state education, creates a temporality of linear progress: of contemporary Greece as a peaceful democratic nation-state. It simplifies anti-dictatorial resistance, omits violent and radical political action, and folds a reified version of the uprising as an event of heroic political action into the national narrative. I then consider how, during the time of my fieldwork, this political myth aimed to reinforce the positioning of the then government as the peaceful and safe centre, and to legitimize the discourse of the 'two extremes' of the Far-Right and Far-Left.

Within these dominant political myths, the space of the Polytechnic is often thus produced as 'sheltering extremism'. However, during the days of the commemoration, it is produced as a site for mourning dead heroes of the past, through the formalized remembrance practices of wreath-laying. Related to this, is the political myth of the 'Polytechnic Generation' whereby the protagonists of the uprising are simultaneously celebrated as heroes, and normalised as accountable for the current crisis. Lastly I explore the ritual of the annual march from the Polytechnic campus to the American

embassy on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, through its affective atmosphere, bringing together thousands of people with different imaginations of the uprising and political action in the present.



28. Stounari entrance to Polytechnic. Banners: BREAD – EDUCATION – FREEDOM 1973 2013 and THE GOVERNMENT IS LOCKING UP THE POLYTECHNIC

### **The Polytechnic Uprising as Legitimizing Modern Greek Democracy**

The core of the state's narrative of the Polytechnic uprising is attached to notions of 'non-violence,' 'democracy' and 'heroism'. During the period of my fieldwork, this specific political myth was employed as a way of actively maintaining a conception of a contemporary peaceful and secure Greek democracy. A celebration of heroism, this political myth denies the radical political imaginations that existed in the Polytechnic occupation, and the militant anti-dictatorship struggle that led to it, emphasizing the non-violent nature of the Uprising. The non-violent political action is contrasted with the 'bloody' end, whereby the military dictatorship broke into the occupied campus with tanks bursting through the gates, killing the innocent students, who become martyrs for democracy. In dominant political myths, the brutality of the Junta serves to contrast with contemporary modes of supposedly democratic and peaceful contemporary governance. Here I am interested in what the official political myth of the Polytechnic uprising omits or 'forgets'. I use the term forgetting, whilst acknowledging that attending to such silences is problematic: it is difficult to show that something is not there (Connerton, 1989).

The Polytechnic uprising has been commemorated in the form of a national school holiday since 1999, when parliament voted on a bill to sanction the 17<sup>th</sup> of November as a day to 'pay homage to the Greek Youth and as a commemoration day of the Greek people's Resistance against the dictatorship and in support of Democracy' (Kotea, 2013: 23).<sup>58</sup> The uprising is thus celebrated as the starting point of Modern Greek democracy, ensuring the temporality of linear progressive history. In schools, primary and secondary school children re-enact the uprising, write stories in activity books, sing songs, and visit the campus to lay flowers if they are based in central Athens. This political myth perpetuates an image of post-dictatorial Greek democracy as emergent from non-violent political action, which is employed within a wider discourse as a means of critiquing contemporary political action. There is no room within this political myth of the Polytechnic to acknowledge the ways in which the 'demands for "democratisation" and "national liberation" were embedded in an "anti-fascist, anti-imperialist" narrative, different versions of which were shared by all left-wing parties and youth organisations in this period,' (Papadogiannis, 2009: 79) let alone the anarchist aspects, or the 'dynamic resistance' to the dictatorship which led to the popular student movement (Voglis, 2011). The 'forgetting' of anti-dictatorship struggle in the commemoration is a practice that goes back to 1974 and the desire to stem political contestation in a context that did not see a 'purge' of people from the dictatorship era in power (Panourgia, 2010).

Political myths omitting these narratives first circulated in the years immediately following the uprising; remembrance of the uprising was initially suppressed (Kornetis, 2006). Konstantinos Karamanlis<sup>59</sup> had been 'summoned from exile by the political and military establishment to dismantle the Colonels' military junta and to oversee the transition to civilian rule' (Kassimeris, 2005: 745). He organised the first democratic elections to be held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1974, and his centre-right party New Democracy were elected with 54%. The elections were held on the same day as the uprising in order to stem the possibility of any repetitions of the unrest; marching to the American embassy on the anniversary was banned (Kornetis, 2006; 2013; Kotea 2013). This attempt by the state to replace the remembrance of the uprising with elections is contemporarily viewed by Kornetis as 'appropriating and transforming the

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<sup>58</sup> The official commemoration was established after three rejected bills in 1990, 1997 and 1998, although not unanimously. As Kotea notes, 'The Greek Communist Party (KKE) didn't vote for the bill, because its proposal was for the 17th of November to be sanctioned as a day of vigilance, fight for democracy and national independence was turned down' (Kotea, 2013: 23).

<sup>59</sup> Kornetis discusses Karamanlis as the 'symbol of the pre-1967 Right' in his thesis, and the effects that this had on students who had been active in anti-dictatorship resistance. One of his participants describes the moment: The day that I heard that Karamanlis was coming back, I remember, we were all at the Saint Paraskevi Square, many people, many, many, and all of us left-wingers, and I, who do not let myself cry easily, was in tears, because I considered it a defeat, that Karamanlis was coming back after so many sacrifices. Who? Karamanlis. For us Karamanlis was the one who won the elections of '61 with violence and fraud, he didn't have a good reputation for us' (in Kornetis, 2006: 361)

specific date into a national symbol' (2006: 11), a forceful attempt at intermingling popular contestation and 'national democracy'. In an article published on November 16<sup>th</sup> 1974, Andrews wrote:

[T]he first national elections in ten years are to be held on the first anniversary of [the students'] slaughter. Are these elections (manipulated in advance by the electoral law, free nonetheless) the most fitting possible memorial to that human sacrifice? Or is it wiser to keep the population busy on a day when there might otherwise be trouble?' (Andrews, 1980: 171).<sup>60</sup>

My aim is not to judge the truth-claims of these historical accounts, but rather how they work as political myths. In spite of the ban, the first march in remembrance of the Polytechnic uprising took place a few days after the 1974 election, where it is noted that 'leftists and anarchists commemorated the event on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November with a protest march against the state' (Kotea, 2013: 20), and the following week on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November, a second march took place, organized by the National Union of Greek Students (EFEE). Kotea remarks that 'one million citizens participated in this march which was a manifestation of the anti-fascist and of the anti-imperialist will of the people [that] reached the American Embassy' (2013: 19). In 1976 the memorial march ban was lifted (Kornetis, 2006). Close, a historian, argues that the annual commemoration, the 'tradition of 17 November 1973 ... *sanctified* student rebellion. 17 November, soon afterwards, became the Bastille Day of modern Greek democracy' (Close, 2009: 137, my emphasis). Modern Greek democracy and the uprising here are ineluctably intertwined; a distinct tradition of progress emerges.

The entwinement of the uprising with the first election in 1974 was arguably the first attempt of creating a political myth that conflates the uprising with the transition 'democracy' and the subsequent metapolitefsi period. As discussed in the first chapter, metapolitefsi refers to the 'politics of after' but the period is contested, with the metapolitefsi considered to have ended with the crisis. This flattening process was deemed necessary by political elites at the time. Here, the uprising is rendered foundational and reified in the national narrative of the Modern Greek republic. The commemoration itself becomes the metapolitefsi's 'major legitimizing incident' in Kornetis' historical representation:

The 'Polytechnic' as it became known, has inhabited a central symbolic space in Greek society ever since the democratic consolidation took place the following year. With its memorialisation it became the major legitimizing incident of the democratic transition, as evidenced by the fact that the first post-junta elections were scheduled for 17 November 1974 ... Before long, 17 November was established as a day of national celebration. (Kornetis, 2013: 1)

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<sup>60</sup> First published in the newspaper Stavanger Aftenblad on November 16<sup>th</sup> 1974.

This political myth inserts the uprising into a teleological national narrative, attached to the fall of the dictatorship and the return of democracy, forcibly celebrated by all children in Greek state education. As such, this political myth-making seeks to create a homogenous time (Benjamin, 1916; Peguy, 1968), which is the time of the nation-state (Anderson, 2009). As Rahman notes, such time marks the 'simultaneous experience by members of the nation-state of the same instant of chronological time' (Rahman, 2015: 96). This political myth denies the contentious collective political action before, during and after the dictatorship, and extracts the aspects of the Polytechnic uprising that serves a teleological narrative of progress that can be shared by all "Greeks". There is no space for the years of resistance that led up to the uprising, the multiple militant anti-Junta resistance groups, or the imprisonment and torture of many people during the dictatorship. As Seremetakis notes, for Benjamin and Bloch the 'continuum', of historical and national progress, which presents itself as natural, is a 'mythic premise, narration and iconography, that politically and culturally permeated every dimension of mundane social experience and which generated historical forgetfulness' (Seremetakis, 1999:21). A primary factor in the stifling of the commemoration march in the post-dictatorship years was the 1974 'transition to multiparty democracy,' which Kassimeris describes as 'complex and difficult' (2013: 14). He continues:

The first years of this process were marked by a curious amalgam of continuity and change. The symbols, the rhetoric, even the constitution changed—but without any systematic purge of the bureaucracy or the police apparatus; key sections of the state remained in the hands of the old order. When the first post-1974 government, under Karamanlis, proved unable to deliver the promise of 'irreversible change', the credibility of the new republic was seriously weakened in the eyes of many ordinary Greeks, especially the students whose resistance to the military dictatorship had been instrumental in its destabilization. (Kassimeris, 2013: 134).

During the dictatorship, although heavily suppressed, some political groups did articulate demands for radical change in the post-dictatorial period. 'For these left-oriented groups violence as a means of political struggle constituted a split with the leadership of the traditional Left and a reply to its inadequacies to forestall the coup or to organize the popular grievance in the new circumstances' (Katsaros, 1999:17 in Serdedakis, 2007: 6). The occupation of the Polytechnic itself consisted of disparate political imaginations, with many different groups and individuals engaging in debates around demands and strategies. The dominant political myth of the Polytechnic uprising performatively flattens the disparate demands into 'democracy' and 'national liberation.' This is reflected in the observations of younger participants of the commemoration. Sofia, a first year chemistry university student, says of the 1973 occupiers: 'They weren't even demanding things that were so radical. It made the

quality of life better – healthcare, social reforms – but it was more about consumerism, capitalistic things. It wasn't even that radical!' Here, the Polytechnic uprising is conflated with the social and economic reforms of the post-dictatorial metapolitefsi period. During the days of the commemoration, many speak of the ways in which the uprising is taught in schools, where the official political myths are reproduced, and the uprising becomes intertwined with the freedom(s) that followed. As such, the neoliberalisation of the country and its entry into the EU, and the Eurozone - hallmarks of the metapolitefsi period - are conflated with the uprising. In turn, because of the central role that PASOK played in these policies following their election in 1981, and their self-positioning as the heirs of the Polytechnic uprising, the period of the metapolitefsi is connected with the protagonists of the uprising, or what is commonly referred to as the 'Polytechnic Generation'.

The election of PASOK in 1981 has rendered that year an important marker for different memory practices, as different cultural and historical films were released, reshaping modern Greek history to link all popular movements with PASOK (Pesmazoglou, 2000: 108). Upon election, the prime minister Andreas Papandreou engaged in 'three conciliatory gestures,' which permanently altered the possibility of accountability for the Civil War and the Junta, whereby 'the Left was made, at once, both legal and forgotten,' as Panourgia puts it, 'an enforced amnesia':

(1) It decided to abolish the use of security files on citizens kept by the Greek Central Intelligence Service (KYP), and it finally incinerated the existing files at furnace of steel mill outside Athens in 1989. (2) It allowed the DSE fighters who had taken refuge in Communist countries to repatriate to Greece. (3) It issued pensions to all Resistance fighters. These gestures not only promised reconciliation and a (re)turn to normalcy but also secured the past in the furnace of the steel mill. There was no longer any trace of real accountability, no way of unpicking the skein of twentieth-century history back to when the state started to imagine and produce itself as something cohesive and self-recognisable. (Panourgia, 2009: 151-2)

Panourgia argues in her semi-autho-ethnographic account of the Greek Left that such 'inability or unwillingness,' to enact catharsis 'eroded any remaining sense of trust between the public and the state' (2009: 153). Many people refer to the popular and commonly-held belief that numerous PASOK members used their participation in the anti-Junta resistance as a means of claiming authority; they have become synonymous with the Polytechnic Generation.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See Stevis M (2011) The Greek Crisis: Athens Braces Itself for Protest Remembering Student Uprising. *Wall Street Journal*, Available from: <http://www.greekcrisis.net/2011/11/athens-braces-itself-for-protest.html> (accessed 19 October 2015).

## The Polytechnic Generation

In interviews, as well as in mass media sources, and political discourse, the blame for the current political situation is placed on the Polytechnic Generation, a popular term which Lambiri-Dimaki argues 'functioned as a symbol of democracy, promoted by mass media and politicians', which had the role of 'attributing authority and power to a portion of the post-dictatorship Greek student youth' (Lambiri-Dimaki, 2002: 46). Who the 'Polytechnic Generation' are, has been defined in different ways. The term has been used to describe political figures who are popularly associated with the Athens Polytechnic occupation such as Maria Damanaki and Kostas Laliotis. Kornetis' study of anti-dictatorial resistance delineates the Polytechnic Generation as born between 1949 and 1954, from the generation of Z Lambrakides (born between 1944 and 1949) and shaped by Lambrakis' assassination (2013). Fyssas created a 'biographical index' of the Polytechnic Generation, which includes 5,000 names of ex militants (1993). It was compiled upon the premise that the Polytechnic uprising marked the beginning of the metapolitefsi era and as such 'includes the next generation, which, however, has little to do with the actual anti-dictatorship period' (Kornetis, 2006:13). In Fyssas's view the Polytechnic was a decisive rupture with the past, therefore he does not include people who participated in anti-dictatorship activities in his index, as he perceives them as belonging to an older generational group (Kornetis, 2006: 13). This furthers the notion that militant anti-dictatorship action has been separated out from the Polytechnic uprising. Because of the Polytechnic Generation's perceived dominance of cultural and political life, especially after the election of socialist government PASOK in 1981, I argue that the Polytechnic Generation is an icon of a political myth the uprising that is entwined with the subsequent social and economic reforms of the metapolitefsi period. Kornetis knits together the enduring resonance of the Polytechnic uprising, with the Polytechnic Generation:

It remains imprinted in Greek collective memory that it was the students of the Polytechnic who brought down the Junta. In the summer of 2011, during a surge of protest against the austerity measures taken by the government to deal with its trouble-ridden economy, a slogan launched by the Greek *indignados* went 'Bread, Education, Freedom: the Junta did not end in 1973' – both appropriating the Polytechnic uprising's most famous catchphrase but also perpetuating the common belief that it was the student movement that brought down the regime in 1973 (instead of 1974). Despite the symbolic and actual work that the Polytechnic did to discredit the regime's putative democratic evolution ... this interpretation is strikingly inaccurate. It testifies, however, to the fact that the Polytechnic Generation still possesses a mythical aura in Greek society. (Kornetis, 2013: 2)

Here, the multiplicity of invocation is hinted and, and we find the germs of different political myths that I explore in the thesis. However, Kornetis maintains an

enlightenment view of myth, seeing interpretations as 'strikingly inaccurate'. He does not explore the imaginations or desires of the *aganaktismenoi* (indignants), and how or why invoking the Polytechnic is meaningful for them. As we have established, there are a plurality of political myths of the Polytechnic uprising, and I argue that it is important to explore the tensions between them, and the ways in which they are meaningful for people who participate in their creation and dissemination, as well as how the dominant political myths support structural violence and violent state practices of policing. Furthermore, I argue that the political myth of the Polytechnic Generation had different meanings for people in 2012 and 2013. As Leandros, a thirty-something member of an anti-authoritarian group, who also runs a small bookshop and library, tells me:

New Democracy and Golden Dawn are trying to erase the past, as they do not need the Polytechnic as a mythology. The past social contract 'ideal' that people agreed on, well, didn't agree ... but the poorest were not as anxious to revolt as they were living. Not any more. The Polytechnic cannot use its old meaning of democracy, so Samaras [the then leader of New Democracy, and then-Prime Minister of Greece] and the others want to erase it. They are not Centrist – they are Right wing. They want to rewrite it: 'no deaths'; 'Polytechnic youth are the Polytechnic Generation, they are the culprits of today's crisis.' 'We blame "democracy" – at least, the social parts of democracy: freedom of speech, rights and liberties, welfare state (as much as it exists). Things are different to before. The regime used to say: 'We brought democracy, so we're OK.' After 2008? The Polytechnic revolt was not suitable for elites – they couldn't build the mythology. So they tried to erase it.

Here we see different icons of the dominant political myths being used in new ways since the crisis. Leandros understands the uprising as not being useful for the government – the regime – who now put forwards the Polytechnic Generation as the 'culprits of today's crisis'. This is recounted by many, and is not a marginal perspective. Indeed the culpability of the Polytechnic Generation is perhaps the hegemonic media discourse during the crisis. This rendition of the political myth of the Polytechnic Generation serves as a legitimization of the destruction of any 'social parts' of democracy. Furthermore, for Leandros, the contemporary resonance of the Polytechnic uprising for contentious political action has become dangerous for the political elite since December 2008 and, as such, need to be 'erased'. While the government, the Far Right, and the mass media decry the Polytechnic Generation, the state education system lauds the protagonists of the Polytechnic as heroes.

In 1999 the state formalized a relationship between the Polytechnic Uprising and other national 'heroic' moments, through making it one of three national historical



events that Greek schoolchildren learn about and celebrate as a holiday. They are all limited interpretations of moments in Greece's political history, the other two being 'Oxi (No) Day'<sup>62</sup> and the National Day of Independence.<sup>63</sup> Heroism is problematically bound up in the dominant political myth, and the commemoration is further affixed to the independence fighters of 1821, because the Polytechnic uprising students called themselves 'the Free Besieged', a slogan of the Independence fighters. The notion of heroism comes up often in discussion of the Polytechnic uprising. Kornetis states that the protagonists 'came to haunt future generations' – an idea that some people also articulate – and that 'it was looked upon as the ultimate archetype, a model of action and *self-sacrifice*' (Kornetis, 2006: 250).

In conversation with law students during the commemoration, we discuss why people attend the commemoration. Lena tells me: 'Maybe people are moved by the heroic. People were killed. Collective historical memory tends to idealise those things.' The ideal of heroism and the 'glorious struggle' of the Polytechnic is something that Dimitris Papachristos, a well-known public figure, writer and the 'voice of the Polytechnic',<sup>64</sup> struggles with. In an interview near his home in Exarcheia, five minutes from the Polytechnic campus, he spoke of the importance of going to schools every week in order to counteract the notion of heroism that is entrenched through the state education celebration, to 'tell children that there are many Polytechnics' and instill the idea that 'anyone can do it'. He said that he does not visit the commemoration, as 'only those who were guilty for not participating go.' This echoes the response of some of the other people I interviewed that participated in the Polytechnic uprising. However, Dimitris, Ioannis, and Elena had a different stance. They are all in their mid sixties and still politically active in an anarchist group; a Trotskyist group in ANTARSYA, and SYRIZA, respectively. A text that Dimitris wrote in the Anarchist newspaper to mark the 2012 commemoration reads:

The events and the factors that contributed to the so-called 'metapolitefsi' are known, to a certain extent. What is still in darkness, is all the events that were before that. This is the reason why people were mythologised (as national heroes or fighters) while events and situations were kept in secret in order that the truth on issues, such as the occupation of one third of Cyprus from the Turkish state, would remain hidden. No matter how strange this may seem to many, events prove that those in power made the best

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<sup>62</sup> October 28 is the Celebration of the Greek refusal to the Italian ultimatum of 1940, under the dictatorship of Metaxas.

<sup>63</sup> March 25 is the anniversary of the declaration of the start of the Greek War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire, in 1821.

<sup>64</sup> As he is popularly known due to being the voice heard across the city during the Polytechnic Uprising, through the radio station they created.

possible use of the revolutionary events that took place in November 1973 in their own ways.

Here the uprising and its 'heroism' is understood as being used by 'those in power' to obfuscate the invasion of Cyprus.

Of course, Greek society is aware that the Polytechnic uprising was a demand for democracy and the fall of the Junta. But in the end, *the feast of democracy*, the commemoration of the re-establishment of democracy that we celebrate each year matches a timeline of events in Cyprus, and the return of Karamanlis. We have here another national tragedy, aiming at covering up the real reasons why there was a political movement in the Polytechnic. (Anagnostopoulou, 2013, my emphasis)

Indeed, through emphasizing ideas democracy and freedom, the kind of action that this political myth attempted to engender was grounded in the concerns about the stability of democratic governance and the state, at the time a coalition between ostensibly right-wing New Democracy and centre-Left PASOK. The ferocity with which official level discourse reproduced the dominant political myths reflected the waning legitimacy of the Greek government, with the country in a suspended and worsening state of 'crisis' post-2008. Young people, who associate the Polytechnic Generation with the present political situation, also critique the alleged 'heroism' of the protagonists, which circulated through dominant political myths. This is illustrated in the comments of Diana, a law student who we will meet later in the thesis:

I think that the spirit that prevails today, and the prevailing ideology of today, is a negativity towards the Polytechnic Generation. They are considered corrupt people. Most of them, they really are, because they sold the image ... not the image, but the fight in the Polytechnic to have places in political parties or places in the newspapers or places in stations on the TV channels, and I think it's true. The years after 1974 were not ideal.

This notion of the Polytechnic Generation being corrupt is widely accepted. While it is acknowledged by the participants of the 1973 uprising that I spoke with, they also qualitatively refute it, sharing the stories of their everyday lives and those of former participants that are still politically active in their neighbourhoods. The subjective experience of being refashioned as a hero and the maneuvering of the state in inserting this within the dominant political myth is evocatively described by Dimitris Papachristos:

The enemies of the Polytechnic, they created an image at the beginning – 'How good these kids were, these students who were against the government!' – We were in their hands until we suffocated. They made us heroes. They made us squares and roads, in order to take power from the event in itself. But they cannot do

it. Even for young people that have a day off from the education ministry, it's an official day off, the schools make them do a parade, and they parade against the system.

Even when turned into a national school holiday, Papachristos sees the desire to claim the anti-systemic power of the Polytechnic uprising as irrepressible; I see this as evidence of the plurality of political myths. However, while attesting to its contemporary relevance, he critiques the idea that contemporary political action should be akin to the Polytechnic in practice:

Today we have the Troika, another Junta in its place, an even worse one. Not even the past Junta would be able to take the same measures as this junta. Which means that they use democracy in order to do what they want. So people connect the Polytechnic of that time with the situation today. But they can't see the way to go against it. That's why I say we need a lot of Polytechnics, not like the past one, because it would be something like a historical joke. But through society. We need to go against it!

In evoking multiple Polytechnics, Papachristos acknowledges the radical political possibilities the political myths of the uprising hold for the present, even though he does not participate in remembrance practices during the commemoration. Similarly, despite many of participants' criticisms, many still attend the institutionalised commemoration events – the laying of the wreaths, and the march – as acts of obligation, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

### **The Polytechnic and the 'Two Extremes'**

The political myth which distinguishes the uprising's protagonists as heroes, and separates them from the anti-dictatorship struggle, has perhaps enabled a discourse of 'agent provocateurs' to circulate in the mass media, gaining strength in recent years (Xenakis, 2012). This discourse is an element of the contemporary political myth of the 'two extremes'. During my fieldwork, the leading partner of the government, right-wing New Democracy (ND) adopted the theory of the 'two extremes', which refers to the supposed 'commonalities of the extremism of both right and left' (Anastasakis, 2013: online). Critiquing this discourse, Anastasakis notes that it serves as a

potent instrument for de-legitimising the opposition party in the eyes of many mainstream voters of the centre left. By reminding them that SYRIZA is a constellation of left wing components, some of them of an anarchic and extreme left leaning, ND is attacking the Achilles' heel of the opposition party; it exposes the latter's vulnerability and its reluctance to openly rebuff its extremist connections. (Anastasakis, 2013).

It also, she notes further, addresses ND's own 'drainage of voters to the extreme right, who need to be brought back' (*Ibid.*). During the 1973 uprising, some accounts blame 'extreme' slogans on agent provocateurs, attesting to the diversity of the people involved at the time. Similar language is found in much coverage of the annual Polytechnic commemoration, where the space is represented as 'sheltering extremism'. The significance is that the discourse of the 'two extremes' aims to dismantle the ways in which the Polytechnic campus acts as a site of everyday contentious politics, as discussed in Chapter Four. Narratives of unwanted, 'dangerous' people entering into political spaces with de-legitimised political grounding circulate as rationale for abolishing the AAL. The bodies of imagined extremists making Molotov cocktails in university campuses are made responsible for civil disobedience and violence. The 'two extremes' discourse allows the state apparatus to 'hijack the spontaneous versus unspontaneous dichotomy' (Dalakoglou, 2012: 541) and attach notions of extremism to spontaneous political action. I argue that during the time of crisis, the dominant political myth of the peaceful democratic uprising takes on a new dimension in relation to the discourse of the 'two extremes', whereby the political myth of the Polytechnic is worked on by the state to maintain the allegedly 'safe' centre.

There is a line to be traced, from the Other of the 1973 'agent provocateur' to the figure of the deeply-stigmatised 'terrorist' in the post-dictatorship era and the 'two extremes' discourse that dominated government and mainstream media during the period of my fieldwork. Kevin Andrews vividly describes the ways in which 'agents provocateurs' planted 'extremist slogans' – an interpretation that is not shared by other accounts – and here serves as an instance of political myth:

Periodically there came a warning to the crowds: 'placards with extremist slogans have been planted on our railings; this is the work of agents provocateurs. Do not let those people alienate you from us. Be careful what you read. Pay attention only to the messages approved by our Co-ordinating Committee. One word in particular will awaken bitter memories among some older of our supporters ...' (The reference was to *laokratia*, or 'rule of the people', which had been a rallying-cry of the Communists and much of the Resistance in the streets of newly-liberated Athens at the catastrophic end of 1944.) 'This word, as well as all extremist slogans, we reject as having no connection with the student movement.' (Andrews, 1980: 78)

The political myth of the 'agent provocateur' as extremist persists. Dimitris from the Anarchist Archive participated in the 1973 Polytechnic uprising, and is referred to by others, somewhat ambiguously, as 'always being there when something happens'. He tells me that 'the agent provocateur is a persistent myth' and that although the KKE would often state that there were agent provocateurs in the uprising, 'everything, everyone, decisions which do not act according to their line, is an 'agent provocateur'.

Indeed, militant political groups continued being politically active after the fall of the dictatorship. As Xenakis writes:

The roots of what may be called the 'first generation' which engaged in political violence after the fall of the country's dictatorship of 1967-74 have been traced to underground resistance organisations that functioned during the Junta. Prior to the Junta, the attractions of violent strategies for leftist activist had been strengthened by state repression and state-sanctioned violence by covert groups of the far Right. (Xenakis, 2012: 439)

In flattening the demands of the occupation, broadening the 'celebration' into a national one, and amplifying the role of the 'Greek people' in bringing down the dictatorship in state education, the voices of militant groups are lost. Kassimeris (2005) sketches the perspectives on political violence of different militant groups at the time,<sup>65</sup> and Voglis (2011) has explored the narratives of former members of militant groups,<sup>66</sup> paying close attention to the texture of the relationship between political violence and subjectivity. He delineates the trajectories of different groups, their changing stance on violence as a form of action over time, dividing lines between groups breaking down and reforming. He claims that 'whereas in the period 1967-1970 the goal of these [armed] groups was to overthrow the dictatorship, in the period 1970-1973 many groups saw violence as a way to bring about revolutionary change in Greece' (Voglis, 2011: 566). The relationship he draws between the militant anti-dictatorship struggle and the Polytechnic uprising is interesting:

Armed groups failed to create the mass movement that could have overthrown the dictatorship. A student movement emerged in 1972 and culminated in the 'Polytechnic School Uprising' of November 1973 ... The student movement regarded the militants in the armed groups as 'heroes' but it was an altogether new phenomenon: different age cohort, spontaneous, innovative practices, weak ties with the underground political organizations and mass appeal, at least among the youth. (Voglis, 2011: 566-567)

Of course there has been a proliferation of Revolutionary, anti-capitalist and communist Left groups, as well as anarchist, anarcho-syndicalist and anti-authoritarian groups, since 1974, shaped by the anti-dictatorship struggle as illustrated in the diagram in Chapter One. The connection between the Polytechnic uprising and political violence is most explicitly referenced by the group '17N' which operated from 1975 to 2002, with infamous member Christodoulos Xiros escaping

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<sup>65</sup> As Kassimeris details, 'violence against the regime came to be seen by some students as inevitable and justifiable. For some dissenting students the campus itself became the battlefield. During the events of November, ultra-militant factions adopted violent tactics which they hoped would awaken the majority to the barbarism and brutality of the regime. Other factions saw such clashes as a tool to preserve and encourage political dissent' (Kassimeris, 2005: 748).

<sup>66</sup> The work is entitled "'Who comes to power by force of arms, will only go by force of arms'" Political Violence and the Voice of the Opposition to the Military Dictatorship in Greece, 1967-1974', taking this quotation from a Greek student union discussion in Paris, 1967.

from prison in January 2014.<sup>67</sup> Much to the sensationalist delight of social and mainstream media, he released a video vowing armed struggle to avenge the misery caused by austerity measures, but was re-arrested in January 2015.<sup>68</sup> As noted in the introduction, Kornetis claims that 'the actual date of the event changed signifiers after it was appropriated by the terrorist organization' (2006: 23).<sup>69</sup> 17N has always been referred to as a terrorist organization by the state, and this association with the Polytechnic uprising intertwines with the political myth of the Polytechnic and other universities 'sheltering extremism'. Furthermore, Panourgia argues that the parliamentary Left denied 17N's legitimate attempts to be part of the Left and 'claim a common kinship with the history that has made the Left both a possible and a legitimate participant' in post WWII politics (2010: 154). The political implications of this is that different forms of militant and violent political action – urban guerrilla warfare, armed citizen self-defense, armed national liberation movements, political liberation movements, partisan armed struggle, the antiglobalisation movement, and the 2008 December uprising – 'are all semantically collapsed into "terrorism" when their tactics, objectives, political mandates, and relationship to the state, and to often-competing political ideologies, demand the preservation of their differences' (Panourgia, 2010: 154-55).

This targeting began in the 1970s and 1980s. The poet and singer Nikolas Asimos who famously lived in Exarcheia during this period wrote many poems-songs on the concept of 'terrorism' as it became a dominant mode of oppressing different political groups. One that is most pertinent here is 'I am fed up with the Resistance', castigating the 'culture of bragging about one's imaginary or real resistance to the junta while cooperating with its civilian heirs'.<sup>70</sup> Here he ironically invokes the language of the state, and the Polytechnic Generation.

Because many ask me  
How I fared in prison

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<sup>67</sup> See Smith H (2014) Escaped Marxist guerrilla Christodoulos Xiros alarms Greece with pledge to return to arms. *the Guardian*, Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/26/marxist-guerrilla-christodoulos-xiros-17-november-greece> (accessed 19 August 2015).

<sup>68</sup> See euronews (2015) *Greece: Police rearrest fugitive Marxist extremist Christodoulos Xiros*. Available from: <http://www.euronews.com/2015/01/03/greece-police-rearrest-fugitive-marxist-extremist-christodoulos-xiros/> (accessed 19 October 2015).

<sup>69</sup> As Voglis notes, 'former-militants are keen to disassociate themselves from 17N and "terrorists" in their narratives ... the state after 1974 acknowledged the contribution of all those militants who were convicted for planting bombs in the struggle against the dictatorship, and some of the people involved in armed groups had spectacular careers afterwards. They feel that, notwithstanding the legitimacy of their actions then, *they are legitimized by history*, unlike terrorists from whom they sharply distinguish themselves. Nevertheless, there is a sense of disappointment because neither the bombs nor the people overthrew the military dictatorship' (2011: 566, my italics).

<sup>70</sup> For Further information and translated poems see Libcom.org (2015) *Asimos, Nikolas (1949-1988) Athens' anarchist troubadour*. Available from: <https://libcom.org/history/asimos-nikolas-1949-1988-athens%E2%80%99-anarchist-troubadour> (accessed 19 July 2015).

Why I did not write a song  
Like so many 'resisters'  
I answer to them straight on  
I don't sell my resistance  
All of you who resisted  
How well you have found your place  
So as to compete for a seat in Parliament  
I am fed up with the Resistance  
False words of fanfarons  
I withered in my cell  
And I hate politicians  
The jails are full, the cells are damp  
Penal convicts in dungeons  
Are the world's alibi so as to hide its falsehood  
So as to support its massacres and its legal robberies  
Terrorists!  
Are those who refuse!  
To subordinate.  
Liberals!  
Those who burn  
And massacre.  
Put a bomb and blow up  
In the air all the cells  
For your freedom bury all the socialite nonsense  
Of your life  
Life is beautiful without laws  
Without tanks  
Without judges and lawyers  
Without bosses and shit  
In the greenest weed  
I shall find love  
Acting never and always  
Everywhere and nowhere  
Because many ask me  
How did I fare in prison...

Selling resistance, the subversion of the naming of terrorists and liberals, and corrupt politicians, are all themes that emerged during my fieldwork in 2012 and 2013, when the discussion of the 'two extremes' in the mainstream media and the government was very intense. As Nikos, a fifth year medical student in EAAK, tells me during the Polytechnic commemoration:

For us, we are not extreme: the government is. People have to fight for decent living conditions. This whole discussion is the government trying to make us believe that only they can save us - vote, stay at home and you will be ok. But this is not a democratic state. This connects to the Polytechnic in that we need organized and collective struggles, not individualized, but a collective working class. We need every member of the youth.

Here, he performatively takes on the role of the extremist that has been assigned to him within this discourse, and subverts it to critique the political myth of the 'two extremes'. Here, the state practices themselves are rendered extreme, and Nikos responds with a counteractive political myth of the Polytechnic uprising as containing within it the possibility of collective organized political action. I see this critique, which has emerged from the 'anagonistic movement', as being connected to what Etienne Balibar has recently called the 'extreme centre' (2015, forthcoming). Balibar discusses this concept in relation to Greek and Western European state propaganda, in a provocation written with Sandro Mezzadra and Freider Otto Wolf, published in English, French and German. They state that it aims to 'take hold of public opinion' and generate 'a populism, or rather an extremism "of the centre"' whereby the economic crisis develops as a gap in representation which is linked to the fact that there is absolutely no institutional possibility for European citizens – whether as individuals, or as territories, or indeed as local, national or transnational communities – to *actually* control the decisions which are taken in their name' (Balibar et al 2015: online). This connects to contemporary debates around populism, and the political myth of 'There is No Alternative' (TINA), which people challenge. Indeed, Balibar argues for confronting this

confusion between the notion of populism and extremism, which is not innocent ... including in particular the idea that has arisen, of a convergence or a common ground, between the 'populism' of the 'Right' and the 'Left'. We must take sides in this debate, also trying to move and to show the real issues ... which is intended to scare the average citizen who fears adventures, based on the famous theorem of Margaret Thatcher now practiced all day long by the governments and institutions of the European Union ('There is No Alternative'). (Balibar, 2015: forthcoming, my translation)

These debates were taking place during the Polytechnic commemoration of 2013. Here I will quote from a discussion on the first night about this notion of 'two extremes'. One of the speakers, part of a then-recently initiated anti-fascist alliance said:

It is significant that this [discussion] is taking place in the Polytechnic, where people fought against dictatorship, against the tanks – the ancestors of today's Golden Dawn. Historically, the 'two extremes' has been used by government to strike the lower classes, in Germany in the 1930s. Using anti-terrorist laws against Golden Dawn will undermine people's rights through wiretapping. We are living in a state of exception. Huge mobilisations of social movements against Golden Dawn led to the government doing something about them – they wouldn't have done so without the mobilisation, We have to resist the theory of the two extremes and instead talk about two words: democracy and equality, they aren't



the same. The state can't denounce 'violence wherever it comes from' because it is society itself that is producing violence.

The significance of the Polytechnic campus and the uprising is emphasized here, as well as the relationship between Golden Dawn and the Junta, which I will explore further in Chapter Six. In 2013, my fieldwork began shortly after the murder of Pavlos Fyssas, an anti-fascist rapper who was stabbed by Golden Dawn members in Piraeus on September 18<sup>th</sup>. This caught national and international attention, and led to massive protests, which the speaker above references. However, members of Golden Dawn had been killing people for years (Psarras, 2012), including Shehzad Luqman, a twenty-seven year old who had been living and working in Greece for six years in January 2013.<sup>71</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> November, two Golden Dawn members were shot outside their office in Nea Iraklio, a northern suburb of Athens. Two weeks later, a newly-founded group named 'The Fighting People's Revolutionary Powers' claimed responsibility, through a document on a USB stick given to a television show 'Zougla', which airs on a private station. The Greek Special Counter-Terrorist Unit accepted the document as valid and they are still investigating the text. However, the text itself attracted derision and was mocked by some informants for its use of language. 'It's like a mash-up of someone who has read a few Wikipedia articles. It confuses different strands of thought and uses all the clichés of the Revolutionary Left,' Dimitris told me. The professionalism of the drive-by shooters was taken as further evidence by him and others that this was a state-sponsored attack. This was the context of heightened violence within which my fieldwork was conducted, and in the following section I explore how the political myth of the 'two extremes' becomes salient within remembrance practices of wreath-laying in the Polytechnic commemoration.

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<sup>71</sup> The two men were sentenced to life imprisonment in 2014 for Luqman's murder and have denied association with Golden Dawn since their arrest, despite Golden Dawn literature and many weapons being found at their homes. See Enet English (2015) *Pair get life for Pakistani worker's murder*. Available from: <http://www.enetenglish.gr/?i=news.en.article&id=1860> (accessed 19 October 2015).



29. Pavlos Fyssys mural, Polytechnic

### The Polytechnic Remembrance: Space of Mourning and Respect for the Dead

In this section I analyse the ways in which some of the images of the dominant political myths come to the fore at the main gates of the Polytechnic campus, during the formal remembrance practices of laying wreaths. First I describe the scene of laying wreaths, and examine how the major political parties and mainstream media denounced a small act of playful contestation which demonstrates how the political myth of the 'two extremes' is invoked through this space of mourning. I then ground this excessive response within the post-2008 Greek social and political context and relate it to post-dictatorial practices, with the aim of explaining why the dominant political myth omits anti-dictatorial violent political action.



30. Polytechnic commemoration tweet 2013, @Joanna\_P



31. Wreath-laying, November 2012

I get to the Polytechnic campus on the morning of November the 15<sup>th</sup> in 2012 and many people are milling around: families, students, party members, elderly people and those who work nearby in central Athens. The perimeter of the campus, which fronts onto a main street and another that goes into Exarcheia, is lined with stalls: booksellers, political groups, carnation sellers and bread stalls. The front entrance to the university displays the railing battered by tanks in 1973, alongside a permanent monument to the dead, listing names of those who were also killed during the seven years of dictatorship. Wreaths and messages are laid continuously from the 15<sup>th</sup> until the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> by different unions, relatives of the dead, politicians, and public figures, who are announced upon their arrival, through a loud speaker. Many others leave carnations, letters and drawings. A shifting crowd of people looks at the pile of wreaths on the railing.



32. Taking photos of wreaths, November 2012

Many people are holding devices in their hands, documenting the commemoration themselves, and in the evening online there are tweets of remembrance with the hashtags *17gr* or *17N*, and many websites and blogs referencing the Polytechnic uprising commemoration with photos taken that day. I spend the day here, hanging about and talking to people about the memorialization. When I ask people why they have come, the question in itself is deemed somewhat odd. I get quizzical looks, and hand gestures alluding to the obvious nature of their response, with the implication that attendance is self-explanatory. Recurring motifs are to *remember* 'the dead', 'heroes', 'the end of the Junta', and the 'importance' of the day for Greece. Comparing my observations of the 2012 memorialisation march with an account of November 17<sup>th</sup> 1975, which Savvas describes in an article published at the time, confirms the resonance of the institutionalised ritualized commemorative acts. Only the content of the notes Savvas found scattered among the wreaths left by the statue betray another time, written by their contemporaries:

I read: 'George, I am sorry for my humble gift of carnations, but I promise to follow your example - Voula.' 'I answer your call to help only too late; forgive me -- P.T.' 'Those who throw flowers at you now are doing it out of guilt because they betrayed you two years ago.' 'One must die anyway, but it's better to die as you did. I envy you -- Thanassis V.' 'Diomedes, I'll always love you -- Maria.' (Savvas, 1976: 27)

This side of the campus is produced during the days' commemoration through formal rituals of mourning, mass media representation, and the tables of the 'Traditional Left', including the Youth of the Communist Party of the Interior (KNE). The Communist Party of the Interior (KKE), with whom the KNE is affiliated, have long considered themselves to be the heirs of the uprising, despite denouncing it at the time (see Kornetis 2013; Panourgia 2010). They have had a fluctuating percentage, between five and ten per cent of the national vote since they were made legal in 1974,<sup>72</sup> but since their coalition with New Democracy in 1989,<sup>73</sup> alongside their isolationist and sectarian policies, they are rendered redundant and of the Traditional Left, which the majority of informants (aside from conversations with KNE and KKE members) criticize. Indeed, while many people I spoke to consider themselves to be communists, there have been many counter-currents to Communist Party, and they criticize the KKE and KNE (who are called 'KNAT' which rhymes with 'MAT' the riot police) because they are sectarian, and in student assemblies are against most actions, whilst in parliamentary politics are famously reticent and refuse to participate in

<sup>72</sup> In 2009 they received 7.5% of the vote, May 2012 – 8.5%, in June 2012 – 4.5%, in January 2015 – 5.5%, and in September 2015 5.6%

<sup>73</sup> For a detailed history, see Lountos N (2015) Understanding the Greek Communists | Jacobin. *Jacobinmag.com*, Available from: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/01/understanding-the-greek-communists/> (accessed 19 October 2015).



negotiations.<sup>74</sup> Most people are casually dressed for a mild November day, so it is noticeable when a smart suited man arrives, with a glamorous entourage, to lay a wreath. He is Theodore Papatheodorou, the current deputy minister for education, and after laying his wreath he goes into a small, locked, neo-classical building next to the wreaths.

Minutes after Papatheodorou is announced as having arrived, many young people rush to the wreaths, from the other side of the campus. They chant and shout outside the building, filling the steps. Meanwhile, it is announced that Mikis Theodorakis<sup>75</sup> has arrived to lay a wreath and attend the concert tribute to him, entitled 'I hope to awaken the Greek people'. Operatic singers perform Theodorakis songs on the steps of the main Polytechnic building occupied in 1973. I look around, trying to see him. Everyone is pre-occupied with what the shouting young people are going to do. I overhear someone who has just arrived make a joke that they're angry with Theodorakis, and people laugh. When it seems that the minister is going to leave the building, the young people line both sides of the pathway he has to take to get out of the campus. As he walks through, they shout and throw water bottles, coffee, and yoghurt at him. People stand around and watch the scene unfold. Once the minister has left, the young people go back to the other side of the Polytechnic campus.



33. Just before the Deputy Minister of Education emerges, 2012

<sup>74</sup> For an interesting overview of the KKE's approach to parliamentary politics during the crisis, see Charalambous G (2015) What About the Greek Communist Party? | Jacobin. *Jacobinmag.com*, Available from: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/tsipras-syriza-debt-greece-kke/> (accessed 19 October 2015).

<sup>75</sup> A composer and prominent public figure, now with his own political party. Theodorakis was exiled during the dictatorship and his songs were banished during the seven years of the Junta; people would listen to his music in private. His reputation and following during the post-dictatorial period has diminished for various reasons, including the way in which he portrays his role in anti-dictatorial resistance and his political views: he has continuously shifted from group to group. I touch upon the ways in which his music is used in the present, in relation to the Polytechnic uprising, in Chapter Seven.

Later that day, accounts of the episode circulate on news websites and YouTube footage is available. The Deputy Minister releases a press statement that reads:

I went to the university to pay tribute to the Polytechnic and as Minister of Education. I entered through the main entrance, laid a wreath, made a statement and, with a delegation, visited the rector of National Technical University of Athens (Polytechnic) ... The obscene manifestations of isolated groups certainly do not characterise the Polytechnic Community, do not tarnish the celebration of the Polytechnic, do not touch me personally...such events...ultimately serve deniers of Polytechnic and the symbolism of the Polytechnic.<sup>76</sup>

This small episode, the minister's response, and the circulation of this news item are indicative of the fragility of relations between politicians and students, and hint at the way in which the dominant political myth of the Polytechnic uprising as non-violent has to be continually reinforced, and the political myth of the 'two extremes' becomes entwined. The response of these young people – many of whom I assume to be students – to the Deputy Education Minister visiting the Polytechnic commemoration can be understood as part of wider contestation against the ongoing reforms and privatization of higher education system (see Gropas *et al*, 2013; Gounari & Grollios, 2012). According to participants, Papatheodorou was the first education minister to attend the Polytechnic commemoration in years. The 'deniers' which he refers to include Golden Dawn, who had announced the day before (on November 15<sup>th</sup>) that no one died in the 1973 uprising, as I will discuss later in the chapter. It was interesting to see this moment unfold and the way in which it caused a rupture in the ritual of wreath-laying. And yet the rituals resumed as soon as the MP left the campus, and the young people returned to the other side of the campus. Compared with routine forms of police violence against protesters in Athens, the repertoires of retaliation, or the archetypal 'stone throwing' (Panourgia, 2010) that often follow organized demonstrations, this episode was incredibly mild. Still, it is a small act that is vigorously rejected by all major political parties.

The way in which this small scene was amplified to such an extent in the media ties into a wider discussion about how political violence was framed within Greek media and political discourse, such that small acts like yoghurt-throwing are intrinsically connected to disparate forms of violent contestation. Hatzopoulos and Katelis argue:

The concept of 'the Left' that is associated with the politics of violence is purposely indeterminate in the hegemonic discourse [in Greece]. Its representations are wide enough to lump together the 'hoodie' as the perpetrator of urban destruction, the

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<sup>76</sup> See Inthecity.gr (2012a) *The celebration of the Polytechnic [Ο εορτασμός του Πολυτεχνείου]*. (November 16) Available from: <http://www.inthecity.gr/index.php/eidiseis/greece/5483-2012-11-16-21-35-54.html> (accessed 17 October 2015).

'yoghurt thrower' as the epitome of the populist vigilante, the 'trade unionist' as the agent who aborts peaceful labour relations and the implementation of structural reforms with force, the demonstrator as the agent disturbing peaceful everyday life, and so on (Hatzopoulos and Katelis, 2013).

The performance of throwing yoghurt is an act laden with cultural meaning, a 'practice that constitutes a poetics through which violence comes to take on meaning for its participants' (McDonald, 2009: 59). As a form of protest, yoghurt throwing goes back to the 1950s, and authorities pursued its popularity with the 'legendary "Law 4000/1958" according to which offenders were arrested, had their heads shaved and were paraded through the streets of Athens' (Kallergis, 2012). This explains to some degree why PASOK and other political parties in government issued a strongly-worded statement on the incident, which I quote from newspaper sources:

We condemn in the most unequivocal manner, today's unprovoked attack on the Deputy Minister of Education at the Polytechnic. Such acts tarnish the *spirit* of Independence Day and harm democracy itself ... no political force or group can be called progressive or democratic when *they espouse methods and practices that come from the past and return us to the past*. PASOK condemns the attack against the Deputy Minister of Education today in the Polytechnic, *condemns violence from wherever it comes from*.

The Democratic Left (then part of the government coalition) issued a statement that read: 'For the umpteenth time, we have witnessed attacks by the usual "revolutionaries". These belated fighters do not respect democracy nor honour the Polytechnic ... The progressive and democratic world should not tolerate such phenomena and behaviour. The Democratic Left strongly and bluntly condemns violence. *Violence is fascism, regardless of what cloak it wears.*'<sup>77</sup> This wholesale denunciation of even mild violence in the space of the Polytechnic campus brings out the different themes I have discussed so far: honouring heroes; emblemizing a progressive notion of time and democracy; and denouncing all violence of 'regardless of what cloak it wears'. The 'methods and practices of the past' are at once celebrated in sanctified remembrance of the uprising, and rejected as archaic and barbaric, as seen in the response to these small acts of resistance. The overblown response is connected to the ambitions of the government to uphold the abolition of the Academic Asylum Law in 2011 as detailed in Chapter Four.

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<sup>77</sup> See News247.gr (2012b) *Coffee thrown at secretary of education at the Polytechnic [Πέταξαν καφέδες στον υφυπουργό Παιδείας στο Πολυτεχνείο]* November 16. Available from: [http://www.news247.gr/eidiseis/politiki/petaksan\\_kafedes\\_ston\\_yfypourgo\\_paideias.2012910.html](http://www.news247.gr/eidiseis/politiki/petaksan_kafedes_ston_yfypourgo_paideias.2012910.html) (accessed 17 October 2015).

The dominant Polytechnic political myths are not only overly simplistic interpretations of the uprising that reduce it in the present to a national day of celebrating independence and democracy, with no space for informal contestation. This work on myth also seeks to concretely affect student political organisation and resistance, through the abolition of the AAL. Such critiques also take place *within* the university, as Centre and Right-wing political student groups (who dominate assemblies on many campuses) also participate in the denunciation of violence. In this sense, the space of the Polytechnic campus becomes a stage for wider debates in Greek society around extremism. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, according to reports, 'hooded men' attacked members of PASP (PASOK Youth) whilst they lay wreaths. More voices, this time of student groups, chimed in to reject violence; a PASP member stated that 'when such events occur, rejecting participation in the celebration of the Polytechnic by democratic forces, it makes a fool of its message.' He continued: 'Masked criminal activity tarnishes the message and anniversary of the Polytechnic, highlighting a new form of totalitarianism that threatens Greek society ... We are confident that the lovers of civil disorder, wherever they come from, will be put in the dustbin of history'<sup>78</sup> A Democratic Left group Youth member said: 'This is a distortion of [the Polytechnic's] meaning and can not be tolerated by the citizens' democratic consciousness. In this context we condemn in the strongest terms the violence and bullying that sully the memory of the rebellion.'<sup>79</sup> Clashes amongst students are also prevalent during annual student elections, where ballots are burnt, and fights lead to hospitalization.<sup>80</sup> Using similar language to the political parties in government to which they are affiliated, the student groups of the parties in government, critique violence. They do not enter into a discussion of the context of event, nor the nuances of the interaction - we do not even learn what the dispute at the commemoration was about. I consider such discourse to perpetuate the dominant political myth of the Polytechnic uprising as non-violent and sullied by any kind of association with violence.

We have seen how different political actors draw significantly on political myths of the uprising being 'non-violent' - rejecting any relationship between the 'memory', 'message' and 'spirit' of the uprising with violent action - in order to make statements grounded in the present. These statements seek to delegitimise the actions of

<sup>78</sup> See Ethnos.gr (2012) *Atrocities in the Polytechnic celebration [Αγριότητες στη γιορτή του Πολυτεχνείου] November 16*, Available from: <http://www.ethnos.gr/article.asp?catid=22768&subid=2&pubid=63738616> (accessed 17 October 2014).

<sup>79</sup> See Ethnos.gr (2012) *Atrocities in the Polytechnic celebration [Αγριότητες στη γιορτή του Πολυτεχνείου] November 16*, Available from: <http://www.ethnos.gr/article.asp?catid=22768&subid=2&pubid=63738616> (accessed 17 October 2014).

<sup>80</sup> <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2015/05/14/greek-student-election-new-democracy-youths-percentages-rising/>



perceived extremists, a group imagined to include many of the people I spoke to. The extreme centre position is being upheld by some students, who mark the 'distorted meanings' of others – and any contestation they may represent – for the 'dustbin of history'. The reactions to these moments within the commemoration is emblematic of the wider heavy-handed stance of the Greek state towards contestatory political action, which has become more intense since the events of December 2008 and the austerity measures introduced in 2010 (Vradis, 2012a-d; Dalakoglou 2012, 2013; Xenakis 2012).

In the following section I discuss the annual march to the American embassy, and how dominant political myths are performed through the simplified articulation of anti-dictatorial resistance and nationalism. I describe how the march is a heterogeneous crowd of thousands, and how participants of the march itself experience its affective atmospheres, and the ways in which this is connected to the contemporary socio-political context.

### **The Annual 17th of November Demonstration: Rituals of Walking**

The annual demonstration traces the same footsteps each year, from the Polytechnic to the American embassy. The US government and NATO are widely acknowledged as supporting the dictatorship of 1967-74 (Pedaliu, 2011) with Bill Clinton expressing regret during his 1999 Athens visit<sup>81</sup>, which Aphroditi recalled protesting in Chapter Four. The annual march is an inter-generational demonstration and is massively popular. Its popularity during my fieldwork was highlighted in comparison with other demonstrations in 2012 and 2013, aside from the ERT occupation, which were much smaller. Many participants express anger and sadness over this, including Chryssi. Chryssi is in her early twenties, an architecture student at the Polytechnic, based at the central campus. She is an active member of Kokkino, a Trotskyist group that is part of the SYRIZA coalition. She asks, 'Why is it that 50,000 people go on the 17th November demonstration, but you can't get the same numbers for anti-fascist demonstrations?'

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<sup>81</sup> He acknowledged the relationship, but stopped short of apologizing for US aid to the Junta. See Lacey M (1999) Clinton Tries To Subdue Greeks' Anger At America. *Nytimes.com*, Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/21/world/clinton-tries-to-subdue-greeks-anger-at-america.html> (accessed 19 October 2013).



34. Banner at the front of the Polytechnic demonstration, waiting to leave at 2pm. BREAD-EDUCATION-FREEDOM. 40 YEARS, THE FLAME AND THE STRUGGLES CONTINUE

The 2012 and 2013 marches bear the trace of the past, linking together past Novembers, but it differs in a major way to the march that Savvas describes in 1975: the proliferation of documentation devices. There are professional photographers everywhere, smart phones abound, tweets throughout the day<sup>82</sup> - some of which I will present as illustrations in this section - and YouTube footage online the same evening. On the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup>, I set off to the march's starting point on the Polytechnic campus. Central Athens metro stations are closed in an attempt to keep people away. The Polytechnic university gates are ceremoniously shut at 2pm, marked by an announcement, and the march towards the American embassy begins. At the front of the procession, PASP members carry the Greek flag that was hanging on the rails at the front of the university when the tanks crashed through. The flag is brought out every year for this occasion. As Savvas wrote in 1975: 'Ahead of the march, there is the bloodied flag of the Polytechnic, now a symbol of youth's struggle for liberty, carried by two students and two professors' (Savvas, 1975: 31). At the start of the march I find myself with a student group from the Polytechnic (the front of this bloc seen below), and ask a student why PASP students are carrying the flag this year. She says it is because they were inside at the time of the uprising, which is interesting

<sup>82</sup> See Masouras A (2012) Storify of 17th November. *Twitter*, Available from: <http://storify.com/asteris/greece-austerity-fraught-polytechnic-uprising-anni> (accessed 19 December 2012).

because PASOK was formed after the Junta fell in 1974. Usually the students who carry the flag are the biggest student group, but PASP have not been the dominant student group for some years.<sup>83</sup>



35. PASP with the flag. @keepquestioning 2012

In the unstable contemporary period of crisis, it could be argued that the relationship between the Polytechnic uprising and the Greek flag is one way in which some of the dominant political myths attempt to tell, or walk, a particular story about Greek national history through the streets of Athens. These practices perform an enduring anti-imperialist gesture, which is tied, by some, to contemporary concerns regarding the Troika. There are few other Greek flags to be seen on the 17<sup>th</sup> November march because of the rise of Golden Dawn, who have claimed the flag as a nationalist symbol so that its presence at demonstrations now has neo-fascist connotations. Alexander considers the 'role of memorialization as a form of national collective consciousness ... [that] both underscores and undermines national unity at a time of increasing fragmentation and uncertainty' (2013: 594). The flag is an artefact that

<sup>83</sup> It is difficult to ascertain exact results of student elections, as each group has their own count, and many ballot boxes are destroyed. However, it is clear that PASP no longer dominate the student elections. According to Greek Reporter, in 2013 DAP (affiliated with New Democracy) collected 42% of the votes, PASP 15%, PKS (affiliated with the Communist Party) 14.5%; EAAK 9.5 %; AREN (Left Union, affiliated with SYRIZA) 5.5%. See Greek Reporter, 2013.

powerfully intermingles the uprising with the dominant social imaginary of the Greek nation. This is not to say that nationalism and radicalism are incompatible, but points towards the way in which this dominant political myth celebrates the event as part of Greek national progressive history.

The usage of the flag within the 1973 Uprising itself is worth noting. In a book about the events, the principal of the Polytechnic at the time of the uprising, Konstantinos Konofagos, states that: 'Over the Polytechnic gate at Patision Street, the blue and white flag was waving. No other flag stood by its side. The blue and white flag remained the only symbol of the uprising for all four days ... The Greek symbol of freedom' (Konofagos, 1982: 32, in Kornetis, 2008: 340). This performatively links the uprising to the 1820s War of Independence, when the flag which came into usage, symbolising 'freedom or death' (Hart, 1992). The way in which the uprising is folded into the history and social imaginary of the Greek nation-state is central to the tensions that endure within the space and time of the contemporary commemoration and that were indeed also present in 1973. Different political demands, desires and imaginations of the future co-exist within the occupation of the Polytechnic occupation. The categorization of the occupiers is contested, but we know that there were different factions of the Communist Party (despite the leadership denouncing the occupation), anarchists, Maoists, more centre-left groups, social democrats, and loosely or non-affiliated persons (Panourgia, 2009; Kornetis 2013). Within the context of military dictatorship, the question of openness and gaining support was crucial, and according to some historical accounts, the occupiers clashed over the notion of appealing to wider Greek society. As Kornetis writes, 'Pappas, the Secretary of the Coordinating Committee, indicates the limits of revolt, which aspired to be national and radical at the same time: "When everyone is singing the national Anthem, swinging Greek flags, you cannot be waving the sickle and hammer"' (Pappas, 2003: 246 in Kornetis, 2008: 234). Here, the flag serves to unite Greek people in an attempt to flatten out political differences and simplify the diverse aims and commitments of anti-Junta resistance. The dominance of the political myth that ties the Uprising to a national day of liberation from the Junta, with the bloody flag as a symbol of national suffering, is such that it is thought of as part of a timeline, inexorably linked to the invasion of Cyprus, and the fall of the dictatorship, and as a result it 'stops being an important independent event, with its own demands' (Anagnostopoulou, 2013).



36. Banner at the demonstration, 2013. 1973: OUT WITH THE USA – OUT WITH NATO. 2013: OUT WITH NATO, THE UN AND THE IMF. THE OLIGARCHY WILL PAY FOR THE CRISIS

As Papadogiannis details in his recently published account of Left-wing Youth Politics, Lesiure, and Sexuality in Post-Dictatorship Greece, ‘despite their differences with KNE, the Youth of PASOK, and RF, the autonomous young left-wingers participated in the annual much that took place on the anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising on 17 of November’ (2015: 94). Similarly, despite the many differences between different groups and parties, the crowd in their tens of thousands<sup>84</sup> take the same route is taken every year, and I am interested in trying to account for the affective atmosphere of the march, or ‘the shared ground from which subjective states and their attendant feelings and emotions emerge’ (Anderson, 2009: 79). What can the changing atmosphere, at different points in the march, and in different years, tell us about the contemporary meaning of invoking the Polytechnic uprising in relation to the everyday political action of participants? In 2012 I walk with different students, as well as meet photographer and journalist friends. The procession is organised in different blocs, by political parties, groups, student unions, trade unions and more fluid groups of affiliations, such as the anarchist bloc. This year for the first time LGBTQ groups marched for the first time, and the brothers of Shehzad Luqman, murdered by Golden Dawn that year, were present in a bloc of migrant solidarity. We walk through the city, shouting chants old and new, including those from the Polytechnic uprising itself.

“EAM-ELAS-Polytechnic ... The Junta didn’t end in 1973!”

<sup>84</sup> As with all demonstrations, an accurate number of attendants is hard to come by, with some reports saying 10,000 and others 50,000.



Linking arms, while protected on the sides of the bloc by people holding wooden flag sticks (called *perifrousi*), themselves flanked by riot police, I speak with Polytechnic chemistry students. Anna, a chemistry student, tells me that going on the march makes her feel 'closer to the revolution' and 'wonder how they had the power to overthrow the Junta then' when today 'there are so many Juntas'. This notion of there being many juntas is re-iterated in most of my conversations, and is explored in more detail in the following chapter. Many of the banners refer to the 'new Juntas' of the Troika. This affective 'feeling closer' perhaps intimates the power of repeated practices of remembrance or 'celebrations of recurrence', made possible through 'calendrically observed repetition' (Connerton, 1989: 65) and the tradition of annual invocation, as explored in Chapter Four.

The embodied practice of walking the same Athenian streets, themselves the site of contentious political action over the past four decades, brings people together in their thousands, year after year. As Kallianos has noted, in demonstrations, 'walking becomes both an individual practice and a collective operation. Footsteps collide, intersect, and separate; the same pattern is repeated over and over again' (2014: 97). The heterogeneity of the protesters brings different tensions of the Polytechnic commemoration to the fore. There are many different blocs of different sizes. As Diana, a law student, says:

The march is very much KKE and people of specific backgrounds ... but in rallies and celebration of the Polytechnic, autonomous groups destroy things ... So that marks it [the demonstration] as well. I see it as something ... very old. It has a very strict form, every year the same.



37. Crowd from above, 2013. @JoannaP\_\_

This relates to what Kallianos calls the 'ritualistic tone in their walk ... as if in a procession, the rhythm is set by the slogans shouted from the megaphone,' which he analyses as spatial practices (2014: 97). These spatial practices of walking have, since 2008, involved 'tactical walking' which he considers to be improvised practices, following Gardiner 'in response to the concrete demands of the situation at hand' (2001: 172 in Kallianos 2014: 98). He sees the ritualistic walking as connected to more spontaneous re-assemblments of groups, which 'extend the repertoires of resistance' (Dalakoglou, 2012: 54) and leaving different kinds of traces on the city (Kallianos, 2014: 99). In 2012, everyone wondered how the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> would end, with hopes it would be 'quiet' but at the same time wanting 'something' to happen; this something I took to be regarding the traces of Syntagma 2011 or December 2008. The night before, a freelance photographer asked me if I was prepared - which is to say, whether I have a gas mask - as the tear gas used by the riot police is excessive and part of a weekly repertoire (Hatzopoulos and Kambouri, 2013).

Once the march reached the American embassy in the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup>, the traditional end-point, people continued to walk towards the Israeli embassy, in protest against the Israeli attack on Gaza at the time. A line of overturned riot police vans blocked the way, and after hours of waiting around, sharing stories of exhaustion, people dispersed. The Communist Party bloc eventually made its way to the Israeli embassy. Later that night, twitter came alive with reports of 'anarchists fighting in the streets of Exarcheia with the police', which Vradis calls a 'ritualized rioting' (2012a), and 95 people were detained in Athens.<sup>85</sup> I received text messages to see if we are OK. Talking to people in Exarcheia afterwards, there were feelings of regret that 'nothing happened'. What could have happened? There is much ambiguity related to this desire for 'something to happen'. Before the march, Iannis, a member of RAPAN-SAFN, which is part of EAAK, told me that 'we believe in fighting physically against the police, against the state. We don't believe in the anarchist way of fighting person on person ... we fight as a group'. He stated that there are 'three words to conserve this action: massive anti-violence by the population'. He told me he wouldn't go on the march, but I saw him there. I asked him how it was afterwards, and he says, 'Tiring - we walked for seven hours'. This ritual of walking as being 'exhausting' links to the general exhaustion expressed in relation to ongoing anti-austerity resistance. People were tired of waiting for something to change, and tired in general. There were less

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<sup>85</sup> See From The Greek Streets (2012) *7,000 police guarding Athens and record number of metro stations closed as November 17 polytechnic uprising anniversary demonstration set to start, November 17*. Available from: <http://blog.occupiedlondon.org/2012/11/17/7000-police-guarding-athens-and-record-number-of-metro-stations-closed-as-november-17-polytechnic-uprising-anniversary-demonstration-set-to-start/> (accessed 25 September 2015).

people than in usual years, people say, because of the proliferation of strikes and protests in October and December 2012. People I spoke to at the Polytechnic campus in the days before and after the march speak of fatigue and describe the march as something that could afford to be missed in the context of intense and sustained political activity.

In 2013, the affective atmosphere of the annual march was markedly more 'intense'. Many people avoid the march altogether because of the increased police presence, the threat of arrest and because, as Antonis tells me, 'the level of violence in everyday life is too high'. Ninety-nine people were detained whilst walking down to the Polytechnic according to reports,<sup>86</sup> and held in cramped police cells until the early hours of the morning, for reasons such as carrying objects to assist against tear gas. Eight-thousand riot police accompanied the march to the American embassy, which moved at a faster pace than 2012 and other recent demonstrations. People on the march were talking about how strange it felt, and that the atmosphere was surreal – 'It is a surreal time,' people would often tell me during the winter of 2013. I started the march with Ero and Sofia, the chemistry students from Chapter Four. As the march began, we linked arms and chanted, marching in synchronous steps.

As the march paused at Klafthmonos square, I joined a group of older people, in their mid thirties, who identify as non-aligned communists and organize workshops and events at a self-organised Workers' Club in an Athenian neighbourhood. They were very tense, because one of their friends (Grigoris, who we will meet later in the thesis) had been detained and they had no information about him. We shared stories as we paced through central Athens, and discussed the 'dead language' of the Traditional Left, with Xenia, which at the time made me think of Badiou's then-recent interventions on what he called *langue de bois* (wooden language) in relation the 'urgent' situation in Greece. He had argued that 'it is not the sympathetic and unavoidable language of movementist democracy that will save us ... this is too poor a language for a situated discussion of the future of emancipatory actions' (2013). This was a sentiment shared by the group of people involved in the Worker's Club, who were more interested in local solidarity initiatives. I spent many evenings there singing, dancing, and making posters with unemployed groups. When we got to the American embassy, Stephanos was anxious to get out of the area. He bristled ahead of us, while Thanos reassured me that Stephanos is a veteran, he knows what is going

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<sup>86</sup> According to the Associated Press. See Nellas D (2013) Thousands in Greece march in memory of 1973 revolt. *Associated Press*. Available from: <http://news.yahoo.com/thousands-greece-march-memory-1973-revolt-174613072.html> (accessed 19 October 2015).



on, so we should just follow him. I was the only one from the group who had to return back through the riot police lines to the centre, where I was staying in Exarcheia. Thanos realized that he left his laptop at someone's house and he needed it to send a draft of the newspaper he works on the following day. We decided to return back to Exarcheia. All the streets coming off the main roads were lined with riot police. We walked through Kolonaki holding hands to give the impression that we were a couple; he thought it would work because I 'look harmless' and 'like a foreigner'. We almost got to the Parko, when we heard bangs and screams, and people emerged from a sidestreet holding their heads and crying, 'We can't see, we can't see'. We went to help them; they had been tear-gassed. We stayed with them for a few minutes. One of them recognized me and said, 'You're the one who was asking all the questions at the meeting'.

Meanwhile, Thanos noticed that there was a man standing alone, chewing gum and watching us from across the road. He had noticed him earlier, and was convinced that we were being followed. We went to a nearby kebab shop where there were people enjoying their Sunday evening. The man who had been watching us came into the shop, and continued to look at us, and now started talking into his phone. We stayed there for around thirty minutes, but it felt a lot longer. The man didn't leave, and Thanos became shaken. I tried to assuage his fears, and convince him that everything was fine, that we should just leave, and we did. The man also left and started to follow us. We couldn't just stop in the street, giving him the impression that we were doing something suspicious. Thanos was five minutes away from where he had to go, but he didn't want to be followed to his destination because it is the home of a prominent and public face of the 'antagonistic movement', so we walked in another direction, to the perimeter of Exarcheia. The man left us, and Thanos went home without his laptop.

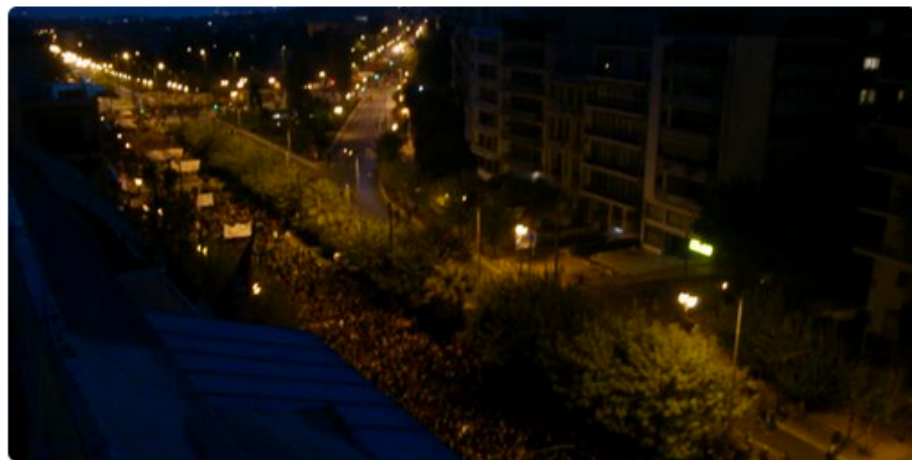
I recount this episode to highlight the affects of fear and suspicion that were palpable in November 2013, and to relate them to the dominant political myths of the uprising that I have been discussing in this chapter, through what McManus calls the 'instrumentalisation of fear' (2011). She describes affective efforts of this politics as being an inherently sovereign endeavour, and 'focused on capturing a specific affect, fear, and galvanizing that fear so as to demand and command a subject' (2011: 6). What happens to questions of agency here? Feelings of fear are 'sad' affects, following Spinoza, and within such a scheme they are tied them to an individuating, disempowering and diminished agential capacity (McManus, 2011: 6). However, while we have heard and felt the tangible fears of participants, of police and neo-

Fascist violence, and of structural violence of the state, there are ways in which the politics of fear works as an 'anticipatory orientation,' which 'demands specificity in order to act' (*Ibid.*). This idea of an anticipatory orientation understands fear as 'compelling insofar as it grips the subject; but ... capricious insofar as its affective indeterminacy needs to be made determinate' (*Ibid.*). As such, the rising intensity of the atmosphere of 2013's demonstration in relation to 2012 can be understood as people maneuvering their comportments towards determinate action, which could be grasped in the initiation of broader anti-fascist alliances, anti-detention centre contestation, twelve week university strikes, weekly support of 595 dismissed cleaners from the Ministry of Finance, and the mass support for the occupation of ERT, as I discuss in the following chapters. Indeed, in spite of the climate of fear and heightened oppression, the 17<sup>th</sup> November demonstration in 2013 was 'massive' according to Irini, who spent the demonstration documenting the march from above, taking photographs to capture the crowds and share on twitter with an international audience. 'It just kept going and going,' she said.



Joanna P. @JoannaP\_\_\_ · 17 Nov 2013

Η ιστορία γράφεται με ανυπακοή Protesters chanting: History is written with civil disobedience #17ngr #rbnews



← ↻ 15 ★ 8 ⋮

38. Crowd from above, 2013, @JoannaP\_\_\_

### **'No One Died in the Polytechnic': Political Myths of the Far Right**

While the government worked on dominant political myths in order to maintain the 'extreme' centre; to try to get rid of the AAL through the production of the Polytechnic campus as sheltering extremism; to delegitimize contemporary political action as violent; and to construct a teleological narrative of democracy, Golden Dawn go further and publicly denounce the uprising, saying that its events were a conspiracy,

and that no one died. The traces of the dictatorship are felt with Golden Dawn's neo-fascist practices; the group publicly state that they were inspired to start their party in the early 1990s after having visited the junta members in prison. Indeed, the former Colonel Papadopoulos 'founded in 1984 the organization EPEN from his prison cell, where he had been sentenced for the coup. The founder and current leader of Golden Dawn, Michaloliakos, was the first president of EPEN Youth Sector (Dalakoglou, 2013: 287).<sup>87</sup>

A few days before the 2012 commemoration, Golden Dawn announced that no one died in the Polytechnic Uprising, and released brochures on the matter in the city of Kalamata.<sup>88</sup> Calling the story a 'fairytale', the brochures 'question the existence of the dead in the student revolt of '73' and claim to 'give a reward to anyone who will present evidence showing that there were dead ... not the tale of the Polytechnic, and the fake dead'. Furthermore, they state that 'the Polytechnic Generation is responsible for our misery. Jail for all thieves!' They illustrate the text an image of Maria Damanaki, the voice of the uprising's radio station with Papachristos, and now an MP. The claim that no one died has been a recurrent theme in right-wing discourse since December 1973. Golden Dawn's allegations spark renewed discussion over the contentious issue of deaths in the uprising. Greek news programmes and websites discuss research findings, adding a small map with the dead marked on it, which is illegible on the computer screen. The idea that cartography adds legitimacy to the research findings is interesting, reflecting the concern with 'facts' and 'truth' in relation to the plurality of political myths that circulate about the Polytechnic uprising. I recall something Papachristos said, when I asked him about the experience of writing about the uprising, a subject on which he has published many books.

It [the uprising] was something that happened naturally. But as years go by, there are more people who criticize and say that we were wrong. If there wasn't the Dutch man with the documentary and the photographer from the Acropole hotel who shot the photos of the tanks going into the university, me who was there backstage, tell me how would I be able to prove it? Not even if I was an elephant.

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<sup>87</sup> Following the murder of Pavlos Fyssas, Michaloliakos was arrested in September 2013 and was imprisoned for the maximum eighteen months of pre-trial detention. He was released in July 2015 and is not permitted to leave the Attica region. The trial for the murder of Fyssas began in September 2015 and continues. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-24314319>

<sup>88</sup> See News247.gr (2012c) *Golden Dawn: No to the fake dead of the Polytechnic* [Χρυσή Αυγή: Όχι στους ψεύτικους νεκρούς του Πολυτεχνείου]. Available from: [http://news247.gr/eidiseis/politiki/xrysh\\_aygh\\_oxi\\_stoys\\_pseutikoys\\_nekrous\\_toy\\_polytexneioy.2009872.html](http://news247.gr/eidiseis/politiki/xrysh_aygh_oxi_stoys_pseutikoys_nekrous_toy_polytexneioy.2009872.html) (accessed 17 October 2015).

The fragility of evidence and the act of making truth-claims based on lived experience is what makes the different political myths of the Polytechnic uprising so contested. Following Golden Dawn's announcement, Lena, the law student from Chapter Four, seeks me out to tell me that her feelings towards the Polytechnic commemoration has changed. When she heard what Golden Dawn said, she tells me: 'It affected me emotionally, and it made me realise that the Polytechnic is meaningful to me, and it has to be reclaimed, as it is still important, if people like Golden Dawn are trying to deny it even happened.'



39. Tank tweet, 2012, source unknown



This encounter and the prominence of Golden Dawn's statement in the mainstream media illustrate the potentialities of different political myths of the Polytechnic uprising, even within a climate of intense disillusionment with the metapolitefsi period and the Polytechnic Generation. The kind of threat that Golden Dawn pose – while material and real – here lies in the way in which they are working on a myth of the Polytechnic uprising that is actively competing for the desires and imaginations of the 'Greek people'. To what extent is Golden Dawn's mythmaking a continuation of that of the mass media and political elite who also denounce the Polytechnic Generation? The resurfacing of such narratives, as Portelli has recently said, is a warning to European post-war nation-states. He argues that the emphasis of *national* resistance following the war, and the suppression of fascist accounts, has allowed the 'hidden' voices to resurface in the present (Portelli, 2013). Stephanos, our 'veteran' from the march, is in his late thirties, a communist who is active in ANTARSYA and the Workers' Club. He told me many stories about continuing anti-fascist action 'like my grandfather' and he told me that he made some posters which were used by the historian Liakos in a student seminar. I found them on the street (see the next page). We talked about contemporary Greek fascism and myth:

OK let's put it another way. What do the fascists have? What is the fascist rhetoric? It's abnormal, it's not logic, or enlightenment. It's a myth, it's mythical. It produces passions for them; they are passionate. Let's talk about the Left rhetoric. It's logical, you know what the Left says: make a logical choice, in favour of your interests, your class-based interests. It is logical. Ok. It doesn't have a myth. Apart from the Polytechnic. This is why Golden Dawn is always trying to puncture the myth of Polytechnic. Of course, they use lies; we know that. We [communists] speak logically to the people, and in a non-logical situation – the crisis – and the Fascists do not speak logically. Who gains more? Them. So we have to find the sentimental equivalent.



Here, the affective power of myths is attested to, although through the contrast – problematic in my view – of the logic of ‘the Left’ with the illogical neo-Fascist. This brings to mind Walter Benjamin’s observation that the ‘vitalist right appreciated the presence of a dimension of experience that rationalism neglected at its peril’ (McCole, 1993: 177). For Stephanos, the currency of the myth of Polytechnic uprising in the social imaginary of ‘the Left’ is that it is their only myth. This account is unsettled in Chapter Seven, in which I discuss other myths that are worked on in the Polytechnic campus during the commemoration. The construction of a ‘sentimental equivalent’ to Fascist myths, centred around Greek nationalism, for Stephanos, is to build solidarity practices, as discussed in Chapter Four.

## **Conclusion**

Actively producing a temporality of linear progressive time, the dominant political myths are engaged in attempts to maintain the ‘extreme’ centre and the then-government’s legitimacy as a ‘modern democracy’. I explored the ways in which this political myth simplifies anti-dictatorial resistance, omits violent and radical political action, and folds a reified version of the uprising as an event of heroic political action into the national narrative. I then considered how this political myth aimed to reinforce the premise of the then-government as the peaceful, safe centre, in part through legitimizing the discourse of the ‘two extremes’ of the Far-Right and Far-Left.

The space of the Polytechnic is produced as ‘sheltering extremism’ but during the days of the commemoration, it is also venerated as a site for mourning dead heroes of the past, through the formalized remembrance practices of wreath-laying. Related to this is the political myth of the ‘Polytechnic Generation’, whereby the protagonists of the uprising are simultaneously celebrated as heroes, and normalised as accountable for the current crisis, as one political myth intertwines the period of the metapolitefsi with the Polytechnic uprising. Lastly, I explored the ritual of the annual march from the Polytechnic campus to the American embassy on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, which brings together diverse groups of people. The march helps materialise dominant political myths through the markers of a specific kind of Leftist nationalism, while also exposing the affective registers of fear and suspicion, and desires for confrontation. I have argued that dominant political myths are grounded in present widespread anxieties about extremism of the Left and Right, and work towards eliminating narratives of the multiplicity of anti-dictatorship resistant practices within the Polytechnic uprising, through perpetuating the ‘non-violent heroism’ of the

Polytechnic fighters, and the dead. These are attempts to delegitimize contemporary political action, and the instrumentalisation of fear is keenly felt by people I spoke to. These widespread anxieties are evident in the different affective registers of the annual demonstrations to the American embassy. The following chapters look at 'counteractive' political myths of the Polytechnic. Chapter Six explores invocations that contest the official political myths and the affects of fear that they engage with through analogous gesture, generated in attempts to mobilise indignation and collective anti-austerity action.

## CHAPTER SIX

### POLITICAL MYTHS OF A CONTEMPORARY JUNTA: INVOKING THE POLYTECHNIC THROUGH ANALOGOUS GESTURE

#### Introduction

Whereas in the last chapter I focused on dominant political myths and official remembrance practices, in this chapter I analyse the remembrance practices that take place in specific interior spaces of the Polytechnic campus. Over the days of the commemoration, the contemporary relevance of the Polytechnic is repeatedly proclaimed in remembrance practices by different political collectivities, in the form of images, text, utterances and gestures. As Alexander has argued, the 'act of memorialisation can work as a form of pilgrimage – of "being there", of witnessing and testifying – in which performance enacts an attribution of authenticity and a staking of individual and collective claims' (Winter 2010b in Alexander, 2013: 594-5). I explore these collective claims as interventions on the present, political myths that contribute towards the production of counter-spaces and temporalities, aiming to disrupt the dominant political myths and mobilise collective action. The phrase 'The Polytechnic Lives' refers to the 1973 uprising itself, as well as referencing the Lambrakides movement of the 1960s, which rallied around the slogan of 'He Lives'<sup>89</sup>, and is used in a multiplicity of ways. The slogans below are proclaimed in polyphony, uttered in conversation, and emboldened within pamphlets produced by different groups.

The Polytechnic Lives! Follow the path laid down by November  
The Polytechnic lives in the struggle of today  
The Flame of the Polytechnic continues to burn  
Uprisings do not enter museums  
1973: Dictatorship – NATO – Exile. 2013: Memorandum – EU –  
Fascism

The act of asserting the vivification of the Polytechnic goes beyond solely uttering the phrase itself. In this chapter and the following chapter, I explore how the experience of making, re-making, and sharing different political myths is meaningful for people, in terms of the spaces, temporalities and affect generated. I discuss how these practices produce the Polytechnic as a counter-space (Lefebvre, 1991) during the days of commemoration; an experimental pedagogical space, but one which also allows for a different way of imagining, talking about and acting upon the contemporary socio-political situation. I explore how the temporalities fabricated through dialectical images, enable a passing down of what Benjamin describes as 'history of *discontinuity* ... composed of those "rough and jagged places" at which the continuity of tradition

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<sup>89</sup> Z, the 1969 film by Costa-Gavras, covers this topic. The American phonetic 'z' - Zei means 'he (or she) lives' in Greek.



breaks down, and the objects reveal “cracks” providing a hold for anyone wishing to get beyond these points’ (cited in Buck-Morss, 1991: 290). Lastly, I explore how questions of political subjectivity are negotiated and how a range of affects, generated through political myth-making, animate critical political agency (McManus, 2011). Matthaïos, an engineering student and member of United Left who I see on demonstrations and at the commemoration, tells me:

We have used the event to build a mythology of the Polytechnic for ourselves - but it is used by the state and dominant forces as mythology. Of course the radical Left didn’t let this happen without a battle, so each time it tries to change meaning given to the revolt by the regime. Whenever there are struggles it takes on new meaning - that is the only reason it has meaning.

In a sense, Matthaïos encapsulates the ambition of this project’s scope, as well as marking the ‘radical Left’ as the heirs of the uprising who refuse to accept the meanings attached to it by ‘dominant forces’. I draw attention to the ways in which the political myths that Matthaïos speaks of come from fragmentary perspectives that attempt to resist national historiography, and dominant political myth-making. This concern with and embracing of fragments is a position that, following Pandey, is ‘not only a marker of resistance to dominant structures,’ but an ‘analytical strategy’ that is an ‘antidote to the hubris of totalizing theories’ (Chibber, 2014: 19). As such, the tensions that are inherent amongst diverse practices of political myth-making come to the fore. Considering such practices as forms of everyday indirect resistance, I aim to contribute to recent work on anti-austerity political action in Greece, which aims to de-orientalise and de-pathologise indirect resistance, by ‘moving beyond its easy dismissal as irrational, incoherent or inconsequential’ (Theodossopoulos, 2014b: 500).

This chapter specifically deals with political myth making of the Polytechnic uprising that work through analogous gestures, and the creation of dialectical images (Benjamin, 1999). The temporality that these political myths create is one that encompasses 1973 and the present at once. I discuss the ways in which specific speech acts, artefacts, and practices perform analogies between the Polytechnic and the present. I argue that the content of these political myths, as well as the embodied practices of making and sharing these political myths, contest and unsettle the dominant political myths of the uprising. Analogies between the Polytechnic uprising and the present are continually drawn in conversations during the commemoration, as people talk between the buildings or by stalls. Iannis, from Chapter Five, tells me,

standing beside his stall: 'Other groups see it as a celebration. Maybe not in their speech or words, but in their actions. We want to organise people, in order to have a Front. We try to connect the past with the present and future.' This notion of connecting the past to the present and the determination to act are what differentiate political myth from historical narrative. For Iannis, the commemoration is not about celebration, but organization, and the ways in which participants describe their actions within the commemoration is arguably a way in which to orient their resistant subjectivity, both individually and collectively. Participants constantly engage in differentiating various political groups in terms of their words and deeds during the Polytechnic commemoration, marking of political and ethical boundaries. Iannis continues to elaborate the process of political myth making:

What you'll see surprisingly is everyday life and imaginations of the future are connoted to the Polytechnic. Every year! This year, the Polytechnic is more relevant than ever. Our view is that conditions have not remained exactly the same; there are several differences, but the youth have to have their own radical view, and not be oppressed by the state; that is the connecting thread.

During the days of the commemoration, the Polytechnic campus is a space of affective encounter, as discussed in Chapter Four, with many interactions between people from different groups, who are occupying the terrain inside and outside the Polytechnic side-by-side. However, distinctions are constantly marked between the ways in which different collectivities make and share political myths of the Polytechnic uprising. Through this process of marking boundaries, participants articulate political subjectivity, as well as through the content of the work on myth they collectively create. The different moments that I discuss in this chapter concern aesthetic and practical aspects of political myth-making that bring the past together with the present through slogans, artefacts, graffiti, and narratives. First, I look at the slogans and graffiti that enact a correspondence between the dictatorship and the present. I then explore the dedication-making practices of an artist-activist as a way of discussing the different affective registers and forms of embodied resistance that are narrated through multi-sensorial visual artefacts. I then turn to the exhibition-making practices of one particular group, Synaspismos Youth. Lastly, I turn to look at the ERT workers' broadcast from within the Polytechnic in November 2013 and how it is important that they chose to occupy the Polytechnic campus on the fortieth anniversary of the uprising. Throughout the chapter is a discussion of the production of dialectical images, and how counteractive political myths mobilise affects of fear to contest structural, State, and neo-fascist violence, as well as hope to position the Polytechnic uprising as a trope for contemporary political action.

### **Polytechnic Dedications: Unfulfilled Desires and Fears in the Present**

On the first night of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising in 2013, as I walked the perimeter of the campus to see how things were outside, I noticed around five people tying small ceramic rectangular tiles to the railings of the university campus that had been destroyed by military tanks in 1973. One showed an image of a neo-classical Polytechnic building, and the other a tank, both iconic images based on photographs, reproduced and circulated innumerable times through newspapers, television, pamphlets, posters, cartoons and so forth.



42. Votive - tank

I asked the small-statured woman who seemed to be directing others if I could help, and what was going on. She introduced herself as Vera, and she explained to me that she had made these tiles: one was a *tama*, or votive, and the other was a *katadesmos*, or curse tablet, and she was leaving them as offerings for people to take away. Each one was wrapped in old newspaper, and as they moved on to another site within the campus – by the crushed railing and the wreaths – she gave me one. Below, the votives can be seen hanging from the trees where in 2012 the Deputy Minister of Education had been ‘attacked’ by students, as recounted in Chapter Five.



43. Votives on the Polytechnic railing

Vera Siderlis was part of the occupation of the Polytechnic in 1973, and told me that this was the first time she'd been back since then. Tama are symbolic objects in Greece: they are dedications that were deposited at ancient Greek sanctuaries. Desposited 'either by individuals or by representatives acting on behalf of an entire community ... they represent personal religion as much as the communal religion of the polis' (Kindt, 2009: 221). As Vera elaborates in a newspaper interview:

Tama is for me, and I imagine for others, the physical form of desire, expectation, hope ... the katadesmos, or curse tablet, is an ancient object that was of lead sheet, which had curses written on them, usually related to emotional relationships and procedures, such as unfair judgments by judges. Here I refer to the repression, that it was socially unjust to enter the Polytechnic with tanks. The small plate depicting the tank symbolizes the undesirable suppression, and the tama symbolizes the desirable vow of rebellion. The tama, of course, requires an unfulfilled desire, so one appeals something sacred, as a last hope to fulfill. For me, the sanctuary is humanity and human suffering, the social fabric which I consider sacred, has been broken. It is unfulfilled and attacked with lies and I hope to mobilise people – people have come here to dissolve our life, under various pretexts, and people either do not understand, or fall into a depression and are left unfulfilled (Siderlis in Xigaki, 2013).

The whole narrative of the political myth of the Polytechnic uprising is conjured up in two images which crystallise the events of the uprising – the occupation of the university buildings is represented by the neo-classical pillars of the university and state violence by the tank. The practice of distributing these objects during the commemoration, using the materiality of the railings, draws upon ancient Greek ritual practices as a way of opening up discussion about unfulfilled desires and curses that plague contemporary Greek society, after (at that point) three years of ongoing austerity measures. She speaks in affective terms, and connects hope to the image of the Polytechnic uprising. The images etched into Siderlis's offerings thus call to mind Benjamin's description of wish-images, images of the past which are 'dialectically ambivalent...mystifying and yet containing "sparks of hope"' for future emancipation (cited in Buck-Morss, 1991: 337).

Contemporary discussion of votives, rather than merely interpreting them as acts of symbolic exchange with specific gods (Burkert, 1987 in Kindt, 2009: 222), has turned to analyzing the public nature of their display, which 'adds another a layer of symbolic "investment" which is ultimately also directed towards the members of the worshipping community itself' (Kindt 2009: 222). This makes Vera Siderlis' action of leaving the votives for people to take away particularly interesting. Her 'community' here consists of people who are passing by or selling goods on Stournari, or who go to the Polytechnic campus at night for meetings and discussions during the commemoration.<sup>90</sup> All the dedications were all gone by the following morning. I am fascinated by these objects, which have the potential to allow for different stories to be told, relating the past to the present. The dedications that Siderlis offers to the public of the Polytechnic might be considered part of an artistic practice, but she is also hoping to make a political intervention. Furthermore, the invitation of reciprocity to other politically active persons at the commemoration that evening parallel the artistic interventions she makes at feminist demonstrations against domestic violence during other times of the year.

The intentions of their maker suggest we might think of these dedications as participatory, distributed objects which take on new meaning in the space and temporality of the commemoration. Unable to trace the journeys that these votives made overnight, I nevertheless propose to consider the votives as what Edwards refers to as 'tactile objects that elicit affect' (Edwards, 2012) in the sense that they are

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<sup>90</sup> That evening, the anti-fascist alliance was meeting, and discussing the 'two extremes', which I draw from in this and the previous chapter.

sensorial artefacts, which go beyond the visual. This is an approach that goes beyond the analysis of signification of images to a specific 'reader', and acknowledges the 'figural excess' of images (Bottici 2014) in the sense that their meanings cannot be fully analysed. Instead, I take them here as crystallizations of political myth which use affect to attempt to mobilise people, with an ambiguity around what form it might take. I will develop this approach in considering the exhibition-making practices of students.

Within the spaces of the Polytechnic campus during the days of the commemoration, there are many self-made posters and collages telling the chronology of the Polytechnic uprising with images and text. Different groups claim spaces within the campus, and in this section I look at the practices of one such group, as a way of opening up discussion of the themes that emerged during my fieldwork. In November 2012, the night before the campus opened to the public, and before students broke in to fight each other for space, as Natalia describes in Chapter Four, I was invited to a building near the Polytechnic that is home to Synapismos Youth, the largest group within the SYRIZA coalition, by one of their members. Five young women were sitting around a laptop screen, making posters. They used Google image search to find and download images for their posters, which they were making by hand. They showed me a poster in-progress, one student pointing out the images: 'Hitler, Argentina and Chile (that one is about the IMF), the dictatorships in Spain and Portugal, Mussolini in Italy. It's all about capitalism.' Another of the students, who said they were 'finding ways in which to honour those people [the uprising's protagonists],' described the process of making posters: 'It makes me feel closer to the revolution.' This process of making is meaningful, constituting an affective and collective endeavour. The images, the social relations between the people participating, the act of creating such ephemeral representations, and the experience of the audience encountering them within the memorialization, all have to be taken into consideration when discussing these artefacts as part of the work on myth.

When the campus opened to the public, I went to see the posters in situ in the 'exhibition space' of Synaspismos Youth, usually a studio for architecture students. In the exhibition, numerous A5 postcards were hung from the ceiling as can be seen below.





44. Dialectical cards hanging exhibition

On one side of each card is an image showing a scene from the dictatorship or the uprising, and on the other side an image of contemporary Greece. The historical images are recognizable reproductions of the same black and white and sepia images of the past, which can be found in every pamphlet and poster across the commemoration, and the contemporary images have been widely circulated online. They are made to be turned over by hand. These visual statements about the contemporary moment, however crude, are not a passive or superficial engagement with history. They constitute an active intervention on the present, through creating a temporality that considers the past legible in the present in a specific flash. The content of the images themselves speak to the issues that matter to the students within the current political situation. Discussing the 'stories told with and around photographs' (Edwards, 2002: 229), where space and interaction is particularly important, also allows us to discuss affective agency in relation to these images of political myths. Edwards asks: What are the 'material and affective performances through which photographs might become a form of history or engagement with, and reclamation of the past?' (*Ibid.*) In other words, how might the physical gesture of turning these images from one side to the other, engender a 'powerful connection between the photographic object, as a relic held in the hand and the physical connection to the subject' (*Ibid.*)?

I analyse these artefacts as dialectical images, which 'are neither aesthetic nor arbitrary,' as Buck-Morss reminds us (1991: 339), and it is important to take seriously

each photographic coupling of the past and the present, as an interlocutor into specific contemporary experiences of political action and state or neo-fascist violence, which aim to mobilise political action. I also explore how these images generate affect and how their themes are narrated within the commemoration in conversation and storytelling. The notion of photographs as 'tactile objects that elicit affect' posits photographic meaning to be 'made through a confluence of sensory experience in which the visual is only part of the efficacy of the image (Edwards, 2012: 230). These images, within the context of the Polytechnic commemoration, and situated within the campus itself, take on particular resonances. They cannot be understood as signs alone, but as a 'phenomenologically and sensorially integrated medium, embodied and experienced by both [their] makers and [their] users' (228). Specific relations between political myth, political subjectivity, affective agency, and contemporary political action are negotiated and narrated around these images within the commemoration.

I consider them to be dialectical images, in the sense that they are both a *method* of generating something 'from the detritus of material memory', as well as an expressive historical *object* that 'marks the interruption of an alternative temporality,' into 'the 'always-the-same' of capitalist consumption' (Pensky, 2006: 114). They are fleeting not only in the sense that they are only exhibited in the commemoration for three days, but also because they bring together the 'present' and the 'past' in a way that is only legible, only meaningful in the contemporary period of crisis. Drawing from Benjamin, McCole observes:

A dialectical image results from the reciprocal relationship between two discrete historical moments ... Since the dialectical image arises from the configurations of two discrete yet shifting historical moments, it is a '*rapid* image'. It is not eternally available, for it disappears once the moment of configuration passes by. The measure of time inherent in it is an emphatic *now* – the 'now of reconfigurability [Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit]'. (McCole, 1993: 249)

If we take Benjamin's idea of historical knowledge as 'a pathos of simultaneity', as McCole puts it (*Ibid.*), then we can see how these cards materialise simultaneity. This simultaneity – arriving from the constellation of past and present – potentially produces an 'explosion' in the present (Benjamin, [N3,1] 1999: 463). I am interested in how they 'make present' a 'now' that aims to mobilise political action, or as Benjamin puts it 'this dialectical penetration and actualisation of former contexts puts the truth of all present action to the test. Or rather, it serves to ignite the explosive materials that are latent in what has been' ([K2,3] Benjamin, 1999: 392). Preceding this, Benjamin points us to look not solely at the objects of the dialectical method, but



the interaction between objects and subjects, as Esther Leslie (2006: 83) notes, which I hope to attempt through my exploration of the cards that students made during the commemoration:

It is said that the dialectical method consists of been doing justice each time to the concrete historical situation of its object. But that is not enough. For it is just as much a matter of doing justice to the concrete historical situation of the *interest* taken in the object. ([K2,3] Benjamin, 1999: 391)

The first dialectical card I want to discuss shows the law school occupation of February 1973, commonly understood in narratives of the Polytechnic uprising as its precursor, on one side. On the other side, it shows the Syntagma square occupation of June-July 2011 (image 45).



This constructs a dialectical image that valorizes specific kinds of political action: the

horizontalism and autonomy of 'the Movement of the Squares' in relation to existing institutions and political parties (see Kaika and Karaliotas, 2014a,b; Dimitriou, 2014; Katsambekis, 2014) and the importance of being 'grounded in place' (Halvorsen, 2012: 439). Many people who had never been involved in political groups went to Syntagma Square every day, and it is an experience that has deeply impacted many people I spoke to, who are now involved in the local assemblies that sprang in their neighbourhoods afterwards. Invoking this wish-image during the commemoration mirrors Vera Siderlis's dedications, which show the image of the neo-classical building of the Polytechnic. The desires of this wish-image are ambiguous: what hopes and expectations are invested here? Does it await or anticipate another mass-scale occupation, akin to Syntagma (which did happen the following year at ERT, as I discuss later in the chapter)? Irini went to the Syntagma occupation every day for a month and a half, and describes the affective atmosphere of uncertainty that followed.

I feel like we might end up in a vicious cycle. I understand why this general anxiety exists, the feeling; because there is no certain plan. We haven't managed. There was a proper discussion that flourished during Syntagma Square, that had started in 2010 and continued into 2011, when Greece was on the brink of exiting Europe; There was a debate about what we should do. But we didn't manage to gain broader support. It was not transformed into a broad political movement. If you don't have those kind of dynamics then you have a bit of a mess ... If you don't have the power of the working class, everything is a little bit random. People take to the streets and then go back home because there is no proper alternative - co-ordinated, organised, with determination, all that. If there is no such thing, then what are you doing? Psychoanalysis, therapy. That's what happened in Syntagma after a point. We started doing therapy.

Many others who participated also express regret that the consensus around non-violence at Syntagma led to the heterogeneous occupation that included nationalists who waved Greek flags in the upper part of the square. Some participants called this part of the occupation 'Dionysian', or corporeal, in contrast with the lower part of the square which was deemed 'Apollonian' or intellectual (Dimitriou, 2014: 76). This is something that haunts many people I spoke to, the fact that they did not evict Golden Dawn from the Dionysian upper part of the square, which would have inevitably involved violent tactics. Some of participants believed that if they had evicted Golden Dawners from Syntagma in 2011, they would not have risen to such prominence and

have been elected in 2012 and in 2015 come third in the General elections.<sup>91</sup> They see the acknowledged presence of Nationalists as deeming Golden Dawn acceptable by the Syntagma occupation, with Christos saying 'We should have cut off their head when we had the chance,' hinting at the myth of Hydra.

## A Contemporary Junta: Images of Non-democratic Violence

In this section I explore specific kinds of political myth making that invoke a ‘contemporary Junta’ and the ways in which they attempt to open up critique of the contemporary socio-political situation and express a will to act against different kinds of violence. Bringing together the Troika and the Samaras government with the military dictatorship, or Junta, in one dialectical image also critiques the social imaginary that the dominant political myths work on in Chapter Five.

The images bring up intertwined issues of different kinds of violence: structural and state violence through economic policies, police brutality, and neo-Fascist violence. References to the Troika as a contemporary Junta are frequently articulated throughout the city, in conversations and on walls. The image below shows graffiti five minutes walk from the Polytechnic which reads: 'Before with tanks, now with banks' (image 46).



<sup>91</sup> From 0.3% of the national vote in 2009 Greek elections, Golden Dawn received 7% in May 2012, 6.9% in June 2012, 6.3% in January 2015 and 7% in September 2015. They came third in the elections of 2015.



Below is a dialectical card showing the Military dictatorship with the statement: 'Corruption, a long-term value.' The other side depicts then-leader of PASOK Venizelos, the former Finance Minister Papaconstantinou and Christine Lagarde, the head of the IMF (image 47).



The inclusion of the CD is specific to the 'present' of 2012. It refers to the 'Lagarde List', which contains the names of around 2,000 Greek citizens with bank accounts in HSBC Switzerland. Lagarde, who was then French Finance Minister, initially reported the list to the Greek government in 2010. It was part of a longer list of 130,000 clients, which had been found in a raid on the home of a former HSBC technician who was accused of selling stolen data. The Finance Minister at the time, Papaconstantinou, gave the names of the twenty individuals with the biggest balances

to the tax police, but there was no follow-up. It was then claimed that the CD had been lost. In 2012, popular journalist Kostas Vaxevanis published the full list of Greek citizens with bank accounts in Switzerland in his magazine *HOT DOC*. He was subsequently arrested, and later acquitted.<sup>92</sup> The scandal was viewed by economists as yet 'another indication of the lack of government emphasis on tax policy' (Betz and Carayiannis, 2015: 681), and by Greek NGOs and international media as impeding on freedom of speech (Michailidou and Trenz, 2014: 4). I loosely categorise this image of continuous corruption of political elites as part of the work on myth of the 'contemporary Junta,' which can be found in different sources over the days of the commemoration, including many pamphlets, which are specially produced each year.

One pamphlet text from 2013, produced by a revolutionary anti-capitalist Leftwing student group, entitled 'Forty years later, will we overturn the contemporary Junta?' states:

Forty years after 1973, the Polytechnic is neither only an important event that stayed in history, neither something that can teach us about the struggles which must be undertaken in a misty and far away future, neither a celebratory three days where the people leave a wreath in the lower Polytechnic, neither simply a standard march to the American embassy. It is a contemporary and relevant uprising, the proof that the people can win and overturn all of those that oppress them; it is our driver for the uprisings of today.

At first, the situation that we are living in today doesn't appear to be much better from what happened under the Junta. It might be that today's government is not imposed on us by a military coup, but the politics that they implement, as well as the way they make decisions, allows us to talk about a contemporary parliamentary Junta, which reinforces the power of Europe and the IMF, as the Junta had the support of the Americans. At the same time, the attempts of capital, in co-operation with the governments, to overcome the global crisis, creates a financial/economical Junta in which the international organisations who control the movement of money and work (European Union, IMF and ECB) have a primary role.

It becomes clear that a peculiar Junta exists even today. A Junta that leaves its marks on the economic situation of the people, as well as the provision of education, but also the democratic rights of society. It becomes clear that the central slogan of the Polytechnic of 'Bread, Education, Freedom' could have been today's slogan.

The authors of this text interrogate the image of a contemporary Junta. Firstly, the

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<sup>92</sup> See Borger J (2012) Greek magazine editor in court for naming alleged tax evaders. *the Guardian*, Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/28/greek-editor-court-tax-evaders?newsfeed=true> (accessed 20 November 2012).

authors differentiate their practices from dominant political myths of laying wreaths, insisting that the Polytechnic is neither a celebration nor a historical event. For the authors it is a pedagogical and contemporary uprising, a 'driver' for contemporary political action. Following on from this is the notion of a 'contemporary parliamentary Junta' which allows them to state that 'Bread, Education, Freedom' could be a slogan for today. This short text evocatively contrasts the Troika with the Junta in a vague and generalized way that enables desires and imaginations of a contemporary uprising to be articulated. Pamphlets are considered a kind of 'disposable literature' but radical historians understand their importance as possible archives and resources, because of their status as not being part of 'official history'. However, rather than valuing such objects only as texts which aim to recuperate and reconstruct narratives and arguments of (allegedly) 'marginal communities to ensure a fuller history (from below)' (Pimlott, 2011: 521), I argue that these artefacts are material forms of political myth making. They are important not only in the sense that they are produced through pedagogical and embodied practices of collectively making, which are described to me as processes of consensus and collaboration. Pamphlets are important artefacts of political myth also in the sense that they contain within them an intention to open up a critique of present socio-economic conditions through this analogous gesture of the 'contemporary Junta'.

The influence of the slogan 'Bread, Education, Freedom' reverberates across the commemoration and beyond. On the 17<sup>th</sup> November march, it is repeated like an incantation, and followed by phrase: 'The Junta didn't end in 1973', which, while being counterfactual (the dictatorship fell in 1974), rhymes with Polytechnic, and attests to the power of its political myths. Following the murder of 15 year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos, one of the 'alternative information platforms of left-wing students' during the events of December 2008 was called 'Polytechnic's Calling', referring to the 'famous cry of the pirate radio station' of Dimitris Papachristos, which was set up during the Polytechnic occupation on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1973 (Kornetis, 2010: 78). An excerpt of this website reads: 'That was a slogan that gave hope to the Greek people against the oppression of the dictatorial regime. Today we find ourselves confronting the phony democratic regime which is trying to undermine our rights, our lives and our dignity' (2010: 78). Here we see the beginnings of the work on the 'contemporary Junta' myth. I collected forty five pamphlets, most of which explicitly draw analogies between 1973 and 2012/ 2013, bound through determinations to act on the present. I argue that these utterances are part of political myths of a 'parliamentary Junta', which are expressed in different ways:

The Polytechnic annually opens the debate on new social struggles that need workers and the youth. This year's Polytechnic is more relevant than ever, as the modern social and economic Junta: government-EU-IMF destroys, like then, the lives of our future – ASYX (2012)

So what if it's been 39 years of the Polytechnic uprising. In fact it is like not a day passed, and remains as timely as the causes that gave birth to it. – RAF EAAK (2012)

We answer:

The bread will be there for all, or none

Freedom is there for all, or none – XAMAS (2012)

All these struggles give hope for a positive outcome in the constant struggle of the people against this rotten system. A new Polytechnic adapted to the circumstances and needs of today can and should come in the coming months. Why, opposite the triptych 'Unemployment - Scrapping education – State terrorism,' which answers even today the historic request for 'Bread - Education - Freedom' – ANAFI (2013)

The Polytechnic emerges in the cracks of time. The uprisings and the overthrow of the political project of domination. Everyone on the streets to defeat the contemporary juntas: Government - EU-IMF – capital – ANAFI (2012)

We catch the thread of the Polytechnic

the workers and the youth will write history again.

bread-education-freedom-solidarity-internationalism – XAMAS (2013)

These are some illustrative examples of the innovative ways in which the slogans of the Polytechnic are adapted for contemporary purposes, with multiple references to the 'contemporary Juntas'. These texts explicitly aim to mobilise people in the present, through invoking the contemporary relevance of the Polytechnic. The contemporary resonance of these slogans are 'icons' of the political myths of a contemporary Junta which repeatedly emerge in conversation and interviews. Here I use the term icon to refer to the condensational capacity of myth, which powerfully purveys political myth (Bottici, 2014: 134). Christos is in his late-twenties and unemployed, and we talk while standing near a stall in the Polytechnic campus on November 16:

Polytechnic is not just historical, something which has ended. It is about the ability of the youth of *today* to fight against the Troika in Greece, which is connected with and to the legacy of the Polytechnic, and even what the students of the Polytechnic were

asking for - basic - shouting Bread, Education, Freedom – all three words today are necessary.

Here, Christos passionately ensures that the focus of participating in remembrance practices is clear; as opposed to an historical event, Polytechnic is about the contemporary ability of the youth of the present to fight against the Troika, and the demands of the Polytechnic remain relevant and necessary. While this is clearly expressed as a critique of the contemporary socio-political situation, the nature of political action proposed are generalised and ambiguous. This is because the work on myth here operates on an aesthetic level and on spaces of representations; these narratives dramatise the narrative of the Polytechnic, putting young people at the forefront of the contemporary situation to evoke imaginations of uprising. This generalised desire to fight against the Troika, or contemporary Junta, is usually followed by statements regarding political action, specifically the assertion that 'it is just to revolt.' Christos opens his arms to gesture towards the tables around him, and continues:

From our point of view, that of the Revolutionary Left, the Polytechnic shows today there are not only *reasons* to fight, but *measures* to fight against. Greek people, students, workers, all people, have the power to break with EU measures.

Reading them back, Christos's remarks could have come straight out of a pamphlet, a performative gesture of revolutionary gusto. While he does not go into details of what this fight might entail, he fervently asserts an imaginary of collective agency akin to that of the Polytechnic, which brought together students and workers, and brings them up against the target of contemporary government-imposed austerity measures, via the Troika. Participants of the commemoration commonly define these measures as forms of state violence. Conversations ubiquitously refer to the harsh economic policies, unemployment figures, pension cuts, planned education reforms, the treatment of migrants and refugees, the degradation of human rights, and so on. As Iannis, who was tired of walking in 2012, tells me at an opposite table in 2013:

The Polytechnic is relevant today in that people were making demands for their everyday lives. They wanted wages, jobs and a good education. It's the same today. Youth unemployment is 60%. Then it was officially not a democracy, and now it's unofficially not a democracy.

The work on myth that compares violent state practices with an undemocratic military dictatorship opens up a debate that is often tied to a critique of the



contemporary political discourse of the 'two extremes', which I analysed in relation to the official political myths of the Polytechnic in Chapter Five. As noted, this discourse, put forward by political parties in government and dominant in the mainstream media during the Novembers of 2012 and 2013, posits that there is equivalence between the violence of Golden Dawn and that of 'the Left'. People who are involved in everyday political action feel targeted by this discourse, which aims to delegitimize their actions. During the Polytechnic commemoration, there were debates held in the evening on the subject, and it also emerged in informal conversations. Nikos a fifth year medical student active in EAAK, comments:

The 'two extremes' is led by the government in order to terrorise people. It produces an image of the far right and an image of the radicals who are also always fighting. What they don't say is that the austerity policies right now are extreme. For us, we are not extreme: the government is. People have to follow us and fight for it, if they want conditions fit for living. The whole discussion is the government trying to make us believe that only they can save us: 'Vote. Stay at home.' But it is not a democratic state.

People who are involved in everyday political action engage with the 'contemporary Junta' political myth to the extent that it might destabilize and contest the dominant political myth of the 'two extremes'. There is a consistent recurrent refrain about what is at stake in such work on myth, which is the necessity of fighting against austerity measures, and the sustenance of a resistant subjectivity, with the aim of mobilising more people. This is to counterpose what is imagined as the state's desire for people to 'stay at home.' The ways in which people who participate in the Polytechnic commemoration relate to the discourse of the 'two extremes' provide a means of collective identification - as being the target of such discourse - and brings to the fore negotiation of boundary-making of politics and violence. Chryssi is a young architecture student at the Polytechnic and part of a Trotskyist group within the SYRIZA coalition. In the run-up to the Polytechnic commemoration, she was the only female on a four-person panel discussing the 'The Left and the Two Extremes' at the Steki Metanaston social centre near the Polytechnic campus in Exarcheia. During the commemoration, we discussed the Polytechnic and the 'two extremes' discourse. In the following excerpt, she talks about the kinds of actions that are labelled by the state and society as violence and contextualizes this discourse in her own experiences.

They see violence as throwing rocks, burning things, masked people. Not cops hitting us, or state repression. Those people, they say, 'We don't want any violence.' That's not true; they only want state violence; they want a monopoly. Fascist violence is tough, but

whenever social movements use it, it's called terrorism. The media and the state say it's the same. I say ... *we* say as communists, that it is about different class interests. Golden Dawn are bourgeois. The state is trying to keep the border of legitimacy. The state sets the frame of how violent you can become [she draws a square on the table with her fingers]. The frame becomes narrow. The scale of violence is getting bigger, we should be prepared for the more evolved kinds of violence that lead to revolution. OK, not tomorrow, but we have these class fights all the time [between Golden Dawn and anti-fascists].

Here the violent subjectivity of the rock thrower is evoked, which comes up repeatedly with regards to how activists see themselves misrepresented in political discourse. Contrasting the kind of violence used by activists with state violence and fascist violence, Chryssi highlights the inequality and injustice of the state monopoly of violence. She begins to state her personal perspective, but immediately corrects herself to pronounce a collective communist subjectivity and shifts mainstream political discourse to issues of class politics, and a revolutionary imaginary. This quickly returns to more everyday violent clashes between Golden Dawners and anti-fascist activists, which occur at on the street, at markets where groups distribute information, and at rallies. Given the then-recent attacks on Communist port union members, the murder of Pavlos Fyssas, and the murder of two Golden Dawn members, her concern with these clashes was highly significant. Furthermore, she observes:

We did not choose to discuss it [the two extremes]. The media did. And we know how the government will answer. Others use theory as a weapon; they use it and we have to answer it.

This notion of the discourse being framed by the state causes many others, namely people involved in anarchist, anarcho-syndicalist and anti-authoritarian groups, to not want to engage with the subject, and only in tentative discussions if it does come into conversation. Many are tired and bored of this discussion. As discussed in Chapter Four, this is because they have been targeted as 'terrorists' throughout the post-dictatorship period, with many imprisoned during the time of my fieldwork on spurious charges.



48. Solidarity with anarchist Sipsas. 'The theory of the two extremes will not overcome us'.

This threat of state and fascist violence is narrated again and again by activists and related to their everyday experiences with the police and Golden Dawn. Chryssi later tells me in relation to the heightened threat of violence that they have to

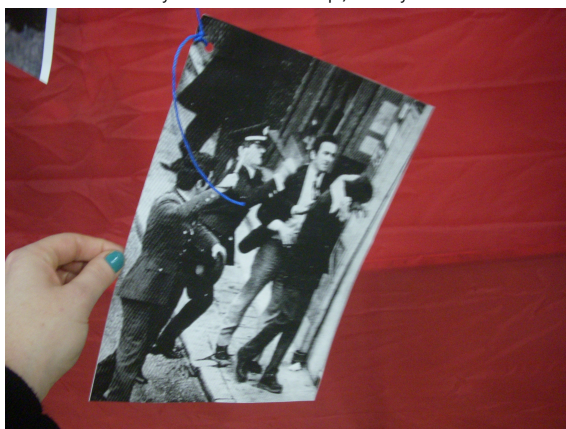
raise consciousness and be prepared theoretically. We should be able to guard our demonstrations. We should form groups of self-defense – not to beat police and Nazis – but simply to have ways to defend ourselves. Because we are going to be attacked.

These fears are part of the reason why the political myth of a 'contemporary Junta' is meaningful for those who create the dialectical cards below. These images bring together the dictatorship and Golden Dawn; police brutality during the dictatorship and in the present; and tanks with water cannons. I argue that they are a method through which their makers have generated historical objects that elucidate non-democratic temporality:



49. Dialectical card: 'The Junta'.../'...and those who are nostalgic for them' [Golden Dawn]

50. Police brutality under dictatorship / today



The concerns that arise from these images, which counteract the dominant political myth of the two extremes, as discussed in Chapter Five, are the topic of many debates in the counter-space of the commemoration. Inside the main building of the Polytechnic, commonly used for meetings and assemblies, there was a public discussion as part of the commemoration about the 'two extremes' and anti-fascism. One speaker restated both the importance of the space of the campus itself and the direct relationship between the dictatorship and Golden Dawn, as evoked in the image above:

It is significant that this [discussion about the two extremes] is taking place in the Polytechnic, where people fought against the dictatorship, against tanks; the ancestors of today's Golden Dawn. We have to resist the theory of the two poles and instead talk about two words: democracy and equality; they aren't the same. The state can't denounce 'violence wherever it comes from' because it is society *itself* that is producing violence.

51. Dialectical card: Tanks destroying Polytechnic gate /  
Water cannons being used in Athens demonstration in October 2012



The government, as discussed in Chapter Five, commonly utters this phrase: 'We condemn violence from wherever it comes.' It is frequently repeated by people in an ironic way. As Christos told me, 'What they're *really* saying is that they condemn it



from everywhere except themselves because what about police brutality?’ The monopolization of violence by the state and the equivalence of the violence of the Left with that of Golden Dawn are continually contested by those who feel they have to engage with the discourse. The speaker above turns the question to that of democracy and equality. While not elaborated in his talk, I am interested in the diverse imaginations of ‘democracy’ that are tied to the political myth of a ‘contemporary Junta.’ Grigoris, a civil engineer in his mid-thirties, who has been going to the Polytechnic commemoration since he was at university there, and was detained prior to the annual march in 2013, for having a gas mask in his bag, tells me:

Golden Dawn say that what makes human beings different to animals -anthropologists say language, but ok- is that they have hatred. So, they -the state- say I’m in the extreme. Let’s say Dina is in the extreme, and me too. I say: ‘I want to be out of the EU and have our own coin. I don’t want to be with Europe.’ And her, she hates you. Who do you fear most?

Paring down the theory to a confrontation between himself and his friend, who is present during our conversation, Grigoris turns it to the matters that concern him, affective registers of hatred and fear, as Chryssi and many others do. What is at stake in this rejection of the ‘extremist’ subjectivity is an attempt to find ways to act and the capacity to resist fascist violence and the mounting popularity of Golden Dawn, through mobilizing affect. The Polytechnic uprising annual march manages to mobilise people in their masses, and yet more everyday anti-fascist demonstrations do not have the same pull, as Irini laments:

As the Far Right gets bigger, it [Polytechnic] becomes more pertinent ... But why do so many thousands of people go there [Polytechnic] for the 17<sup>th</sup> November march, and not if you call an anti-right wing or anti-fascist protest tomorrow, with the same aims?

Here Irini attaches anti-fascist aims to the Polytechnic uprising, and alludes to the commonplace assertion during the period of my fieldwork that ‘things [were] quiet’ and not enough people were being mobilized around contemporary anti-fascism; an assertion which is made primarily by those who are involved in such action. Perhaps the emancipatory notion of Lefebvre’s ‘right to the city’ was being taken up by the unintended benefactors of Golden Dawn, as Vradis has argued (2013). The crucial question of how people can be mobilized by remembrance of the past, but not action in the present is a key part of the comparative gesture within this political myth, which seeks to put images of the past and present side by side to invoke similarities between the dictatorship and the rise of fascism in contemporary Greece.

Standing around their table in the Polytechnic campus on November 16, the chemistry students from Chapters Four and Five, Ero and Sofia, frame a consideration of the 'two extremes' within a discussion of their fear of violence from the police and Golden Dawn. They ask, 'Which is worse? Both can kill you.'

Ero: The state is trying to show that it can safeguard you. You won't be able to eat, and you won't have a job, but you'll have a normal life.

Sofia: They are saying that we are fighting each other, like one death for another, but what they are describing has nothing to do with it – it is another world! If you are just at home with your TV, you listen to that, what are you supposed to think?

Ero: You can feel the fear in your body. I feel it. The violence is ideological violence. I have heard friends say they would rather get beaten by cops than be caught by a fascist. On the one hand, the police, the other, fascists. Fascists have knives. They were hiding behind the police in Keratsini.<sup>93</sup>

Sofia: We saw the footage, and they broke shop windows and banks. Not us. It was sad. We wanted the demonstration to have a positive meaning.



52. Stencil graffiti in Exarcheia showing Golden Dawn and the MAT Riot police

Many people at the Polytechnic articulate embodied feelings of fear based on their

<sup>93</sup> All of my research participants were in Keratsini the day after Fyssas' murder to protest against Golden Dawn. Ero and Sofia vividly describe hiding in peoples' houses from Golden Dawn and the riot police, and their disorientation in this suburb of the city that they do not know well. Many were detained and beaten up by the police that day. See Syllas C (2013) Greece: murder of anti-fascist prompts protest - Index on Censorship | Index on Censorship. *Indexoncensorship.org*. Available from: <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2013/09/greece-murder-prompts-protests-political-moves-golden-dawn/> (accessed 20 October 2013).

lived experiences as well as that of their 'comrades' or 'companeros' in recent times, in supporting others who have been attacked or in pursuing justice for the families of those killed by Golden Dawn. In December 2013 over fifty persons, including the leader of Golden Dawn, two police officers and five MPs were arrested and charged with offences including murder and blackmail. The links between the Greek police force and Golden Dawn have been formally established since 1998 by PASOK MPs (Psarras, 2012), with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights investigating the connection in 2012, well as Amnesty International reporting on the human rights violations of the Greek police and Golden Dawn.<sup>94</sup> Popularly shared information from *To Vima* newspaper stated that between 45 and 59% of the police force voted for Golden Dawn in the 2012 elections,<sup>95</sup> with similarly high figures in the 2014 European Elections,<sup>96</sup> and the 2015 elections.<sup>97</sup> The fact that people continue to participate in everyday political action, in spite of the knowledge and experience of police and neo-fascist violence which has become routinized and more brutal since 2008, brings to mind Portelli's emphasis on the horizon of possibilities as defining the range of a 'socially shared' subjectivity' (1997). He writes that the 'representative quality of oral sources' is 'measured less by the reconstruction of the average experience, than by the subjective projection of imaginable experience: less by what materially happens to people, than by what people imagine or know might happen' (Portelli, 1997: 86-87). The horizon of possibilities for people includes relatively commonplace physical violence, tear-gas, arrest and incarceration. As such, I argue that the narrated collective political subjectivity that is shared with me during the Polytechnic commemoration through political myth-making of a 'contemporary Junta' is one of embodied resistance to state and neo-fascist violence. In this section I have explored the ways in which participants create and share dialectical images as attempts to mobilise people, invoking ambivalent affects of fear. I have also shown how the counter-space of the Polytechnic commemoration allows for the issues crystallised in these images to be reflected upon and articulated in public discussions and through the collective, independent production of pamphlets. I am interested in how remembrance practices of myth-making contest the dominant political myths

<sup>94</sup> See Amnesty.org (2014) Impunity, excessive force and links to extremist Golden Dawn blight Greek police | *Amnesty International*. Available from: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/04/impunity-excessive-force-and-links-extremist-golden-dawn-blight-greek-police/> (accessed 7 May 2014).

<sup>95</sup> See Labropoulos C (2012) One in Two Police Officers Voted "Golden Dawn". *To Vima*, Available from: <http://www.tovima.gr/afieromata/elections2012/article/?aid=457088> (accessed 20 October 2012) and Fisher M (2012) Are Greek Policemen Really Voting in Drove for Greece's Neo-Nazi Party?. *The Atlantic*, Available from: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/06/are-greek-policemen-really-voting-in-drove-for-greeces-neo-nazi-party/258767/> (accessed 20 October 2012).

<sup>96</sup> *Tovima.gr* (2014) - Το Βήμα Online. Available from: <http://www.tovima.gr/en/article/?aid=600119> (accessed 6 June 2014).

<sup>97</sup> Labropoulos C (2015) Αστυνομικοί, οι πιο φανατικοί υποστηρικτές της Χρυσής Αυγής. *TO BHMA*, Available from: <http://www.tovima.gr/politics/article/?aid=739411> (accessed 20 October 2015).



from Chapter Five, but also simultaneously constitute that which they oppose: the State. As Herzfeld has noted,

even the citizens who claim to oppose the state invoke it – simply by talking of ‘it’ in that way – as the explanation of their failures and miseries, or accuse ‘it’ of betraying the national interests of which it claims to be both expression and guardian. In the process however they will contribute through these little acts of essentialising, to making it fixture in their lives. (2005: 2)

In the following section I contrast such political mythmaking, with the intervention of the ERT occupiers at the 2013 Polytechnic commemoration, and discuss how the shutdown state broadcaster invoked the Polytechnic uprising with an analogous gesture.

### **‘Here Again at the Polytechnic’: the 2013 ERT Occupation**

On June 11th 2013, the Hellenic Broadcasting Service – ERT – was shut down overnight, by the government: ‘Eight TV channels went black, seven radio stations were muted and nineteen peripheral broadcasts stopped. Moreover, film and radio archives were blocked and orchestras were silenced, including Hadjidakis’ Orchestra of Colours and the ERT Music Ensembles’ (Leontidou, 2014: 556). Having pledged to cut 15,000 state jobs by 2015 as part of bailout commitments, this was the first case of mass public sector layoffs by the Greek government. The Panhellenic Federation of Journalists Unions (POESY) media union stated that ‘bailout creditors are demanding civil service layoffs and the government, in order to meet its obligations toward foreign monitors, is prepared to sacrifice the public broadcasting corporation’.<sup>98</sup> The decision to shut down the state broadcaster was internationally denounced, as well as by the coalition partners of New Democracy, PASOK and DIMAR (Democratic Left), the latter who left the government as a result of the success of occupation, according to people who were involved.

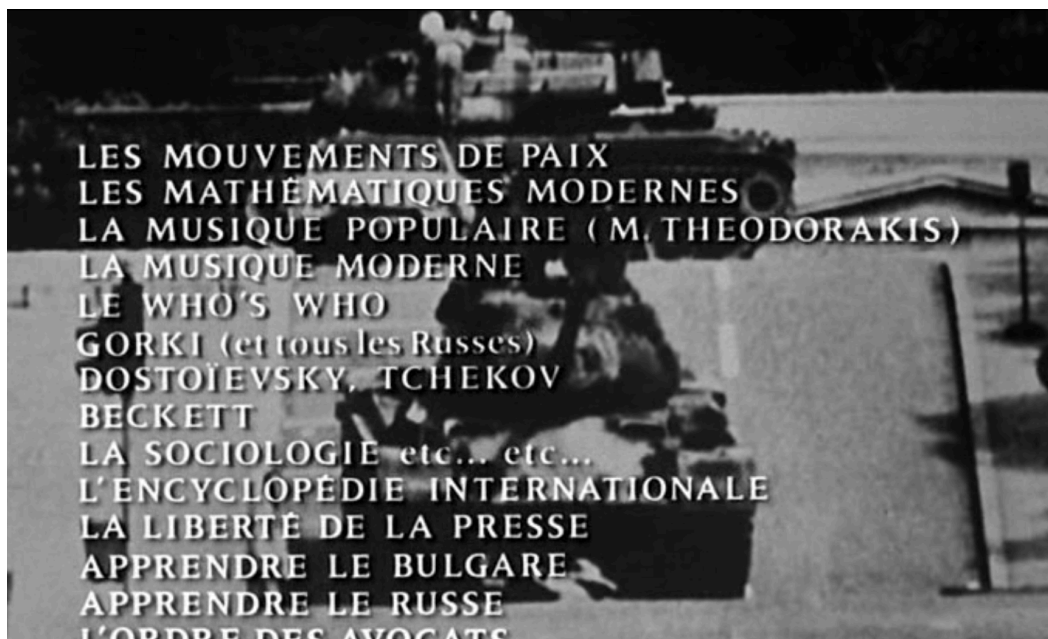
The ERT headquarters were immediately occupied by the workers, and continued to broadcast through a bootleg feed online over a satellite courtesy of the European Broadcasting Union. Support from the public was expressed from the first night, with the surrounding courtyard occupied day and night by political groups, visitors, musicians, artists, protesters, and national and international solidarity organizations. Building on previous sections of this chapter, here I am interested in specific practices of political mythmaking through which this ‘vulnerable’ movement, or moment, invoked the Junta and Polytechnic as a comparative gesture, with a determination to

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<sup>98</sup> See the Guardian (2013) Greece shuts down state broadcaster in search for new savings. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/11/state-broadcaster-ert-shut-down-greece> (accessed 21 October 2015).

act on the present. There are two moments that I discuss: first, the night ERT went 'black' and was immediately occupied and, second, the broadcast from within the Polytechnic campus during the 2013 commemoration.

On the night of June 11<sup>th</sup>, invocation of the Junta was immediately perceptible from afar; based in London, I 'followed' the events unfolding on Twitter and Facebook. As soon as the TV channel 'went black', social media references to the dictatorship soared. These references can be partly explained by the common reference to the dictatorship as 'seven black years' and the heavily oppressive culture of the dictatorship, as referenced in the film *Z*, which lists things made illegal by the Colonels:

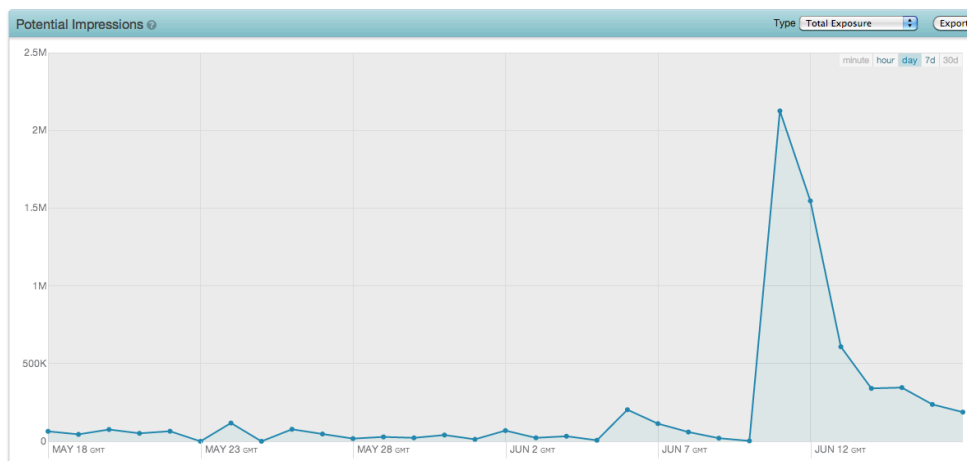


53. Still from *Z* (1969) showing things made illegal under the Junta. Note sociology.

The following is a visualisation made using a programme called Topsy, showing just over two million 'impressions'<sup>99</sup> for references to the Junta on June 11<sup>th</sup> 2013:

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<sup>99</sup> Impressions are the number of times a tweet is visible in someone's twitterfeed.



54. Topsy tweets for references to the Junta

Examples of typical tweets included:

Down with the Junta! Everyone tonight out on the streets!

Junta, SOS Junta in Greece!

OK, this isn't a Junta. There wasn't state television then

Junta is in the air!

They are preparing to cut the line of ERT. Such democracy we haven't seen since the Junta

Smells like Junta

It's not a Junta my dear, you have a choice to vote for them

The last 3 years, my mother hasn't said to me one single time 'aaah, you never lived through a Junta ...' until today

When the words have further mutated and perverted to serve interests, then you'll have a Junta. What don't you understand?

Down with the Junta of Samaras! [Then prime minister]

Junta is every government unless it's a SYRIZA government

We have to have elections to get what we want (SYRIZA). Otherwise ... we have a Junta

These tweets, which directly reference the dictatorship alongside contemporary state practices, reiterate the political myths of a 'contemporary Junta' created and shared during remembrance practices, as discussed in the previous section. However, the crucial difference here is that these utterances are being made spontaneously, outside

of the space and time of the annual Polytechnic commemoration. Whilst not all of these tweets contain explicit determinations to act within them, the comparison of the shutdown of ERT to an act of a dictatorship resonates widely, as the number of 'impressions' noted here attests to. These tweets serve as an introductory illustration of the invocation of the Polytechnic uprising in relation to the ERT occupation. In this section I explore how these invocations are meaningful for people, how they create new political myths of the Polytechnic, and the ways in which these practices are forms of indirect embodied resistance.



55. ERT occupation, a commemoration tweet, @Inflammatory\_ 11 June 2014

This work on myth, linking the Junta and the uprising to the shutdown and occupation of ERT, is also to be found in academic representations. Leontidou states that 'even the Greek junta of 1967 - 74 had not dared such an unprecedented act of censorship and intimidation' (2013: 556) and, furthermore, that 'memories of the Greek dictatorship have thus returned, when imaginations resisted suppression and coercion and sparked solidarity from abroad' (558). Once in Athens myself, in the winter of 2013, I heard these kinds of statements invoking the junta woven into the narratives of experiences of that night, alongside invocations of the Polytechnic. 'It felt like Polytechnic' was a common refrain, even amongst those who had been part of the 1973 uprising itself. What does the Polytechnic 'feel' like? Here people would talk about the mass participation, of 'all different kinds of people' and the conviviality: the different assemblies, workshops, musical performances. The night of the shutdown, thousands of people had mobilised and gathered in solidarity with the sacked employees at the ERT headquarters. The occupation of the headquarters lasted over the summer. The site itself became a focal point of political action - the radio station

and online TV channel continued as self-organised practices, there were regular demonstrations and assemblies inside and outside the building; and solidarity concerts were organized. Irini went there every day, which was exhausting for her. However, the massive participation still excited her, when we discussed it in early November 2013.

Because I saw so many people gathered there, I thought, 'Ok this is our moment,' that it might trigger a change or something, that it might escalate. I'm not saying it could have toppled the government, but imagine: it was the State broadcaster and Samaras was shitting himself if we used that to spread what was going on. We received media attention from abroad. Everyone thought, 'This is crazy'. So it was a good opportunity. It didn't happen, eventually. At that point in time I believed that something could happen. That it would be a place where people from various backgrounds would come together again and make something out of it.

The way I experienced the whole thing, it was exciting precisely because it gained massive support. But it was more of a ... not spectacle, I mean ... in these terms, it could not go one step further. It was just you know, being outside, guarding the building, waving flags. Getting airtime for people who didn't have access to TV before, stuff like that. But if you want to do it properly, you mobilise the unions, you block the printing houses and that's it. Proper protest action, not a spectacle. But they didn't do that .... Because it would escalate things and this is the problem with Greece at the moment. Deep down inside, there are some people, there are some sections of the broader movement that ... say things against what is going on, but they are not prepared and they don't feel like actually overthrowing anything because they don't know what happens next, and it makes them feel insecure.

Finally, on November 6<sup>th</sup>, the occupation was violently evicted by riot police. News began to emerge that POSPERT, the ERT union, sought to broadcast from within the Polytechnic. The police had made a statement threatening to enter the campus during the commemoration if they did so.<sup>100</sup> The broadcast and threat of police violence became the topic of every conversation leading up to, and during, the commemoration. As Irini tells me:

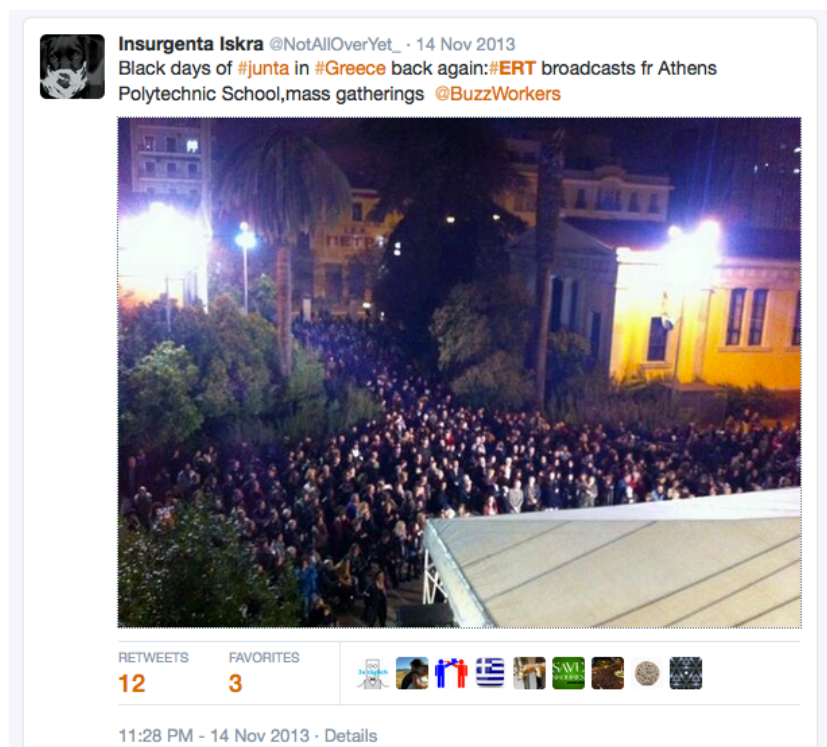
Although the massive protest movement of 2010-2012 had faded, these [public sector and university] workers were taking to the streets repeatedly and tirelessly ... So the government was vigilant in case their [ERT] spirit triggered something bigger. This is why

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<sup>100</sup> See Aeginitiko D (2013) ERT workers ask to broadcast from within the Polytechnic [Εκπομπή μέσα από το Πολυτεχνείο ζήτησαν οι εργαζόμενοι της ΕΡΤ]. *Protothema.gr*, Available from: <http://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/328089/ekpobi-mesa-apo-to-polutehneio-zitisan-oi-ergazomenoi-tis-ert/> (accessed 21 October 2014).

police threatened to deploy riot officers in the campus when they found out what the ERT guys were planning to do for the 3-day celebration...exactly because the spirit of the students' revolt has become relevant again since 2009...So any association between the radio programme of the former ERT employees in 2013 and the radio programme of the young students in 1973 would make sense...And from a government's perspective there's a chance for things to escalate...But the action appeared to be symbolic. They didn't strive to remain there further [than the commemoration days] and I think that's what kept the situation in track.

The evening before the annual commemoration, on November 14<sup>th</sup>, a concert of Theodorakis songs was staged in the Polytechnic campus, organized by ERT and striking Polytechnic workers. In the image below, there is a banner above the stage proclaiming, 'Here *again* Polytechnic' – a re-working of the slogan heard across radios during the 1973 Polytechnic occupation, 'Here is Polytechnic'. This directly references the famous cries of Papachristos, who we heard from in Chapter Four.<sup>101</sup>



56. ERT broadcasting from the Polytechnic, @NotAllOverYet\_ 14 Nov 2013

Here is Polytechnic! People of Greece, the Polytechnic is the flag bearer of our struggle and your struggle, our common struggle against the dictatorship and for democracy!<sup>102</sup>

Huddled under umbrellas, a mixed crowd of different generations listened to famous

<sup>101</sup> Papachristos has a regular radio show on ERT, and is frequently mentioned by ERT occupiers as a connecting thread between the ERT occupation and the Polytechnic uprising.

<sup>102</sup> In Greek: Εδώ Πολυτεχνείο! Λαέ της Ελλάδας το Πολυτεχνείο είναι σηματοφόρος του αγώνα μας, του αγώνα σας, του κοινού αγώνα μας ενάντια στη δικτατορία και για την Δημοκρατία! (see Panourgia, 2009)

anti-dictatorship songs, while cameramen scuttled about. The concert's atmosphere lacked the 'spirit' of the ERT headquarters occupation, audience-members told me, which I had watched on a livestream on my laptop and which had later been described to me countless times. I was at the concert with Irini, who considered their decision to broadcast from within the Polytechnic a form of 'calculated symbolism' and posited that 'people are generally thinking, "What are they [ERT] doing now, outside the building?!"'<sup>103</sup>



57. ERT Theodorakis concert at Polytechnic

The massive nature of the ERT occupation over the summer was reflected in the fact that everyone I spent time with and spoke to during the commemoration period had been there frequently, some, like Irini, 'almost every day.' Many had a sustained engagement with the occupation from the first night. Nikos, our medical student, shared the sentiment of many, stating: 'The only exciting thing is that ERT is here.' During the days of the commemoration, ERT broadcast from within the Polytechnic, with the exact location of the room from which they were broadcasting kept secret because of the police. Irini, while critical of the 'calculated symbolism' – as I discuss as part of a larger theme of 'nostalgic aesthetics' in Chapter Seven – tweeted from within the broadcasting room:

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<sup>103</sup> For an article which discusses the ERT occupation at the Polytechnic in relation to the uprising and contemporary anti-austerity struggles by a journalist who usually writes for SYRIZA's newspaper, see Tsimitakis M (2013) Ex-Workers Have Turned the Greek BBC into a Pirate Radio Station | VICE | United Kingdom. *VICE*, Available from: [http://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/read/ert-resurrected-itself-at-the-athens-polytechnic-school](http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/ert-resurrected-itself-at-the-athens-polytechnic-school) (accessed 21 November 2013).





Joanna P. @JoannaP\_\_\_ · 17 Nov 2013

#17ngr #rbnews Students msg in '73 was spread through a pirate radio set up in NTUA. 40yrs later same story with #ERT



RETWEET

1

FAVORITE

1



58. ERT broadcasting from inside the Polytechnic, @JoannaP\_\_\_ 17 Nov 2013

The spot from where they installed their web radio was a tiny room that remained secret among those who visited, just in case. I was following the developments with ERT closely, so it was obvious for me to cover it on Twitter as I do with several protest actions in Athens. It was weird because it seemed like history was repeating itself ... who would have known that 40 years later people would broadcast from the very same campus to communicate the same message: bread-education-freedom. That's what I wanted to show with the image of a student from the 70's revolt, broadcasting in front of his equipment juxtaposed with an image of a former ERT employee broadcasting in front of his laptop. To evoke the feeling that times changed, fashion changed, technology made a huge progress but some things remain the same. Having said that, I am not fond of such moves, I find them useless, because they embrace the imagery of past events that have been pushed to the edge for symbolic purposes, thus degenerating the struggle of the present.

Irini does not discuss the ERT broadcast in terms of affect, but rather as a 'useless move'. Why did ERT choose to broadcast from inside the Polytechnic, and how was it meaningful for them to do so? In this section, I explore these questions, through interviews with people who were part of the occupation, which took place in the spring of 2014, almost a year on from the beginning of the movement. I first met with



three people from ERT, in an occupied cafe in Exarcheia, after having met Panos through Irini. Panos, in his fifties, had not worked at ERT but was involved in the day-to-day running of the radio station. He introduced me to two women, both of whom had worked at ERT before it closed. One had been involved in programming, and the other was a TV presenter who took part in the occupation. They described the night as spontaneous, with 'everybody going there.' As Maria, a former radio news presenter told me, 'This is why some of the same phrases are used today, because it reminds people of the Polytechnic. Also, there are people who were active in both struggles [ERT and Polytechnic] such as Papachristos.' She told me of how she 'lost a job but got a new life,' and 'gained a lot, through working and living in common.' Meeting new people and making new connections 'like brothers and sisters,' she continued, 'gave me freedom. I had a programme and a total liberty of voice. I feel free now.' For the ERT broadcast from the Polytechnic, she made a radio programme, using slogans from the archive, and connected them with the present. She has an optimism which reflects Leontidou's analysis of the *joie de vivre* and spontaneity of the ERT occupation, and the enmeshed 'cooperative and solidarity economy and cultural scene under construction in material and digital spaces' (2013: 561). For her, the ERT occupation possibly heralds a new temporality:

Maybe it's about a period of time opening and closing. A new fresh thing, an optimism. There are some people from the Polytechnic generation in political parties who govern now. Maybe it is a time that ends [metapolitefsi], but a new beginning of movements - after ERT there are a lot of movements.

Now that she has been affected by the crisis, she is getting involved in new social movements. In May 2014, I met Andreas in the offices that ERT have been hosted in since December 2013. They are in a building across the road from the old ERT headquarters. To get in, you have to press two unmarked buzzers at once and go up a flight of stairs. There are desks with computers, some chairs, two closed-door rooms, and a broadcasting room for the radio. People come in and out, smoking, drinking coffee and chatting. There is a large black-and-white poster on the wall of the massive crowd of thousands outside the ERT headquarters, reminiscent of the images of the crowds outside the Polytechnic gates in 1973.

Andreas talks to me after his daily radio show. He is in his mid fifties, and has worked for ERT as a radio journalist since 1993. After having narrated a story about his experience of being part of the occupation, I ask him whether he had broadcast from inside the Polytechnic during the November commemoration:

I was there. It was very touching, at first. [pause] I was nine at the time of Polytechnic. It was very important to me to hear about the youth who decided not to fear tanks, bullets, the army, and they expressed themselves for, *in* the name of, the Greek people. For a nine year-old boy, this is very important. So when I was in Polytechnic to broadcast from there, being myself someone who resisted the government's decisions, it felt like I was 10 years-old in my heart, and 100 or 200 years old in my mind, and I made a big effort not to make my hour of the programme just for myself, to say, 'Oh, now I'm here, I'm part of this history.' Because I was there for a special reason, to remind people that ERT was alive, that the possibility to find justice in this country was alive, and that we must make the old, new and fresh, the meaning of other revolutions. Revolution is not a memory, it is not something to make us cry a bit. It's something which can be *today's* project, but in the way it *fits* to today.

Here, being part of history is a narrative achievement tied to his personal history, connecting his youth and his middle age. The first thing he mentions is being affected by the space, being touched, and tying this to his personal biography, emphasising resistance against fear, and naming himself as someone who resists. The tanks, bullets, and the army are contrasted with the contemporary government's decision to shut down ERT. The remark that took considerable effort to not focus on himself, and instead re-orient his broadcast towards questions of collective social justice is interesting. In seeking to remind people that the possibility of social justice, through the ERT struggle, is alive is linked to the key phrase of the Polytechnic - 'The Polytechnic Lives' - and so the performance of resistant subjectivity, as an ERT broadcaster from within Polytechnic, shifts from individual terms to those of collective subjectivity. The imperative 'We must make the old new' relates the Polytechnic to ERT. He re-iterates the way in which revolution is a contemporary project, and this possibility of social justice being linked to the Polytechnic is crucial to the work on myth, mobilising people, and moving away from the sentimentality which can be attached to revolutionary memory. He describes how it was to broadcast from within the commemoration:

It was very important because you have history on your side. You have so many years of different efforts, and the very strong meaning of Polytechnic, to remind people that history is not a straight road. Sometimes to take back energy again, you must go there, stay inside and think about these points of history, and then reform it to today, and channel the energy of these points of history, to the needs of today. The most difficult thing is to do things in a new way, and not just [go there]. Because I could go to Polytechnic and say 'Here is Polytechnic' every year, until 2083! It's easy. But you must say

something more about why you need Polytechnic today. Will it be the same? Will it be the trial only of the youth? Or must the whole of society live in another way to make a new Polytechnic? Or you have other forms, and Polytechnic is only the battery from which to take energy? You must ask yourself and ask the people. But to be in this – not only this historical point – but in this *place*, really, inside the Polytechnic with many students over the days, it was different, it was different. Because every time, the place has something to say to you.

Different themes that have been discussed over the chapters so far come to the fore here: the notion of the place of the Polytechnic being important, and the annual coming together within it producing regenerative counter-spaces. Historical moments are in this story embedded within the space and temporality of the commemoration. The affective atmosphere of the commemoration enables Andreas to question what a Polytechnic of today might be, and who would be its protagonist. The commemoration as a resource, literally evoked as ‘a battery’ that the movement can draw on in specific moments, generating affective agency, increasing the capacity with which people feel they can act. His assertion that it is easy to make the generic statement of ‘being here’ – as the ERT banner itself does – and that one must do more, and channel the historical point towards the needs of today, questions myth-making practices and the extent to which they are able to mobilise action on the present. Here he also questions the notion of a ‘revolutionary subject’ which is popularly ascribed to ‘the youth’, particularly within the context whereby dominant political myths of the Polytechnic represent it as being led by students, rendering the involvement of workers, farmers, and others secondary. This question of the ‘subject’ of the uprising, as well as the affective power of the place also comes up in the narrative of another ERT worker, Sisi, who works as a cultural programmer:

I was in Polytechnic Friday and Saturday evening. It was very important, very important. Many people were inside and outside. When I spoke to the people with a microphone, I knew people would hear me and it was a unique experience, in that place, that moment, after 40 years, after all that blood. We were just standing in the same place of ’73, ERT workers: simple. When I was on the microphone, it was very emotional. I talked about the past, I talked about the present. I talked about the sacrifice of then, about the problems of democracy today, and about government decisions being illegal ... Polytechnic is a symbol, always a symbol. In 1973 there weren’t only Polytechnic students. There were workers, not only students. I was honoured to be there, I feel in awe of this place.

While attending to the emotional nature of being in the same place as the occupiers of 1973, Sisi reproduces some aspects of the dominant political myths of heroism and

sacrifice, within a critique of the undemocratic nature of the then-government. While both are in awe of being in the same place as the protagonists of 1973, Sisi doesn't interrogate the value of symbolism, while Andreas notes the importance of 'finding new historical points', the process of 'renewing meaning' and discovering 'the power to wake yourself up':

Those broadcasts were exceptional ... it was something special. But if you don't find new historical points, as time passes, you find yourself far away from Polytechnic sometimes, and slowly but steadily the meaning becomes diminished. And sometimes you find it is just some words, which do not have the real power to awaken you. So you must make new points in history. Based on this [the Polytechnic], but renewing the meaning. You have to remember. So now, Polytechnic, for me ... it has become something new. I was there in another time, in a society in crisis, a democracy in crisis. Not with guns. But if you are opposite guns maybe it's easier, it's clearer. They have a uniform and a gun, so they're the enemy, OK. If you fear too much, you run. If you don't, you walk ahead. But when your opponents are not clear, there are no uniforms, no guns, so who is the enemy really? Maybe it's part of me? It's more complicated. And this has to be more thoughtful, and we must make new theories. I think we have the old way of analysing things, like Marxism, but we have new societies, we have new surroundings and we must find which one is the proper way of dealing with it. We must make new theories, and of course, new actions.

Moving from a narration of his embodied affective state whilst in the Polytechnic commemoration, and the ways in which it can be used as a resource, Andreas highlights the inherent dangers in such action. He is suspicious of the affective atmosphere of the Polytechnic commemoration. The idea of words losing meaning leads to a performative critical self-reflexivity regarding the contemporary relevance of the Polytechnic. The fragility of political myths within a necessarily more complex contemporary situation where there is 'no clear opponent' is attested to. I find Panos' reflections on his participation fascinating, and at the same time their eloquence betrays his experience at hosting a weekly radio programme on everyday politics, the first, he tells me, in Greece to have listeners call up and participate. As such, he is adept at on-the-spot critical contemplation. It is interesting to contrast Andreas' reflections with those of Panos, who did not work at ERT before June 2013, and has been involved with the occupation and the running of the radio station since.

It [broadcasting from inside Polytechnic] was so bad. Why was it so bad? We were on automatic pilot, feeling sentimental. Really miserable. The Theodorakis concert was a very bad concert, very traditional. This is what really annoys me, this kind of Polytechnic shit. You have to play it again, and again. Songs that represent a

completely different terrain. The reference that ERT made to the Polytechnic uprising was wrong on two aspects. The things they have in common: during the uprising they also had radio station. Now you had the opposite: a radio station occupied. In both cases, you had an occupation, and media. In the Polytechnic there was an uprising, and media [the radio they built] which they needed to communicate with people. In the opposite sense, ERT was something programmed to transmit. So what happened right after the uprising [June 11] is that they had the media but no message. They were trying to find it. If you watch all the programmes, you see a complicated message. Their main problem is that they don't really have a message, they are still trying to find it.

The music of Theodorakis is heavily associated with the dictatorship, having famously soundtracked Costa-Gavras' *Z*, a thinly-veiled critique of the Colonels' rule.

Theodorakis had been leader of the Lambrakis Youth Movement, following the murder of the MP and Peace leader Lambrakis in 1963, whose story is told in the film. Theodorakis became an MP himself in 1965, and was imprisoned during the dictatorship, famously writing songs from prison before his release in 1970 when he toured the world. Throughout his career he composed popular songs using the poetry of Seferis, Ritsos, Anagnostakis and Elytis. A classically-trained composer, Theodorakis drew inspiration from *rembetika* – often referred to as Greek blues – following his imprisonment on the island of Ikaria in 1947 during the Civil War, and integrated the '*laiki*' rhythms and melodies into his classical compositions (Holst, 1980: 55). Writer and musician in Theodorakis' orchestra, Gail Holst wrote in 1980 that 'the dictatorship years transformed Theodorakis into an international hero,' whose 'experiences in prison and exile transformed his music,' and that in 1974/5 he 'toured his liberated homeland like a conquering hero' (1980: 206-7). Theodorakis's songs are known inside-out by people in the Left, and have earned internationally renown, especially among those with an interest in what we might call 'resistance songs'.<sup>104</sup> While the songs are still heard in cafes, bars, on demos, and here, in the concert during the Polytechnic commemoration, some people are very critical of Theodorakis. His particular brand of unabashedly patriotic leftist heroics is often deemed irrelevant.

Panos's critical stance articulates how invoking the 'Polytechnic shit' through an analogous gesture is redundant, lacking significance and miserable. Many who are politically active and participate in remembrance practices on an annual basis share this critical stance towards the kind of political myth-making which is dependent upon

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<sup>104</sup> In 2014 Kurdish women fighters used songs from *Z* to soundtrack a YouTube video made to mobilise international support during the ISIS siege of Kobane (Loizides, 2015: 72). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7a0WIBQ8kw>

drawing comparative links between the Polytechnic uprising, or the dictatorship, and the present, as if nothing had happened in-between. As such, these remembrance practices as a means of mobilizing people can become repetitive and meaningless over time. As Tassos, our prominent anarcho-syndicalist tells me, 'People can vote: this is not a dictatorship my friend!' The notion of representations from a 'completely different terrain' coming to bear on the present is central, if we consider the importance of legibility in regards to the dialectical image. If we are to judge political myths 'as a means for acting on the present,' (Bottici, 2007: 162) then clearly for some, the analogous gesture is redundant. In the following chapter I discuss other kinds of myth-making during the commemoration which invoke other pasts through citation and montage, as well as some participants' critique of nostalgic aesthetics.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explored the ways in which participants contest different forms of violence through creating, sharing, and critiquing political myths through an analogous gesture of a 'contemporary Junta' and through the Polytechnic uprising as a wish-image of political action. Through different social practices – being in the commemoration; making artefacts; the ERT occupation broadcasting within the Polytechnic – I have explored work on counteractive political myths, which operate through analogous gesture. I have argued that these invocations of the Junta and Polytechnic together with contemporary socio-economic conditions are part of the work of making, re-making, and sharing myth, which constitute performative practices of political subjectivity and which generate affective agency. I have shown that these embodied forms of indirect resistance are intrinsically connected to the production of counter-spaces of the Polytechnic during the commemoration. Remembrance practices and occupation practices are spatial practices; and the work on myth that explores desires and imaginations of people with regard to the space of the Polytechnic constitutes it as a space of representation. The political myth of contemporary Junta produces the Polytechnic as a space that does have the ability to *do something* – why would ERT go there unless it thought that there would be political implications? The failure of ERT to mobilise people around their occupation within the Polytechnic, to reproduce a mass movement akin to the 1973 Polytechnic uprising, shows us that while meaningful for people, political myths are not processes that automatically translate into collective action.

We have seen that political myths can be a site of radical imagination. Here they open up a critique of the contemporary socio-political situation through asking an

apparently simple and crude question: do we have a contemporary Junta? Through mobilizing fears of state and fascist violence, participants create dialectical images, which aim to interrupt the present and to mobilise people through exposing the contemporary Junta and illustrating that its violence is equivalent to the dictatorship's. These images also interrogate us: What are you going to do about it? Even if the violence isn't actually equivalent, the myth is working to generate affect. Furthermore, the ways in which people negotiate these political myths is articulated in itself in affective registers of ambivalence, combining uncertainty, hope, and fears. In the previous chapter we examined the official political myths, which the people in this chapter attempt to contest. In the following chapter, I explore work on political myths within the commemoration that invoke other moments – the Civil War, December 2008, Syntagma 2011 – which are critical of the nostalgic aesthetics surrounding invocations of the 1973 Polytechnic uprising.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **POLITICAL MYTHS OF TENACIOUS RESISTANCE: INVOKING OTHER PASTS WITHIN THE POLYTECHNIC COMMEMORATION**

Since 2008 the annual Polytechnic uprising commemoration has taken on new resonance. In Chapter Six I looked at practices of myth-making that worked on the analogous gesture of 'then' and 'now' through the creation of dialectical images. Aside from these kinds of political myth-making, however, there are other ways in which images of the past are invoked during the Polytechnic commemoration. This chapter focuses on remembrance practices that are not solely about the 1973 uprising, but attempt to recover other moments within the commemoration. This chapter is concerned with different kinds of invocations within the commemoration that construct temporalities situating 1973 as one of a constellation of important political events. I analyse the singing of songs from the Greek Resistance and Civil War; the production and experience of a ciné-event of 'Greek resistance'; the invocation of December 2008 and Syntagma 2011 in speech and text; and participants' critique of 'nostalgic aesthetics'. These interventions and artefacts are united in that they bring other moments to bear on the present, and I argue that they are part of the work on myth that posits 1973 as one moment in a tenacious resistance, creating temporalities which aim to 'seize the past' through citation and montage practices. This supports my argument that there is a heterogeneity of remembrance practices, which are themselves tied to heterogeneous practices of resistance. The different temporalities constructed alongside the production of the commemoration as counter-space are attached to different imaginations of political action; the 1973 uprising is not invoked with the present as an image in itself. Here, participants express anger and indignation with the official political myths of Chapter Five, as well as ambivalence and frustration with practices that, in their view, instrumentalise the Polytechnic uprising, an implicit critique of the myth-making explored in Chapter Six.

#### **A Rock in a Lake: the Polytechnic Uprising, the Other 'Novembers' and December 2008**

Within the commemoration there are participants who want to highlight the annual three days as a form of resistance in itself, and emphasise its history, as is expressed in the RAF EAAK pamphlet below:

The uprising has always hurt the elite government. This is why in the early years they tried in every way to attack its subversive message. They did this by either using the most brutal repression against the marches to the American Embassy (1980 riot killings of



Koumis and Kanellopoulous, and the 1985 killing of 15 year-old Michael Kaltezas), or trying to convert the celebration to have the character of a safe museum. (2012)

Citing the deaths of people during different commemorations of the uprising makes visible aspects of the commemoration, which are invisible in both the dominant political myths and the 'contemporary Junta' myths, and yet which speak to the kind of state violence vividly etched in living memory through the killing of Alexis in 2008. The explicit reference to the 'subversive message' of the uprising is the nucleus that orients all counteractive political myth-making that I discuss across Chapters Six and Seven. As I will show in this section, there are specific 'Novembers' that are brought to the fore frequently in pamphlets and exhibitions – 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995 – with the latter three deemed 'critical moments', 'instances where the intervention of youth outside of mainstream politics was felt strongly' (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou, 2011: 93). The deaths mentioned in the pamphlet excerpt illustrate that remembrance of the uprising has not always been institutionalized in the manner discussed in Chapter Five; from 1976 to 1980, New Democracy banned the march to the American embassy. Following the march in 1980, two young people, Stamatina Kanellopoulou and Iakovos Koumis, were beaten to death by special forces officers, with reports that their skulls were smashed. The 'official stance of the socialist opposition [PASOK] which was a complete cover-up of the incident,' (Taxikipali, 2010) is alluded to below in Katerina Gogou's poem, written upon the men's murder. The 'they said' here refers to the conservative Feminists of the time.

They shoot to kill.  
- They are shooting in the air, they cried  
Then the small hole in front of the bus stop was filled with blood  
- They are only plastic bullets, they said  
Then he fell  
- He has fainted, they cried.  
Then he was motionless,  
But they were already on their way. He was still,  
But they had already taken the trolley-bus, and gone. Gone were they.

There is an insistence, particularly on the part of anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups, to continue to cite these deaths. Below is an excerpt from a newspaper, produced by the Anarchist Archive. The language stresses the authors' ongoing resistance against the 'oblivion and distortion' of the state and their maintenance of the 'flame' that represents a 'socially dissenting position':

Year after year, despite constantly rising suppression, we faced the wave of oblivion and distortion, against the state, against the logics

of avoidance, because this is what has been existing all this period ... Groups of unrepentant people continue to take blows against oblivion and distortion, representing the socially dissenting position that used to exist in the 73 revolution. Maintaining the flame, still burning, these blows produced two of the highest moments in this long-term trajectory: the insurrectionary events of 1985 that followed the murder of Michalis Kaltezas and the revolution of 1995 with the occupation of the Polytechnic by thousands of people at the day of the 22nd commemoration. This year, it is the 39th blow, and we keep on counting. (2012)

The authors of this text – Anna, Dimitris et al – put forward the 1995 occupation of the Polytechnic following the police murder of Kaltezas as a ‘high point’ and a catalyst for different kinds of political action. Panos from the ERT occupation (who was critical of the ‘Polytechnic shit’ in Chapter Six) poetically evokes the different ways in which these pasts are made present, through a different metaphor.

In a symbolic way, Polytechnic is the beginning of uprising that ended badly, but left marks. The law school isn’t symbolic in the same way. Any uprising in Greece since the Polytechnic is connected as a route. Artistically we try to connect any uprising with Polytechnic. In fact if you talk in historical terms, Polytechnic is like a rock on a lake – it makes waves – they come, they return, return, return ..

The only ... even Alexis’s uprising is connected to Polytechnic. The only one not connected is Syntagma – its the first time somebody throws another rock in the lake, makes other kinds of waves, and in a different way there is a link between the uprising of Grigoropoulos and Syntagma – the people involved.

There is a difference between thinking of the Polytechnic uprising as a rock in a lake or a flame to be maintained and in conceptualizing it as a ‘model’ that has been implicitly or explicitly evoked by ‘every student mobilisation’ since (Kornetis, 2006: 13). Furthermore, this is a different approach to the kind of dialectical image-making we saw in Chapter Six, although it still suggests a constellatory connection between events, through citation. As has been discussed, the Polytechnic commemoration has become more popular, and in the words of participants, more relevant, since December 2008, as Leandros who is in the autonomous group that runs a library tells me:

After 2008? The Polytechnic revolt was not suitable for elites – couldn’t build mythology, so they tried to erase it. A genuine revolt from young people before the Crisis. They rejected everything,

didn't ask anything from the system. This changed the Polytechnic  
- became more massive.

Here, the 'genuine' revolt of December 2008 following Alexis's murder – as opposed to ritualized riots – magnifies the Polytechnic commemoration and gives it new significance. While it has been argued that the mobilizations of December 2008 and Syntagma 2011 rejected any explicit invocation of the Polytechnic uprising (Kornetis, 2010), which I instead interpret as rejection of the dominant political myths. A vivid text from pamphlet made shortly after the death of Alexis read:

11th December 2008

**We are here / we are everywhere / we are an image from the future**

'Politics is the politics of consensus; the rest is gang-war, riots, chaos.' This is a true translation of what they are telling us, of their effort to deny the living core of every action, and to separate and isolate us from what we can do: not to unite the two into one, but to rupture again and again the one into two. The mandarins of harmony, the barons of peace and quiet, law and order, call on us to become dialectic. But those tricks are desperately old, and their misery is transparent in the fat bellies of the trade-union bosses, in the washed-out eyes of the intermediaries, who like vultures perch over every negation, over every passion for the real. We have seen them in May, we have seen them in LA and Brixton, and we have been watching them over decades licking the long now white bones of the 1973 Polytechnic. We saw them again yesterday when instead of calling for a permanent general strike, they bowed to legality and called off the strike protest march. Because they know all too well that the road to the generalisation of the insurrection is through the field of production – through the occupation of the means of production of this world that crushes us. (Reproduced in 56a Infoshop, 2009: 61)

The Polytechnic was occupied that December, a central point of organization, and the slogans 'Bread, Education, Freedom' and 'The Junta didn't end in 1973' were chanted and spray-painted in the city (Kornetis, 2010: 78). Giorgos – the artist who was also part of Villa Amalias (the oldest social centre, evicted in 2013, as recounted in Chapter Four) – told me stories about this occupation, how it transformed his relationship to urban political action, and the city itself. Elena, the Italian anarchist who returned for the weekend of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alexis' death, also recounted her experiences of 2008 while we were at the Polytechnic for a party raising money for political prisoners. Dub music emanated from a large sound-system, while people danced sweatily on the vibrating floors crammed into the room where Elena had slept

during the occupation. Outside this building, groups of people were sitting around and chatting into the early hours in the large public space where students paint banners before demonstrations and the walls are covered in large murals. Meanwhile, in another building on the campus, EAAK had organized a party to raise funds for elections, where rembetiko music played and people sat in groups, having conversations. Elena pointed out where she had hacked off bricks from the wall to throw at the police, and commented how strange it was to be here again. The stories she told were often hallucinatory in the sense that they were prompted by things we saw in the street, and she did not attempt to recount the urgency of those days through a linear chronology of events. This can be contrasted with other kinds of representations that describe the ways in which the Polytechnic campus was crucial to the December 2008 events. The following paragraph is from the *Revolt and Crisis* book, by scholar-activists:

People are gathering at the square, the reference point of the neighbourhood and the entire city, but also at the Technical University, the reference point for every emergency ... clashes all night long, on Patision Street, starting from Athens Polytechnic. Those who had the fastest reaction times are running to the common confrontation areas in order to make themselves visible, to awaken the city, to defend their life. Exarcheia, the Technical University, Patision Street, have retained their character and their memories for years ... The existence of a closed and clearly protected space helped but also captured the street revolted. The university institutions have turned once more into nuclei of revolt. (Markrygianni and Tsavdaroglou, 2011: 40-41)

The Polytechnic is here 'turned once more into a nucle[us] of revolt' Apart from the personal stories of life-changing experiences through December 2008, of which there are many, the events invited critical reflection of different kinds of violent political action. As Vradis argues, December 2008 'exceeded the violence equilibrium' of the containment and ritualization of regular 'commemorative riots' of November 17<sup>th</sup> or on weekends, by going beyond the confines of the territorial area and through the protagonists of the revolt themselves, who were 'unprecedented ... in the mixture of their social and class composition' (2012a: 13). The importance of 2008 was attested to within the 2012 commemoration, as reflected in the following excerpt of a XAMAS pamphlet. The events of 2008 are here exalted in relation the 1973 uprising:

The youth, who were raised on the back of the great Polytechnic uprising of 73, did it again, with a dynamic gaze upon the flow of history. They stepped forward, and became once again the factors of uncertainty, sending waves throughout society, proving that December is a necessity of our time, and will return constantly to the spotlight, as a possibility – 2013.

The imagining of December as a constant possibility also alludes to the Dekemvriana,

of 1944 and the Varkiza agreement<sup>105</sup> – which was signed upon the defeat of EAM, as outlined in Chapter One – were prevalent during the events of December 2008 and in their later analysis. Indeed, 2008 was called ‘the new December’ both by participants who ‘had the sensation of being in a civil war,’ as well as the purveyors of ‘dominant discourse’ who wanted to exacerbate the polarizing tensions of ‘national discord’ (Gaitanou, 2011: 91). Slogans at the time included: ‘In this “Dekemvriana”, we will win’ and ‘We are in a Civil War’, ‘This is the “Dekemvriana” of our Generation’ and ‘December 1944 – December 2008’ (Gaitanou, 2011: 91). As I will now discuss, the Dekemvriana, Varkiza Agreement and Civil War continued to be cited by participants in the commemoration of 2012.

### **Invoking the Greek Resistance Through Singing**

On the first night of the Polytechnic commemoration in 2012, after a discussion about migrant workers’ rights in one of the lecture theatres, I spent some time wandering around the outdoor space in between the buildings. The space was full of people scattered around tables with piles of leaflets on them, talking and laughing. There were two groups of people standing very close to each other singing 1940s resistance songs, interspersed with football chants and attacks on New Democracy (then in government) as if they were in battle, singing over each other in attempt to be the loudest. I asked nearby people who they were and was told were two factions of ANTARSYA. Although in jest, there was definitely a competitive spirit in the performances as they bellowed over each other. The conviviality made this performance seem commonplace; there were people milling about, different conversations happening, flirtations. I was not the only one watching them: some of the older people who’d set up the room dedicated to those who had died in the uprising were also observing the singers from the steps of the nearby building. I made an audio recording: the power and beauty of the unadorned voices singing in unison, seemingly unprompted, had all the splendour of a choral group.

This spontaneous, embodied performance of resistance songs within the site of the Polytechnic brings different moments within Greece’s history of political violence to the fore. Why are young people singing these songs and what kind of engagement with the Resistance do these performances enact? When I ask people about the Polytechnic, a common response is to say that in order to understand the Polytechnic you have to *go back* to the Resistance. In singing these songs, the Resistance and Civil

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<sup>105</sup> The Varkiza agreement was between the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs (supported by the British) and the Secretary of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). It ordered the disarming and destruction of ELAS (National People’s Army of Liberation) which was the military arm of the left-wing National Liberation Front (EAM).

War are invoked through specialised songs known only by a small percentage of the population. I'm interested in the invocation of this specific past through song, both in terms of the violent political action it narrativises and the resistant subjectivities that are performed in their rendering. Such invocations demand examination - not only in terms of the thematic ideas embedded in the performances, but also through the actual performances themselves - as a powerful ritual that ties people together.

Songs of the Greek Resistance have multiple sources and interpretations and as such might be considered part of a 'folk culture', which Scott describes as one that 'achieves the anonymity of collective property, constantly being adjusted, revised, abbreviated, or, for that matter, ignored. The multiplicity of its authors provides its protective cover, and when it no longer serves current interests sufficiently to find performers or an audience, it simply vanishes forever' (Scott, 1990: 161). The assertion that such culture vanishes without performers points towards the importance of the fact that the songs are still being sung, and I am interested in exploring the current interests they serve. Whatever these interests may be, that late night they were grounded in the site-specificity of the performance; singing these songs *during* the commemoration *within* the campus of Polytechnic positions the performance as part of a defiant celebration of a once-'hidden transcript' (Scott, 1990) of the suppressed post-war Left within a context of 'nationalist anti-Communist fundamentalism' (Koliopoulos and Veremis, 2002:107). It also connects the young people in 2012 to their 1973 forebears. The 1973 activists themselves, as Karamichas notes, 'worshiped and idealized the wartime Communist resistance and its revolutionary tradition, which operated in highly selective ways...in turn, the Polytechnic Generation itself became "a culturally reproduced site of youth rebellion" for many generations to come' (cited in Kornetis, 2010: 173-4). So these singers are drawing selectively on a significant repertoire of national and local resistance, enacting inter-subjective experience (a jovial battle of lyrics) that makes claims to specific forms of political action and subjectivities of resistance, albeit in a highly circumscribed fashion. In jousting each other in song, the two groups of singers enact a form of contention that emulates 'effective contention' - action that 'does not resemble a marching band's precision drills, but the clash of championship football teams' (Tilly, 2008: 41).

While these performances might seem spontaneous to an outsider, it is evident that they have been sung many times before, the phrases learned and embodied; they are performances of specific knowledge, which is inscribed in the action of singing

(Bachelard in Cecena, 2012: 118). How far does this inscribed knowledge go as a way of delineating collectivities? One couplet that is sung, 'Lets go people, don't bow your heads, they will betray you in Varkiza once again,' is an explicit reference to the Varkiza agreement of 1945. Under its terms, EAM/ELAS agreed to disarm, on the condition of being able to engage with political activities. The terms, however, were not honoured by the nationalist organisations and armed gangs, who began to persecute and assault their opponents – a period which became known as the 'White Terror'. Varkiza as an icon of betrayal and defeat 'reappears' during critical moments – in December 2008, and several protests during the time of 'Crisis', in which the slogan 'End with Varkiza' emerged (Koronaïou et al, 2012: 15). Indeed, in December 2008 'graffiti on the buildings of Athens read: "Varkiza Agreement is dead. We are at war again"' (Memos, 2009: 220), and it could similarly be found on the walls during the Student Movement of 2006/7 (Kallianos, 2012: 31).<sup>106</sup>

Recalling this betrayal through song underscores the crucial contrast between the government, Far-Right, and everyday forms of resistance, and contemporary groups such as ANTARSYA who resist austerity measures implemented by the state. I re-print the lyrics to 'Heroes' below:

### Heroes

Heroes, impregnable mountains<sup>107</sup>  
 Heroes, with twelve lives  
 Castles of Olympus  
 And Parannassus' ghosts<sup>108</sup>  
 Heroes in the ruin

Blood, red water  
 Blood, loud river  
 Fire in Alamana<sup>109</sup>

And fire in Gorgopotamos<sup>110</sup>  
 And fire in Gorgopotamos  
 Let's go brother, let's go forward  
 And the people are with us  
 In our greatest achievements  
 In the stones<sup>111</sup> and in the ground

<sup>106</sup> As discussed in Chapter Four, this period is very important for students who were involved during that period, in opposition to the reform of a law concerning public education that the right wing government of New Democracy wanted to pass.

<sup>107</sup> EAM controlled the majority of mountainous regions and in 1944 set up a provisional government, PEEA dubbed 'the mountain government'

<sup>108</sup> Parannassus is the mountainous region where EAM/ELAS hid after the Varkiza agreement.

<sup>109</sup> Alamana is the name of a battle between Greek Revolutionary Army and Ottoman Empire during Greek Independence war 1821.

<sup>110</sup> Gorgopotamos is the name of a town in which a bridge was destroyed by the Resistance in 1942, disrupting German transportation of supplies - one of the biggest guerrilla acts in Europe.

Death, black brother  
Death, I will become immortal  
Fire in Alamana  
And fire in Gorgopotamos  
And fire in Gorgopotamos

Wind in the mountain tops  
Black moon in the hearts  
Come and take your freedom yourself  
With songs, weapons and swords

As a ritual, singing resistance songs is a powerful means of uniting symbols of political action with strong emotions. The compelling sensorial experience of people singing is 'emotionally contagious' (Kertzer, 1988: 40,100) and if the episode that I have described can be understood as a performance of a political subjectivity using symbols of resistance, it is one that works only in unison; it has to be sung together. Furthermore, if 'people's emotional involvement in political rites is certainly a key source of their power' (Kertzer, 1988: 180), then the kinds of emotions that are being shared and expressed in the resistance songs, alongside the ideas embedded within them, are important to unpack. Situated within the highly divided political society of the present, it is possible that singing resistance songs goes beyond a light gesture to the past, but constitutes a political rite that stakes a claim in present political struggles. The structural violence of the state, as well as explicitly violent political action that is increasingly part of the repertoire of the Far Right, have been accompanied by fears of a new Civil War propagated by the mainstream media and public discourse. As such, to invoke the ghosts of the Civil War, as resistance songs do, mixed amongst songs deriding New Democracy, is provocative and a form of everyday resistance. The episode at the Polytechnic speaks of militancy through impassioned, playful, collective performance. It is a call to arms, to 'come and take your freedom yourself / with songs, weapons, swords'. While the singers are joyful and merry on a dark night of celebration, there is a reason why they sing this song and not another. What commitments are they attending to? Could singing these words in this particular setting enable a moment of fixity in the face of contemporary political flux? Referencing the history of the Resistance grounds the singers in a Communist tradition that has splintered into different shards, which rejects the Greek Communist party (KKE). Another rhyming slogan asserts, 'Aris was a great communist, that is why he never gave up the ELAS weapons.' Aris Velouchiotis, a prominent leader of ELAS, was removed from the Communist party because of this decision. His name

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<sup>111</sup> See Panourgia (2010) on the multiple significance of stones in Greek history.



and image are brought up repeatedly during the commemorations of 2012 and 2013.



59. Aris flyer, Polytechnic commemoration 2012. END VARIZA!

The narrative of Velouchiotis's life was carefully constructed during his leadership by poet and artistic director of the ELAS 'People's theatre', Kotzioulas. Describing this process, Myrsiades and Myrsiades write:

As a captain whose fame was rooted in local forms of recognition, the Aris that Kotzioulas constructs claims Parnassos (Apollo's birthplace) and Karpenisi (the deathsite of Markos Botsaris, hero of the War of 1821) as his origins. His choice capitalises on their mythic and historical associations, as well as their proximity and their familiarity.' (Myrsiades and Myrsiades, 1999: 242)

The lyrics sung in the Polytechnic on the night of November 15<sup>th</sup> selectively depict Aris,<sup>112</sup> while the violent brutality of the Civil War is only hinted at through the lyrics

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<sup>112</sup> In an obituary of Castoriadis, Barker writes about asking him about Aris Velouchiotis, and apparently he said 'it had all, all of it, Velouchiotis too, been Stalinist bullshit, and that it was like that long before the return of the psychotic Nikos Zacharides.' (Barker, 1998)

of blood and stones. What is fascinating, in terms of the performance we are looking at, is the way that Aris himself placed emphasis on demotic (Greek folk) song in everyday life, narrativising events in a way that impels people towards action. Here, demotic song

becomes a means of both modelling from the past and structuring the future. Demotic song summons up an image to be mimicked in real-time agentic action; captured symbolically, it can then be reproduced to control the flow of historical meaning. Turning song to weapon, the Black Hats [Aris' personal guards] characteristically broke out into song on various occasions and together with their chief were themselves the subject of song. (Myrsiades and Myrsiades, 1999: 242)

Furthermore, EAM/ELAS used their wide knowledge of demotic song as a way to contrast themselves with EDES, the nationalist opposition, who did not have such a repertoire and were not 'of the people' (*Ibid.*).

Clearly the poets who narrativised the plight of EAM/ELAS were aware of the power of political myth, as the kernels of the history of the resistance reproduced in the lyrics of *Heroes* continue to find resonance and to intervene in the political, invoked here in the public space of the Polytechnic campus. The ritual of breaking out into song is itself continued. While the short-hand references to the violence of the White Terror which destroyed much of rural Greece belie the deeply complex and divisive nature of the ensuing Civil War, singing generates an affective atmosphere amongst the participants that possibly motivates contentious political action in the present. It could be argued that the popularity of these songs represent on some level a nostalgia for a communist Greece that never (or almost) was. However, activism in contemporary political struggles is crucial to the people singing these songs today. It is interesting to ask why these young people are singing resistance songs rather than the songs specifically linked to the Polytechnic uprising, which are nationally famous and the creation of other 'heroes', such as songs by Theodorakis or Savvopoulos, who uses the poetry of Ritsos. I argue that part of the reason for this is the influence of the dominant political myths discussed in Chapter Four. The Civil War is not taught in schools (Koronaïou et al, 2012); the Polytechnic has its own national school holiday. As has been discussed, people learn about the Civil War through family, friends, films, songs, literature, and pamphlets. In the Working Club in Nea Smyrni, a self-organised centre that hosts a health centre, events, workshops, dance classes, and so on, Stephanos tells me about his grandfather's involvement in the Civil War, and traces a line from the anti-fascism of the 1940s to 'wearing his grandfather's shoes' in the present. He made a poster showing the image of an old pair of shoes, and put it up around his area with a slogan about 'wearing our grandfathers' shoes'. There are many families where grandparents fought on different sides and others that do not

know their histories because of the silence incurred during the anti-Communist years. In terms of this history there have been fierce debates regarding revisionism (See Panourgia 2010).<sup>113</sup>

Portelli has said of the figures of the Italian Resistance that they are 'icons before they are human beings' (2013). Indeed, while the generation of the Greek resistance now number very few, the 'Polytechnic Generation' of the uprising are flesh and blood, fallible human beings who are frequently put forwards as culpable for the current political situation in Greece as discussed in Chapter Four. Theodorakis is a case in point. His songs were clandestinely listened to, and, while exiled for most of the dictatorship, he was exalted as a spokesperson of the anti-Junta resistance. On November 16<sup>th</sup>, during both annual screenings I attended in 2012 and 2013 of a student-made film, when his face came on the screen, he was loudly booed by the audience. The next section is guided by this film, and looks at the ways in which different images of the past are invoked in an auditorium of the Polytechnic every year as part of the commemoration.

### **Political Myth and Montage: Ciné-event and 'Greek resistance'**

'Each year they add more. I can't stand it. It's like an Angelopoulos film'<sup>114</sup> ... Ah, you like Angelopoulos? That's why you can stand it'

This is what Tassos says, laughing by the tables near the Stournara entrance, as I tell him that I'm off to see the film that is screened every year on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November at 4pm and which, at this point in 2013, is about four and a half hours long. Made by a student group, XAMAS, it is advertised on their website as a 'documentary about "people's and youth movements from the civil war until today."' The blurb states that it is 'for the old to remember, and the young/new students to learn. And not just learn about history but to take example and to walk the same paths. This is not the time for silence. It's time to fight!'<sup>115</sup>

On the 16<sup>th</sup> the faint sound of singing and chanting can be heard as I walk towards the architecture building. Once inside, the sounds of feet stamping reverberate to the

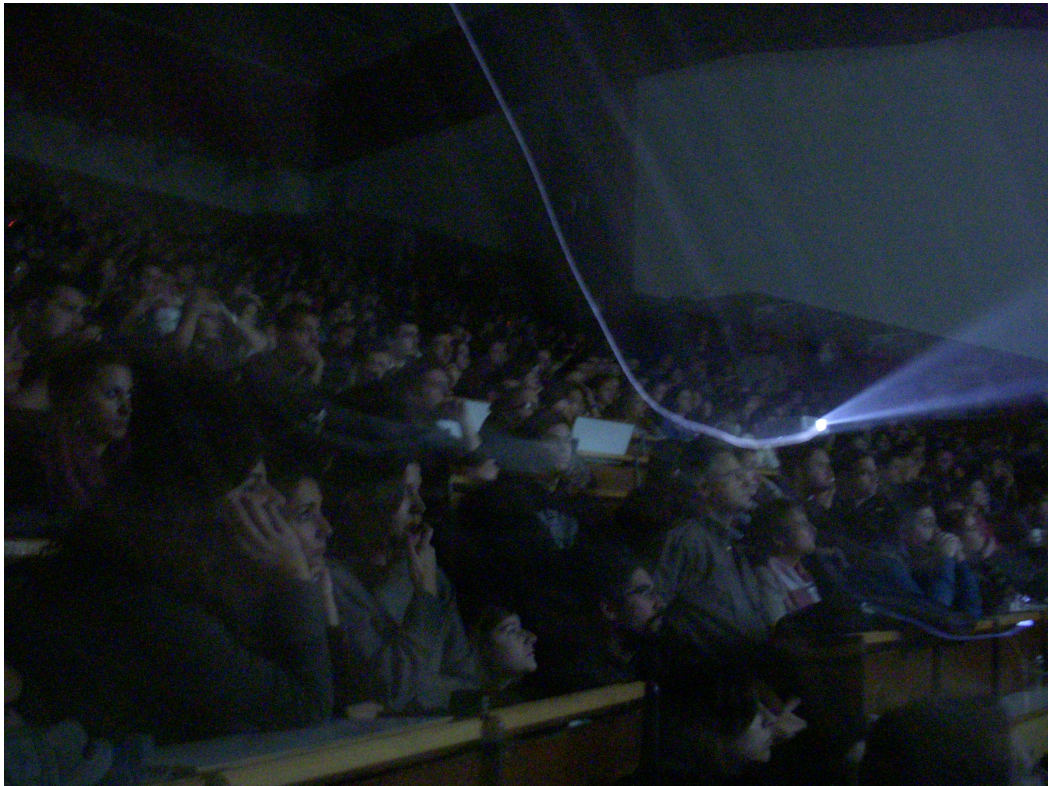
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<sup>113</sup> As some recent work on young people and memory has said: '[Y]oung people are not always well qualified to discuss and analyze the tragic nature of the war, because ... they are not fully aware of the historical facts. These are ideas and views mainly coming from their families and their environment and secondly from historical sources and this only for those studying history in the university, even though this should not be taken as a rule. The tragic consequences of the Civil War are transferred from generation to generation within families and each family's narration is obviously related to oral tradition and history and this influences each one's political stance and affiliation. Of course, silence over the Civil War is another important parameter (Koronaïou et al 2012: 32)

<sup>114</sup> Angelopoulos films are mocked for being long, slow and didactic.

<sup>115</sup> See Xamas2000.blogspot.co.uk (2014) XAMAS documentary screening [XAMAS: Προβολή ντοκιμαντέρ]. Available from: <http://xamas2000.blogspot.co.uk/2014/11/blog-post.html> (accessed 21 November 2014).

ground floor. Going up the stairs, the sound gets louder. When I enter the auditorium of the architecture building, on the second floor, there is a rapt audience of at least two hundred in the dark crowded room.



60. People watching the film.

The film starts Greek resistance against the Italian-German-Bulgarian occupation and the subsequent civil war. From logos in the corners of the images, we know that this footage is from state television documentaries. The images are of varying quality and different timbres of narrative is overlaid. Christos, who has seen it every year since it was first shown in 2002, describes how 'it starts with the fight against the axis occupation, continues to the Civil War - showing the ability of the Greek Communist Left to have a place in post WWII Greece, oppressed by Anglo-Americans. It continues to the present, showing all the struggles of the Greek youth, showing the major struggles. Every year it becomes a big longer.' That is to say that every year since it was first made, ten to thirty minutes of footage are added, showing what has happened in that year. Throughout the film, famous resistance songs and those from the period of the dictatorship are played over footage, with the audience singing along. All different kinds of chanting break out periodically, with different groups shouting one after another, over each other: anti-fascist chants that are heard on demonstrations, communist chants, the chants of different groups and schools, feet stomping in time with the shouted words. There are cheers and boos for different

people who come on the screen.

The film brings different moments of the past to bear on the present. It is shown once a year, always on the same date, and is made by student activists for student activists. This encounter between the specific media and its audience 'needs to be studied within the contexts and routines of everyday life, which render them meaningful' (Morley and Silverstone, 1990). The film shares histories that are not learnt about in school and audio-visually summarises the political events of the previous year (November-November). While the student group who make the film name it a documentary on their blog, I would argue that this doesn't really capture the specificity of it. The form is intertwined with the way it is made, and who it is for. I argue that, as the film is made by a student political group for the purposes of being shown on a specific date in the Polytechnic during the commemoration every year, it becomes an event in itself. The statement of the group that the documentary is '*not just* to learn about history, but to take example and walk the same paths' is important. The desires of the makers bring to mind contemporary discussions about the 'militant image' and the re-consideration of Argentinian filmmaker Getino's cine-acción, or ciné-event, (Eshun and Gray, 2011) while the convivial interactive nature of this event suggests the ways in which people coming together can be considered a 'social cinema scene' (Puwar, 2007).

More than merely a screening, a 'ciné-event', as Eshun and Gray write, is a

screening with discussion situated within the context of a political event. For Getino, the 'moment of communication (the ciné-event) is a terrain still new, but full of possibilities' that required 'organisers who know how to liberate the screening space, developing the critical feature of collective decision and participation.' (Eshun and Gray, 2011: 5)

The ciné-event is 'theorised as an encounter capable of catalysing the latent potentialities of the spectator, presumed passive, into the active "protagonist" of the ciné-event' (*Ibid.*). This sense of active participation being critical and catalyzing latent potentialities is something that I will discuss later, in relation to how the participants talk about their experiences. For Eshun and Gray, 'what is striking is the unguaranteed and tentative nature of this process. Getino admitted that there "still persists during the projections of militant cinema the attitude that one is 'in front of a film' and not a political event'" (*Ibid.*). The interactive nature of the experience of watching the film constitutes a very specific spatio-temporality, which resonates with the attention to the 'socialities and intensities produced among the screen, seats, steps, and foyers' of 'social cinema scenes' (Puwar, 2007: 255). However, the self-

made nature of the film, the non-cinema space in which it is shown, and the limitation of its screening to once a year necessitate further theorization of this event.

The film is made through collating different footage; techniques of montage and social media expertise are crucial – which brings in discussions of the relationship between contemporary political action and social media. It is ostensibly for anyone who wants to attend, as it is open to the public. However, being in the room, it is clear that the majority of people attending are in groups or amongst friends, with different parts of the crowd singing and chanting at different moments, in ways that perform different kinds of belonging. As Natalia says, ‘It’s, in a way, for interior feelings. Not many people that just want to pass by the Polytechnic come inside to go and watch it. *It’s between us.*’ This film, and the event itself, confounds the different definitions that circulate in media and cultural studies, as well as visual anthropology. I will now discuss how the making of and participating in this ciné-event are meaningful, through describing the scene itself and interviews with the makers and some participants.

As one person who has been to the ciné-event every year tells me, the film is ‘collectively researched and produced – it’s a self-educational process, you make your own research. The people are in the later years of studies, and they usually do it in groups.’ I argue that this making is not only interesting in terms of technological innovation and its use of participatory social media and the effects this has for political action more generally, but also in terms of agency. I speak with the person who was responsible for the film this year, Lambros, who was occupying the chemistry school in the Polytechnic campus in the suburb of Athens. He tells me:

It was started eleven years ago, and last year an older person from XAMAS helped me. This year I showed someone else. Every year we add something about what happened last year, one hour. Strikes – the university strike, demos, ERT occupation. In the last three weeks I saw a hundred videos. From YouTube I tried to find videos, songs, and images the best I could.

While I had been expecting him to talk at length about aesthetics, the brevity and humility of his response to my fascination with the film’s production affirm that he does not have the ambitions of a director. The fact that activists are using new technology to create films of political action is meaningful because they are creatively generating new kinds of engagement with images of the past – this is not cinema per se. The production of the film through collage methods and the use of new technologies bring up questions of agency with regards to new ways of creating

cultural and political artefacts. The self-made participatory film, using new forms of media, could not have been made in an age prior to smart phones. As many argue, 'the internet opens up closed bodies of knowledge by shattering the layperson/expert dichotomy based on rules and rituals that once regulated access' (Juhasz, 2008: 336-7). Responding to these new ways of using media, Van Dijck posits that this is a new kind of 'user agency' which is 'cast by cultural theorists as participatory engagement, in contrast to the passive recipients of earlier stages of media culture' (Van Dijck, 2009: 42). While YouTube is not inherently participatory, in the case of the film, whereby students who are not named 'authors' collate the content of different political struggles and movements, this collective aspect is important.

In the analysis that follows, I don't mean to uncritically extol the virtues of social media, but through being able to distribute images of police and state violence, the connectivity made possible through the wide usage of smartphones in general has transformed contemporary political action. While many are skeptical about email and social media usage, especially in the wake of NSA revelations, documenting via camera has been an important tool in transnational solidarity networks and in being able to hold the state accountable. In the Greek context, images of tortured and beaten antifascist protesters, as well as images from inside a maximum-security prison, famously circulated on twitter. What is interesting in the case of this ciné-event, is that while most of content of the film is comprised of YouTube footage, the form of the film is projected into a large auditorium – it escapes digital spaces. To return to the act of montage itself, the way in which songs from the past are overlaid onto contemporary footage is intriguing. As Godard and Miéville ask of their documentary about the PLO (1978), 'What does it mean to edit the Internationale into any and every picture, rather like the way butter is smeared on bread?'<sup>116</sup> (Steyerl, 2012: 85) We can similarly ask of this film, what does it mean to put 'Heroes' (the song discussed in the last section) over footage of contemporary demonstrations? Godard and Miéville conclude that this 'additive "and" of the montage with which they edit one picture onto another, is not an innocent one and certainly not unproblematic' (*Ibid.*).

What if this 'and' of political montage is functionalized, specifically for the sake of a populist mobilization? And what does this question mean for the articulation of protest today, if nationalists, protectionists, anti-Semites, conspiracy theorists, Nazis, religious groups and reactionaries all line up in the chain of equivalencies

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<sup>116</sup> As Steyerl remarks, 'what happens, though, if we conversely relate a reflection about a form of artistic production, namely the theory of montage, to the field of politics? In other words, how is the political field edited, and which political significance could be derived from this form of articulation?' (2012: 86)

with no problem at anti- globalization demos? Is this a simple case of the principle of unproblematic addition, a blind 'and', that presumes that if sufficient numbers of different interests are added up, at some point the sum will be the people? (*Ibid*)

The addition that I want to discuss here is the yearly addition of YouTube footage: How do they choose what to add? This is not unproblematic. Where are the Syrian refugees? The anarchist hunger strikers? Who is included in the 'and' – where are the women, and the 'non-Greeks'? The film in 2013 ends with the addition of the video made for the Athens university strike, which had started in September 2013 and continued until December.

The film works with images and sounds in a different way than the invocation through comparative gesture, which was discussed in the last chapter. Here, images of the past are grounded in the present and significant in that people are invoking them, but the narrative is not connected to the present in such an explicit way. I want to draw attention to how the filmmakers use montage. Hito Steyerl, an artist and writer who works predominantly with images of the 'political,' calls this process 'concatenation' – the joining together – of images. The film uses montage, yet it is done chronologically: it constructs a linear history of struggle, connecting the past to the present like beads on a thread, punctured with songs and chants from the present and other time periods. There are different kinds of authorial voice: documentary narrative; protest videos. No vocal narrative, just images of battles between police and protestors. This leaves the meanings of the film even more open than a documentary with a narrative form, which would 'explain' events. As the student who makes the film, Lambros, says:

Other students say the quality should be made better. 2006/7 takes up too much time, and it has to have standard parts added, 2008, 2010, 5th of May. Make it more like a documentary, not just songs and video but say what happened.

Lambros recounts what he considers to be the important recent moments in contentious moments through listing the years, which are shorthand citations. As someone who was not involved in student politics at this time, and from the contemporary vantage point, the movement of 2006/7 takes up too much time. This idea of taking up too much time is a judgment that can only happen retrospectively, as when the footage is being added, everything that year is deemed important. Drawing on the interactions between media, cultural studies, and anthropology, following the 'ethnographic turn' in media studies since the 1980s (Putnam Hughes, 2011), in this section I discuss the experiences of participants, following the wide usage of Stuart



Hall's notion of a communicative event as 'not ultimately fixed or determined by any one of these moments and allow[ing] for a potential plurality and contestation of meanings' (Putnam Hughes, 2011: 301). Reflecting on the experience of watching the film, Nikos, our medical student from Chapter Six, tells me:

It feels like we are watching parts of history that even we the youth have been part of. After 2008, the big strikes, Syntagma 2011, all of these are parts of history that are together with what we've been part of, experienced, and watch.

I've watched it every year. It's interesting. It demonstrates that certain historical facts are not individual facts. All of them are connected as continuous, as people struggle against imperialism, capitalism.

When we watch it we feel like we're part of it. You may watch a demo you've been a part of ... We see the generation of our fathers. It's a continuum. Even if the government wants to push us to believe that we've lost and cannot go the other way, it shows that we haven't lost the fight - class struggle for hundreds of years. The working class can win.

Here Nikos brings up important issues that the ciné-event generates and highlights several themes that come up across the interviews. First, the 1973 uprising is invoked, but it is not isolated; it is placed within a chronological rendering of class struggle, which is represented as unrelenting, and tenacious. Second, the film does not emphasize the ways in which different events are connected, this is a discontinuous history that is represented through montage. Thirdly, there is a sense of identification with past generations of people who have resisted, and a feeling of being 'part' of it. There are hours of 'historical' moments that then are followed by events that the people watching the film have themselves experienced and actively participated in - they see themselves on the screen. I consider the ciné-event to be a means of passing down a *discontinuous* tradition (Buck-Morss, 1991) of resistance, made possible through participatory practices of montage and citation. Fashioned out of the jagged edges, this film renders the contemporary watchers the heirs of past generations. Finally, the way that Nikos emphasizes that the act of watching the film is a collective experience is indicative not only of the ways that people perform resistant subjectivity as a collective fight against the government.

The way that the film brings together different spaces and times renders it not unlike cinema in general, in the sense of Foucault's notion of cinema as a 'space that is both a "hetero-topia" and "hetero-chronie," where a single space is juxtaposed with several

spaces and sites that are in themselves incompatible and where juxtaposing multiple temporalities synchronises the viewer to other times and spaces' (Puwar, 2007: 254) This synchronisation, in this case to other moments of Greek resistance throughout the ages, can be considered in terms of processes of identification. Turner argues that 'we have always been told that we "identify with" or see ourselves in characters on the screen. Screen heroes and heroines are widely held to offer some kind of wish fulfillment, and our admiration for one or other of them is assumed to be the expression of a wish we might, even unconsciously, want fulfilled' (2012: 151). There is a regular invocation of heroes on the screen: Aris, Che, Lambrakis raise cheers, and the different moments shown represent different struggles that the parents and grandparents of some of the audience participated in. Perhaps the chronological arrangement plays a role here; does the narrative produces certain effects of inevitability, cause-effects, retrospectively constructing a continuum of resistance practices through concatenation, even if the images are not. I am interested in the way in which processes of identification are tied to repetition. Most people I speak with have seen the film more than once; some people have seen it every year since 2002, while others have only seen it a few times.

The repetitious act of going every year forms an important part of remembrance practices for some. Costas, who was one of the makers of 2013's version, says, 'I saw it for the first time three years ago. It was passionate. It's four hours, so you can't remember it all. So you go again.' The film is affective. For Sofia, the chemistry student, the film 'made me sad because my parents and grandparents went through hard times.' This year is different for her, she is disappointed but also more angry: the film gave her goosebumps, and moved her in powerful ways. 'The film changes a bit every year, it is really inspiring,' she tells me. The affective nature of cinema has been widely written about; Shaviro takes forward a Deleuzian idea of cinema as 'affective blocs' to consider films as 'affective maps, which do not just passively trace or represent, but actively construct and perform the social relations, flows, and feelings that they are ostensible "about"' (Shaviro, 2010: 6). I argue that the affective nature of the film is intertwined with the embodied practices of singing and chanting together, performing a collective resistant subjectivity, but also one of belonging, as well as a ritualistic aspect to being together in an altered state. Clearly, the multi-layered film has multiple levels of participation. The collective education of learning about previous generations that happens in the ciné-event, the way in which this event is 'between us' and of 'interior feelings' suggests that there is a particular insularity here which is at turns nurturing, but which also draws boundaries between insiders and

outsiders. Knowing the songs and chants, and when to sing them, also performs particular constellations of belonging – to the wider ‘continuum’ of class struggle, but also to different groups who are currently politically active. As Bell argues, the ‘performativity of belonging “cites” the norms that constitute or make present the “community” or group as such. The repetition, sometimes ritualistic repetition of these normalized codes makes material the belongings they purport simply to describe’ (1999: 3).

The people who are watching the film are active in ongoing political action, and speak of the ways in which it is inspiring, and moves them. Their reactions reflect Aguayo’s argument that the ‘influence of activist documentary is primarily constitutive’ in that

it provides a sense of shared identification around which a particular audience can orient itself and potentially creates a collective audience identity. The activist genre has the potential to create a spectator, deliberative, consumer or viewer-citizen identity that has varying ramifications for the process of social change. (Aguayo, 2005: 6)

The question of what these ramifications might mean is taken on by Christensen, who argues for a type of documentary film whereby the final product is ‘neither the film itself, nor the impact of the film on individual audience members, but rather the political action and activism derived from the ideas and feelings presented through the film’ (Christensen, 2009: 91-2). While this desire for the potential of cinema is overly instrumental, I take forwards this impulse of focusing on the ideas and feelings, although without the inclination to measure how political action ‘derives’ from the ciné-event. The ways in which the ciné-event’s ‘meaning is created in the encounter with audiences, and shaped by discursive formations and practices’ (Putnam Hughes, 2011: 304) is articulated through the embodied practices I have described. These can be considered articulations in the loose sense that Stuart Hall (1985) describes, in that the connections between representations, practice, text and reader are actively sustained through the ciné-event. Situated in the present moment, histories of the ‘Greek resistance’ are brought into being through the ciné-event, and participating in the ciné-event could be considered a process through knowledge of these histories and practices are constructed and renewed. As Giorgos tells me, ‘It is a tradition we continue every year. Every moment of Communist history is shown’ – or, we could say, constructed. Wilton Martinez, reflecting on the construction of ethnographic film knowledge, states that the ‘relation text-reader produces correspondences of ideologies and master codes that are articulated within specific socio-historical conditions of reception’ (1992: 151). As such, while the earlier parts of the film are narrated, having been stripped from television documentaries, the contemporary

parts are merely images and sounds, which don't 'say what happened' and as such, to understand the situated context of these sections requires particular kinds of knowledge.

It is interesting to contrast this ciné-event with the documentary that is shown in the main room in another building of the Polytechnic, which is on a loop. This room shows the portraits of people who died during the Polytechnic uprising and dictatorship, and is maintained by parents and family members, seen below.



61. Room dedicated to the dead, Polytechnic commemoration 2012



62. People watching the Coerant documentary, 2012



Made by Albert Coerant, the journalist who famously filmed the tanks going through the gates, without which there would be no ‘proof’ for a Dutch and Belgian audience, the film documents the days of the occupation, and many people pass through the room during the day and sit in the formica chairs to watch it. This is a very different kind of film, telling a story very specifically about the Polytechnic. While the Coerant film has a specific 1970s feel, being filmed in 1973, the aesthetics of the ciné-event are critiqued by those who are bored by it. Natalia prefaces her description of the film as being ‘for interior feelings’ with the comment, ‘I liked it then [the first time I went], because I was pretty young. But now it’s the same for eight years and it’s become really boring for me.’ This response is tied to a critique of nostalgic aesthetics, as well as monotony. In order to reflect more fully on the sense of disillusionment with some aspects of the commemoration, by those who nevertheless participate, in the following section I discuss the critique of nostalgic aesthetics of invoking the past.

### The Nostalgic Aesthetics of Invoking the Past



63. Covers of assorted pamphlets, 2012 and 2013

In this section I discuss the ways in which practices of invoking the past – as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven – is criticized by some of those who participate. The critique of commemorative aesthetics is not new, and since the 1970s, ‘young autonomous left-wingers’ have contested them as ‘innately conservative’.

Papadogiannis discusses the stance of participants of Choros<sup>117</sup> towards the 'culture of commemoration that emerged in the post-dictatorship years':

Most notably, a number of members that belonged to B' Panelladiki would criticise the ritualisation of the memory of the Resistance (1941-44) or of the Polytechnic Uprising in a number of events organised by left-wing parties and youth organisations. They claimed that they constituted efforts to 'subordinate' history to an eschatological metanarrative that would vindicate the guidelines produced by the higher ranks of these actors, to which the lower ranks and the social movements were demanded to conform – an act that, according to the autonomous young left-wingers, reproduced 'bureaucratic' relations. Voicing a vehement critique of this 'instrumentalisation' of time, as they labelled it, they abstained from seeking an alternative role model to identify with. They privileged what they called 'experimentation' that could potentially lead to different types of organisational structure of the youth movement in Greece. The potential outcome of this 'experimentation', however, remained unclear to the participants in Choros throughout the late 1970s. (Papadogiannis, 2009: 83-84)

Such a critique of the 'instrumentalisation' of time and the idea of 'subordinating history to an eschatological metanarrative' is strikingly relevant to contemporary discussions of the commemoration. This links back to the discussion in Chapter Four regarding the annual invocation of the Polytechnic uprising as tradition which potentially instrumentalises time, and the uprising specifically. That such a critique has been leveled at remembrance practices of the Polytechnic since the late 1970s hints towards the ritualization of such a position itself. Furthermore, these positions may have become entrenched to the extent that the commemoration is critiqued as 'bearing the mark' of specific left-wing groups, as some people tell me. However, as we have seen, anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups also participate in the commemoration and remembrance practices.

While the remembrance practices share certain commonalities throughout the decades – the way in which the students break in to the university, the re-telling of the chronology of events, the exhibitions, the laying of the wreaths and closing of the gates on the morning of November 17<sup>th</sup>, when the march to the American embassy takes place – there are differences between the ways in which diverse groups take part in the memorialization, which reflect their differing imaginations of political action. The pamphlets, posters, and exhibitions are made by people belonging to organized groups – whether student groups or political groups – which have dissimilar lineages and relations to the multifarious socialist, communist and autonomous groups of the 1970s and early 1980s. The richness of political life in Greece can be referenced in shorthand by 'five moments of mass militant student and youth movements (1979-80, 1987-88, 1990-91, 1998-99, 2006-07) that moved beyond

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<sup>117</sup> Papadogiannis defines *Choros* as 'a loose network that emerged after a series of splits in left-wing youth groups in the late 1970s' (2012: 288)

the established margins and challenged the dominant political configurations in each of these periods' (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou, 2011: 93). In particular there have been distinct changes in political collectivities and action since the December 2008 uprising following the police killing of Alexis Grigoropoulos and the 2011 Syntagma Square movement. Indeed, writing before the summer of 2011, Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou make distinctions between the 'more fixed political subjectivities of the preneoliberalism period (up to circa 1990-1993) and the people who were raised or even born after the establishment of neoliberal (called modernization) policies in Greece,' with the aim of outlining the 'momentous genealogies of the December 2008 revolt in Greece and show[ing] the gradual emergence of a new social agency, political subjectivities and political tactics that contributed to the unmaking from below of the political context of metapolitefsi' (ibid). Within such a radically altered political landscape, students I speak with contrast notions of spontaneity, experimentation, and violence as practices of political action, with the ritualistic practices of the Polytechnic commemoration. Lena, the Law Left and SYRIZA youth student from Chapter Four tells me:

I was never into the aesthetics of it. Old music, very 1970s concepts and practices have somehow survived in universities, the ways unions act, etc. I became disillusioned with it really early. I wasn't attracted to those kinds of practices. The second year I went, I found it really boring. I keep going but I don't like it that much, every year there are less people. It is sad to hang onto memory and try to move people just through that. You have to do more than just cling to memory. Each year it becomes more difficult. But it's just three days, so it's not such a bad thing.

There are several issues to unpack within this critique of the commemoration: the old and boring aesthetics and practices and the obligation of participation. In comparison, Lena found occupying Syntagma square in June 2011 and the hunger strikes of 300 migrants in January 2011 inspiring and motivating. In November 2013, she did not go at all. I saw her on a feminist demonstration close to the time of the commemoration, and she said, 'There are other places to be, other things are more urgent.' Her comments tied to others' critique of SYRIZA not being very present in the commemoration that year. 'They are the second biggest party in government, and they're not here,' Giorgos said, pointing at the tables opposite his. They were lined with SYRIZA posters and ephemera, yet no one was there. The posters of 2012 and 2013 are quite similar, showing a montage of a contemporary crowd with the 1973 Polytechnic supporters; they are merged to the extent that the notion of SYRIZA members being the heirs of the Polytechnic uprising is rendered explicitly.



64. SYRIZA posters 2013: We will live to see our generation's victory. 2012: The people do not forget victories, the time of overthrow is coming!

This begs the question, what is the role of ritualistic action such as the Polytechnic commemoration, for politically active people in contemporary Athens? Indeed, this 'dichotomy between spontaneous versus non-spontaneous actions emerges as one of the key dilemmas in contemporary social sciences' (Murphy & Throop 2010: 29 in Dalakoglou, 2012: 539). Building on anthropologists' re-consideration of ritual theory that has traditionally seen it as the expression of and vehicle for the reproduction of structures of authority, I am interested in new approaches which place 'practice rather than structure at the centre of analysis, [and] enables us to understand that ritual does not necessarily serve social structure, but may also be an avenue for its critique' (Mitchell, 2004: 58). Indeed, Lena hints at a wider critique of the commemoration and its political implications, which is found in pamphlets and discussions, from those who nevertheless participate. The notion of rituals becoming a 'site for contest between different, and potentially antagonistic, constituencies that seek to assert their agency over ritual' (*Ibid.*) is one that comes across in different remembrance practices. As have been described over these chapters, there is a significant body of ritualistic practices that take place at the annual commemoration, and these lend themselves to analysis of how the work on political myth can take place *through* rituals (Bottici, 2007: 182). These practices provide fertile ground for improvisation and re-imagining of present and future political action.

During one conversation, in the occupied café of the law school, Lena and another law student, Diana, who is also a member of SYRIZA Youth and Law Left, talk about their perspectives on the Polytechnic commemoration:



Lena: I'm bored of looking at the past to *legitimise something*. It is a routine; you know what's going to happen. It is *lacking imagination*. It is linked to *traditional ways* of reaction and practice. New movements, such as Syntagma, renewed the way we understand politics - I went there every day.

Diana: She sees it as very old.

Lena: No...! Well, *I'm not the right person* to talk about it.

Diana: The commemoration has a very strict form. Each year it is the same.

Lena: Well our story is not popular even among the Left. A regular Left person will say, 'We draw political ideas, ideology, from the Polytechnic. Now more than ever it is crucial, modern to today.' *They say the same thing every year.*

This fragment of our discussion highlights crucial debates that the memorialization incite: the dichotomies drawn between tradition and 'new movements', the distinction between those who 'say the same thing every year' - the ritualised nature of drawing inspiration from the uprising - and those who do not. The concept of being the 'right person' to talk about the commemoration and the critique of traditional practices suggest that specific interpretations of the Polytechnic uprising are considered more valid than others and insinuate that the commemoration is dominated by people of certain backgrounds and specific political groups. Furthermore, political tradition is related to family in the Greek context, where most families have a history of political division after the Civil War. As an important aspect of the imaginary of the Greek nation, political family tradition is commented upon in interviews with students as a precursor to differentiated politicisation (Passerini, 1996). Interestingly, however, the influence of family is critically discussed when speaking of other political groups, or in terms of the divisiveness it perpetuates. For instance, Iannis states that 'the KKE is sectorial, part of a lifestyle, to do with family inheritance, and like church' and Stephanos tells me a story about a work colleague he met at Syntagma Square in 2011, who would never have gone on a demonstration, or the memorial march, before 'because the Communists killed her grandfather'. Within the narratives of young people I talk to, there is on occasion a clear a desire to break away from the strictness of such ties and practices that seem bound to the past and to tradition. Framed within our discussions of the Polytechnic uprising, I see this is a response to the dominant political myths as discussed in Chapter Five.

The ritualised practices of the Polytechnic commemoration are indeed marked by specific aesthetic tropes. Interestingly, Lena's critique – which comes from a SYRIZA member – is shared by Irini as well, who comes from a more autonomous perspective who is herself highly critical of SYRIZA and their appropriation of different movements since the crisis.

Throughout all these austerity years there have been numerous occupations, strikes etc for symbolic purposes rather than to work as a means to abolish the government, cancel the bailout agreements or whatever...This mentality prevailed across protest actions and the message it gave was: 'We are here to protest, demonstrate our demands, but not become a real threat to those who manage our fates.' Past revolts should not be idealised or mummified in a museum's window display. They should serve as a 'lesson learned'. I am not against symbolic actions, I am against embracing symbolism as the 'core strategy' of actions. They end up talking the talk but without walking the walk.



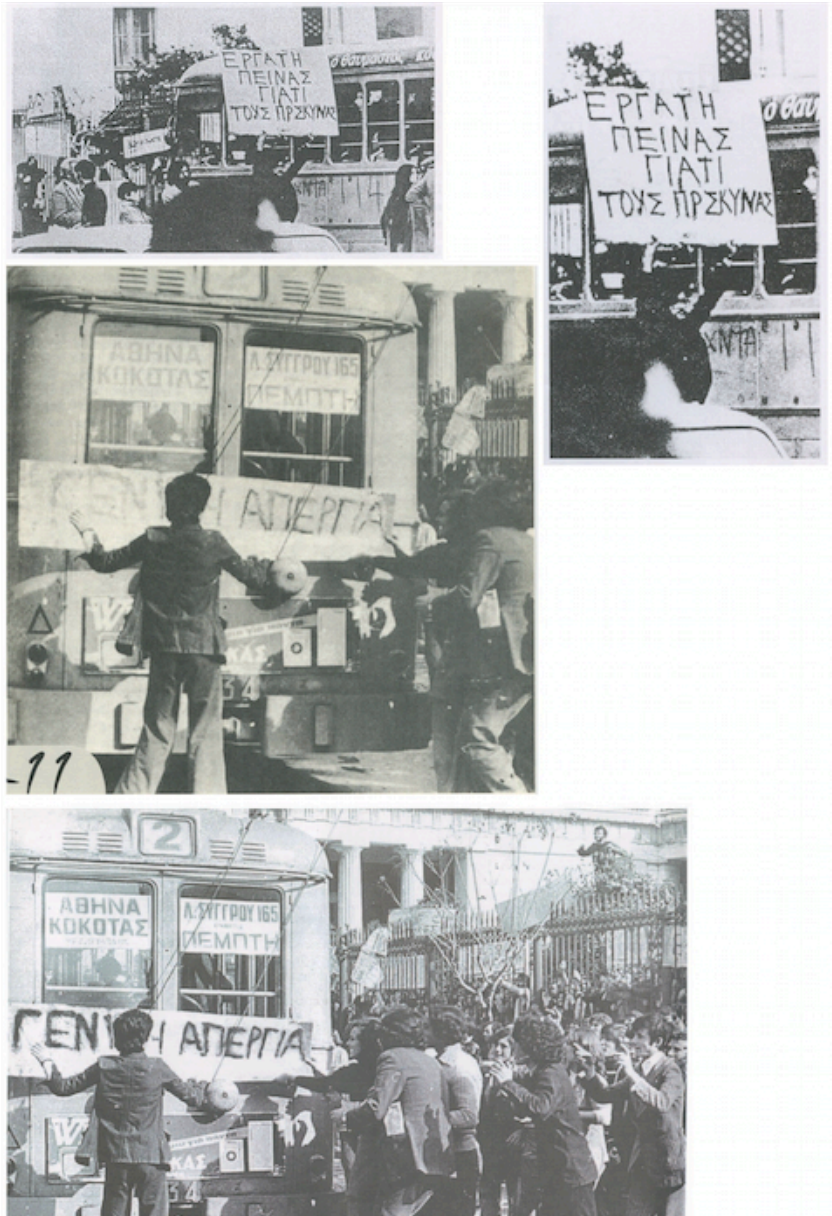
65. Images from assorted pamphlets of the 1973 protagonists making banners

For Irini, political myths of the Polytechnic fail to open up a sufficient critique of the socio-political situation and to mobilise effective collective political action. What does it mean to embrace symbolism as a 'core strategy'? While deliberating notions of the 'fullness of time' invoked in the commemoration, Lena states in a somewhat offhand tone: 'We are not in a pre-revolutionary moment'. Indeed, the remembrance practices invoking the past within the Polytechnic commemoration could be considered as nostalgic for the specific space and time of November 1973. This nostalgia is connected to what Greek historian Liakos deems a 'hegemonic' and 'popular reading of history, enriched by aesthetics, [which] emerged with the end of the dictatorship in 1974' and which built upon the 'period of the Resistance to the German occupation that revived the references to the Revolution of 1821 and created historical analogies' (2001: 39). Liakos outlines this reading of history as 'a plot in which the Greek people were the victims of foreign intervention,' with 'popular efforts at progress frustrated by imposed regimes'. Such a reading, he argues creates an 'historicisation of aesthetics and the aestheticisation of history'

The discourses during the interwar years about '*Hellinikotita*' (the equivalent of *Hispanidad* or *Italianità*) resulted in a search for authenticity in the tradition and contributed to a consideration of history as part of the aesthetic canon, from high cultural activities to popular entertainment. The modernist poetry of Yannis Ritsos, George Seferis, and Odisseas Elitis and the popularization of poetry through the music of Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hatzidakis in the postwar period spread this sentimental affection for national history ... in the 1980s there was a renewed attachment to a national history politicized by the [PASOK] socialists of Andreas Papandreou: 'Greece for the Greeks.' When the socialist ideals sank after 1989, what remained was the popular attachment to the great historical continuities, Hellenism and Orthodoxy. With the disappearance of anti-imperialism, a kind of nativism with anti-Western colours surfaced (Liakos, 2001: 39).

Indeed, across the remembrance practices we see the same images, hear the same chants, the same practices, which one might argue are clinging to the past. Yet the way in which they are nostalgic rests critically upon the specific engagement with the past. These practices are situated in the present and oriented towards the future, in that they seek to interrogate the contemporary political situation through counteractive Polytechnic myths, and mobilise people to act on the present. In this sense, perhaps the aesthetics of the memorialization could be deemed of having the intentions of a 'productive nostalgia' which Blunt defines as 'oriented towards the present and the future as well as towards the past,' (2003: 717) and 'embodied and enacted in practice rather than solely in narrative or imagination' (ibid: 722). This notion of productive nostalgia having a relationship with critical political agency and everyday political action is critiqued by many, including Irini:

The Polytechnic is fetishised exactly because there is a lack of ... because people have not found ways of inspiration. Yes, this is the word, inspiration. The past, it's accepted, I mean they have like constructed a framework, a narrative, they have accepted this narrative, and it's the inspiration that it has. Because nothing was ideal, but now we live things, we live the non-ideal situation, but we have idealised the past. This is it. Seriously, think about it. This is it. You idealise ... this is about the past, nostalgia, nostalgia. Nostalgia can be productive only if you use it, only if you see ... you have to make an in-depth study of it though. Nostalgia is a feeling. I don't think that feelings and only feelings ... I don't think you can make much out of feelings. They will help you up to a certain point. They will help you to a certain extent. Because feeling, it's not a feeling, it's an illusion. I have in my mind what happened in the past. You're talking to someone who's 34 years old [who wasn't alive during the Polytechnic].



66. Images from assorted pamphlets of people flying for GENERAL STRIKE outside the Polytechnic in 1973.



Here any notion of political myths as generating affective agency is rubbished as illusory. The idealization of the past has left Irini disappointed and bored with the contemporary socio-political situation. I see the act of critiquing political myths of the Polytechnic as way for participants to affectively map their orientation (Flatley, 2008: 7) and changing ethical position over time, in relation to political action, as well as critique the current socio-political situation in Greece. These affective responses are tied to different imaginations of political action. For example, such forms of disappointment lead some people to taking an ethical position on political practice that goes towards forming and participating in different kinds of collective action. For some, this entails a focus on transformations of everyday life rather than solely on demonstrations. For others it means participating in SYRIZA as an attempt to gain political power.



67. Ephemera from the commemoration. The flyers at the top were being distributed to buses outside the Polytechnic, as in the previous image. They say: Let's go forward to our generation's uprising. 40 years later, students and workers enliven again the Polytechnic! With meetings-strikes-occupations we will overthrow the government-EU-IMF.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have built on the arguments from the previous chapters to show how participating in remembrance practices and working on different kinds of political myth-making is meaningful for people, in terms of affective agency, and as forms of everyday resistance, through exploring how other moments of the past are invoked in the space and temporality of the Polytechnic commemoration.

First I discussed how rage is expressed through the continued mourning of deaths from November 1985, 1990, and 1995, as well as December 2008. For some participants, these cannot be forgotten and must be cited within the Polytechnic commemoration. I examined how through the embodied remembrance practice of singing Resistance songs, some commemoration participants perform belonging, citing not only the Dekemvriana, but also December 2008. Participants share repertoires of songs that are not taught in schools, but passed down through family, friends, and the internet. Here, contemporary anti-fascism is connected to citation of stories of 'our grandfathers'. Through the montage ciné-event film, an affective experience creates a discontinuum of Greek resistance, which provides an alternative conception of history that posits a multiplicity of battles, in which participants of the commemoration can visualize themselves – both imaginatively and literally – on the screen. Rather than comparing 1973 and the present, these interventions and artefacts bring other moments to bear on the present, through citation and montage. I have argued that these remembrance practices are part of political myths that conceptualize 1973 as one moment in a tenacious resistance, and which create temporalities which aim to 'seize the past' and engage with, as well as generate, affective registers of rage and disappointment with the dominant political myths of Chapter Five. Explicit resistance is referenced in these remembrance practices, which highlights the ongoing and resilient nature of urban contentious politics. Here, the social imaginary of being part of Greek resistance is constituted, which connects to different forms of everyday political action in Athens. Disappointment and ambivalence with remembrance practices which instrumentalise the Polytechnic uprising, and the attendant nostalgic aesthetics, were also discussed. Here, the very premise of a relationship between remembrance practices and affective agency is critiqued, and over the period of my fieldwork these participants stop attending the commemoration, but do attend the annual march as an obligation.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION: CATCHING THE THREADS OF NOVEMBER

Now more than ever, we catch the thread of the 73 uprising, and it arms our collective struggles. Starting again from the terrace of the Law school, we will stand worthy of the duty of our generation, to overthrow them [the government]! – RAPAN SAFN 2013

My project has attempted to catch the different threads of the 1973 Polytechnic uprising, as they appeared in November 2012 and 2013, and trace them in their fleeting nature. I posed the questions: How and why are images of the Polytechnic Uprising invoked and made transmissible in the present through remembrance practices? How are such practices meaningful for people who are involved in everyday political action? In the introduction to this thesis, I contextualized these questions in the 'time of crisis' in a period where people experience different forms of violence - structural violence through Troika-imposed austerity measures; police violence; and Neo-Fascist violence from Golden Dawn. In this chapter I will recount the findings of this thesis and will discuss the theoretical and methodological limitations of my research, as well as its sociological implications.

The most elegant definition of myth that I have come across, and one which has profoundly informed this research, is that it is a narrative which 'must always answer a need for significance. If it cannot do so, it simply ceases to be a myth' (Blumenberg 1985 in Bottici, 2007: 8-9). Furthermore, mythical narratives are explicitly political if they are 'shared by a given group, and can address the specifically political conditions in which a given group lives' (Bottici and Challand, 2013: 92). These features, as well as the inherently plural and continually in-process nature of political myths, bring to mind Calvino's fictional city of Ersilia:

In Ersilia, to establish the relationships that sustain the city's life, the inhabitants stretch strings from the corners of houses, white or black or grey or black-and-white according to whether they mark a relationship of blood, of trade, authority, agency. When the strings become so numerous that you can no longer pass among them, the inhabitants leave: the houses are dismantled; only the strings and their supports remain.

From a mountainside, camping with their household goods, Ersilia's refugees look at the labyrinth of taut strings and poles that rise in the plain. That is the city of Ersilia still, and they are nothing.

They rebuild Ersilia elsewhere. They weave a similar pattern of strings which they would like to be more complex and at the same time more regular than the other. Then they abandon it and they take themselves and their houses still farther away.

Thus, when travelling in the territory of Ersilia, you come upon the ruins of the abandoned cities, without the walls which do not last, without the bones of the dead which the wind rolls away: spiderwebs of intricate relationships seeking a form. (Calvino, 1974: 76)

Like the city of Ersilia, political myths of the Polytechnic uprising consist of multiple, densely interwoven threads, which are re-strung regularly – every year, at least – in relation to what is at stake in the ‘contemporary’ socio-political moment, a fiction in itself (Osborne, 2014). These labyrinths of taut strings are left behind if they are not meaningful for people. How then are remembrance practices rendered meaningful? I have sought to explore these threads and questions through different thematic areas, introduced in Chapter Two, to which I will now return to re-tell the story of my thesis. These are: remembrance practices of political myth-making; their relationship with the production of spaces, places and temporalities; and forms of subjectivity and affective agency. Lastly I will reflect on the proposition that political myth-making is a form of indirect resistance.

### **Political Myths, Social Imaginaries and Political Action**

First, why study political myths, which are perhaps impossible to study properly? I argue that they are too important to everyday social and political life to neglect or dismiss. The importance of political myths in relation to contemporary contentious urban politics in Athens has been the focus of this thesis. I have demonstrated different ways in which it is essential for social scientists to be disentangle how people find it meaningful to make, share, and interpret political myths. I have argued that we cannot discredit the political myths we may disagree with through invoking the ‘truth’ as myths do not rely on truth; this is not their terrain. Rather, I hope to have demonstrated the utility of being attentive to the multiplicity of political myths, and the ways in which they contain within them a determination to act and a capacity to mobilise collective action. I have analysed political myths of the Polytechnic uprising at different scales: I found it useful to analytically delineate competing ‘dominant’ and ‘counteractive’ political myths. These loose and by no means fixed categorisations offer a fruitful means of discussing the tensions between the specificities of the different invocations, each highlighting specific images of the uprising and the Colonels’ dictatorship. The incitation to action contained within these myths entailed very different imaginations of contemporary political action. I explored the processes of making, sharing, and interpreting political myths. This entailed an interrogation of their material practices and artefacts, and an understanding of the social imaginaries which they seek to shape.



The political myths that I gathered under the heading of dominant to discuss in Chapter Five are by no means homogeneous, but they resemble each other with regards to the attempts of those who invoke them to constitute and preserve a social imaginary of 'peaceful democracy'. This work on myth is supposed to maintain the legitimacy of the state, and also notions of 'democracy' during a period in which Greece has - by many accounts - lost state sovereignty, through being managed by the Troika. I explored the ways in which these political myths simplified anti-dictatorial resistance, omitted violent and radical political action, and folded a reified version of the uprising as an event of heroism into the national narrative, promulgated through state education and celebrated as a national holiday. Furthermore, whereas the mythical heroism of the Polytechnic Generation was once useful to legitimise political actors in the government, during the 'contemporary' period of my fieldwork, the function of this myth had shifted with public discourse. The erosion of the state with regards to austerity measures was partly blamed on the excesses of the corrupt Polytechnic Generation during the *metapolitefsi* period. Therefore we can delineate a major rupture even amongst dominant political myths of the Polytechnic uprising: its protagonists are simultaneously celebrated as heroes and denounced for the current crisis through the political myth that intertwines the period of the post-1974 *metapolitefsi* and its economic and social reforms with the Polytechnic uprising and its protagonists. I considered how these political myths were used to reinforce the discourse positing the Far-Right and Far-Left as interchangeable extremists. These political myths were worked on by a government of 'national unity' during a period in which the state claimed to maintain the 'safe' centre; following Balibar, I described this position as the 'extreme' centre (Balibar, 2015), taken to legitimize structural violence.

In Chapters Six and Seven, I explored the ways in which participants contest dominant political myths and structural violence through creating, sharing, and reflexively critiquing these practices of political myth-making, which I loosely termed counteractive. Here I explored how political myths can be a site of radical imagination, and open up space for commentary on the contemporary socio-political situation. While the different kinds of political myths in these chapters - and the social imaginaries that they institute - are mobilised to contest notions of contemporary democracy and the legitimacy of the government, they invoke the Polytechnic uprising in very different ways. In these two chapters I illustrated that people had diverse desires and imaginations of contemporary political action, often in tension with each other, highlighting the heterogeneous and fragmented nature of anti-

austerity resistance in Greece (Theodossopoulos 2014, Rakopoulos 2015).

In Chapter Six, I show how political myths open up the possibility of critique of the contemporary socio-political situation through asking an apparently simple and crude question: Do we have a contemporary Junta? I explored the content and practices of making and disseminating dialectical images, which aim to interrupt the present and to mobilise people through the political myth of a 'contemporary Junta'. I analysed different social practices – participating in the 'unofficial' commemoration; making artefacts; and the ERT occupation broadcasting within the Polytechnic – through the creation and content of different dialectic images. Here, the Polytechnic uprising is proposed as an image of mass political action that has direct resonance for the contemporary socio-political situation.

Whereas in Chapter Six, we looked at how practices of myth-making worked on the analogous gesture of 'then' and 'now' as dialectical images, in Chapter Seven, I explored how other images of the past are invoked in the space and time of the Polytechnic commemoration. Here, the emphasis is on the recovery of other important moments of resistance, which situate 1973 as one part of a constellation of important political events in a trajectory of 'tenacious resistance'. I explored these political myths through practices of citation and montage. Through invoking the Greek Civil War, participants share repertoires of songs that are not taught in schools, but passed down through family, friends, and the internet. Here, contemporary anti-fascism is connected to the citation of stories of 'our grandfathers'. Through montage, I argue that an annual interactive film screening is akin to a cine-event, creating a counter-history, a continuum of Greek resistance, which posits a multiplicity of battles and allows participants of the commemoration to visualize themselves within it. Rather than comparing 1973 and the present, these interventions and artefacts bring other moments to bear on the present. The imagination of political action here is not one that valorizes the 1973 uprising per se, but that draws from the ongoing and resilient nature of contentious politics, and the project of the transformation of everyday life. Here, participants constitute a social imaginary of a continuum of Greek resistance, of which they are part and which connects to different forms of everyday political action in Athens.

### **Political Myths and the Production of Space**

In this project I emphasized that analyzing the production of spaces and temporalities is crucial to understanding contemporary invocations of the Polytechnic uprising,

drawing on the different registers of Lefebvre's spatial triad (1974/1991). In Chapter Four, I explored the ways in which Exarcheia and the Polytechnic are produced as exceptional spaces of contentious politics, through analyzing the entangled relations that produce them. This chapter also served to contextualise the remembrance practices I analysed in Chapters Five through Seven. I brought together different representations of Exarcheia in academic texts and poetry, as well as the everyday spatial practices of people who live in and frequent the neighbourhood, to examine how its space is produced through social imaginaries of solidarity and resistance, desires and artistic production. I demonstrated how the Academic Asylum Law and annual commemoration of the Polytechnic uprising are integrally intertwined with political myths of Exarcheia, which constitute it in the social imaginary as a radical neighbourhood. Political myths of Exarcheia as a radical neighbourhood are not unproblematised by its residents: the area is not isolated from the everyday racism of the city nor the global flows of capital manifesting themselves in local drug trade. Exarcheia has a relatively successful night-time economy, and, perhaps akin to the borough of Hackney in London, is a site of anarcho-tourism and social research to which this thesis self-consciously contributes. Furthermore, the apparently 'contained' nature (Vradis, 2012) of Exarcheia's radicalism has been and continues to be convenient for the state. Demarcating the area as such has proved beneficial for policing tactics, whereby the area is regularly and relatively easily 'surrounded'. Furthermore, media representations continue to isolate and delegitimize contentious political action according to its location in Exarcheia and the Polytechnic campus.

Following the contextualization of the annual commemoration practices within the terrain of Exarcheia, in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I analysed the production of space during the days of the annual commemoration. Over three chapters, I attended to the different registers of Lefebvre's spatial triad in an attempt to do justice to the extremely contested nature of this urban public space. In Chapter Five, I explored how the space of the Polytechnic is produced in the mainstream media and public discourse as 'sheltering extremism' through the Academic Asylum Law. Furthermore, during the days of the commemoration, part of the Polytechnic campus is delineated to become a space for mourning dead heroes of the past. The main gate is opened during these days and the gate mangled in 1973 is placed next to a permanent monument, becoming the site of formalized remembrance and (spatial) practices of wreath-laying.

In Chapters Six and Seven, I focused on the ways in which participants produce provisional counter-spaces during the days of the annual commemoration, dedicated to the articulation of alterity, which I analysed through people's spatial practices and spaces of representation. Critiquing the dominant political myths and the 'celebratory' practices through which they are maintained, different collectivities in the constellation of the 'antagonistic movement' – including anti-capitalist left-wing groups, as well as anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups – occupy the Polytechnic campus to perform their own remembrance practices. Over these chapters, I explored how stories and experiences, as well as practical knowledge and histories of resistance, are shared. In Chapter Five, the political myth of a 'contemporary Junta' produces representations of the Polytechnic as a space that has the ability to mobilise people in itself. Why, for example, would the evicted ERT occupation move its location to the Polytechnic campus unless they thought that there would be political implications? The failure of ERT to mobilise people around their short-lived occupation within the Polytechnic, to reproduce a mass movement akin to the 1973 Polytechnic uprising, demonstrates that while meaningful for people, political myth-making and entwined production of counter-spaces can be constrained and temporary constructions. They should not be judged by whether they successfully translate into mass collective action, but rather for the ways in which they facilitate critique of the contemporary socio-political situation and open debate. Furthermore, the experiences of creating and participating in counter-spaces stay with participants over time, as they narrate through stories of the different commemorations over the years. In Chapter Six, I explored how the counter-space enables the sharing and debating of political affinities through the repertoire of Resistance songs and the act through which they are performed in the public space of the campus grounds. I also explored the specific interactive space of the cine-event.

The different counter-spaces I discussed across the chapters are all fragile. This is evident in the ways in which they are under attack from the abolition of the Academic Asylum Law and the political myth of the 'two extremes'. Furthermore, the annual commemoration as a mode of transmission is also, for some of participants, problematic, as I will discuss further below.

### **Political Myths and the Fabrication of Temporalities**

In this thesis I have argued for the importance of being attentive not only to the relationship between political myth-making and the production of space, but also its

relationship with the creation of different temporalities. Explored across the four chapters of analysis of the materials I collected in my fieldwork, I analysed these temporalities as the products of different imaginations, pertaining to diverse political demands, and as telling different stories about the contemporary socio-political situation. I contend that through focusing on political myth-making, we can learn about the distinct ways in which different social actors conceptualize history and actively engage in the project of constructing different temporalities.

The annual coming together itself constitutes a specific temporality, which I discussed in Chapter Four in terms of tradition, a concept that is a central tension of the commemoration. Participants talk about their involvement and the annual commemoration as a tradition, whilst also critiquing normative forms of transmission, explicitly questioning whether it is *possible* for the subversive aspects of the past – and the Polytechnic uprising in particular – to be retrieved in the present. It is a *type* of tradition, not tradition as such, which has to be destroyed, for this retrieval of the past. The stories that participants tell, and the remembrance practices that they participate in, attempt to dismantle the traditions that have been instituted by the state, but also by others within commemoration. The diverse demands for social justice and liberation take different forms, and as such the heterogeneous and antagonistic nature of the collectivities and commemoration participants come to the fore in their critique of traditional practices. Collectivities contest the discrepancies between others' words and deeds, and the nostalgic aesthetics of the 'traditional' Left – the Communist Party, and some of the older Trotskyist and Maoist groups. Furthermore I found that experiences of tradition differed according to participants' age and how long they had been actively involved in contentious political action. I argued that despite the critiques of participants regarding the possibility of retrieving the subversive aspects of the past through annual commemoration, the coming together during these days is meaningful for people in relation to their everyday practices of political action because there is so much at stake in the contemporary socio-political situation. As such, participants answer the call – the demands – of the Polytechnic: here, 'tradition is not an instance that can be claimed as an authority. *We can only answer its call*. Becoming an heir means honouring the demands of justice and liberation that the past pushes forward to the present' (Simay, 2005: 154, my emphasis).

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I explored the temporalities that are created through different practices of political myth-making made evident during days of the

commemoration, which are connected to different social imaginaries and with the intention of mobilising different kinds of political action. In Chapter Five, I explored the ways in which dominant political myths insert the Polytechnic uprising into a teleological national narrative of progress, creating homogeneous time. Intimately connected with the invasion of Cyprus, the fall of the dictatorship, and the first democratic election in 1974 – held on November 17<sup>th</sup> – the uprising is entwined with the metapolitefsi period, the social and economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s and Greece’s entry into the European Union. Forcibly celebrated by all children in Greek state education, I argued that this political myth sought to create a homogenous time, which is the time of the nation-state, experienced simultaneously by all members as the same instant of chronological time (Rahman, 2015). Extracting the aspects of the Polytechnic uprising that serve a teleological narrative of progress that can be shared by all ‘Greeks’, in this chapter I explored how it is an inherently malleable construction. However, people are heavily invested in the political myth of this temporality, for they resist it passionately, and engage with the nation-state through invoking it. What is at stake in people’s imagination of the nation-state as driving this notion of the uprising as part of national progress? In Chapter Five, I discussed the ambivalence of this cultural intimacy (Herzfeld, 1997) with regards to the discourse of the ‘two extremes’ which I continued to discuss in Chapter Six.

In that chapter, I explored practices of political myth-making which worked through the ‘analogous gesture’. Here state and fascist violence of the dictatorship was invoked alongside moments of the present, to create dialectical images of a ‘contemporary Junta’. This political myth had perhaps percolated into popular culture by January 2015, as I discussed in the Introduction, with the example of the slogan ‘Then with tanks, now with banks’ popular in everyday parlance. I also explored the collective wish-image of the Polytechnic uprising in the present; I argued that ambiguous desires of collective political action crystallise in the image of the 1973 uprising. The kinds of temporalities being created through artefacts, pamphlets, and narration are ones that seek to ‘awaken’ people to violent social injustice and to instill collective political action. I argued that these practices of making dialectical images sought to disrupt historical continuity, and ‘pass down a history of *discontinuity*’ (Buck-Morss, 1991). These practices are meaningful for participants, in that the images of the dictatorship and the uprising bear on the present in significant ways. The question we might ask here, is whether this desire for a rupture, or mass awakening, implies a desire for another kind of narrative of progress (a critique that Benjamin made of some Marxist historical materialism)? In Chapter Seven, I discussed political myths that were concerned with reclaiming other moments, besides the Polytechnic

uprising, through practices of montage and citation. The temporalities constructed here posit 1973 as one moment in what I loosely termed a 'tenacious' resistance to attend to the ways in which this narrative presents resistance as ongoing and resilient. Here I analysed practices of montage and citation and I argued that these practices worked towards the construction of an alternative conception of history, one that emphasises a discontinuum of resistance. The conception of history here is disjunctive, and does not posit a specific wish image, but rather is envisioned in the form of ongoing resistance.

The temporalities of the counteractive political myths in Chapters Six and Seven do not go unquestioned by participants, some of whom critique the instrumentalisation of the Polytechnic uprising, as well as the Civil War, and the recent December 2008 events. The notion of the Traditional Left 'subordinating history to an eschatological metanarrative' (Papadogiannis, 2015: 206) is a critique of the Polytechnic uprising commemoration by Choros participants (autonomous Left) from the late 1970s, and links back to the discussion in Chapter Four regarding the annual invocation of the uprising as tradition. Some participants have furthermore connected this critique to disapproval of the commemoration's nostalgic aesthetics. That such a critique has been levelled at remembrance practices of the Polytechnic since the late 1970s, hints towards the ritualization of this position itself.

### **Political Subjectivity and Affective Agency**

More than four decades have passed since the 1973 Polytechnic uprising, and yet its remembrance continues to produce spaces and temporalities of contestation. In this thesis I have demonstrated that since December 2008 and the first bailout in 2010, the uprising has taken on new resonances for different people, who work on diverse political myths. I have explored how these practices of myth-making are rendered meaningful for people in terms of political subjectivity and affective agency; how fears of state and fascist violence, as well as anger and disappointment with contentious politics generate counteractive political myths. Participants negotiate collective political subjectivity around their invocations of the Polytechnic, in terms of their differentiated remembrance practices. Participants negotiate and narrate political subjectivities, drawing boundaries between different ethical and political positions - although all contend that they are not celebrating the Polytechnic. Participants' delineation of political subjectivity is intertwined with the theme of belonging. I suggested that the repeated act of going to the commemoration and participating in remembrance practices are performative of belonging to different collectivities, as well as to disjunctive histories of Greek resistance.

Political myths work through moving people, dramatizing action and making people feel they are on a stage, and I explored this through the concept of affect. Through the annual coming together, people share stories and affinities, sing songs, and create affective atmospheres that move their participants in different ways. I explored how the making of political myths generates affective encounters, which oriented different agential possibilities (McManus, 2011). The engagements with fear and rage over state, structural, racist, and Neo-Fascist violence were in flux, engendering ambivalent feelings among participants around their own capacity to act even whilst being continuously engaged in political action. Participants express disappointment and exhaustion after years of austerity measures, state oppression and police brutality, which was articulated during the days of the commemoration. These registers were also rendered explicit through the vocalization of a critical relationship between remembrance practices and everyday political action. The spaces and temporalities performed in the annual commemoration, and the ritual of marching to the American embassy, was explored in terms of its affective atmosphere. Affective registers of different intensities of fear engendered ambivalent agential capacities to act collectively. I explored the annual remembrance practices as a coming together that allow for people to share their affective states, for fear to have an anticipatory orientation, making its affective indeterminacy attached to specific subjects and objects, through the practices of making and sharing artefacts that work on political myths. This space and calendric temporality allows for a pause for reflection and storytelling, and as such, the commemoration acts as a resource that supports maintaining the capacity to resist.

### **Political Myth-making as a Form of Indirect Resistance**

I have shown that creating, sharing, and critiquing political myths are meaningful practices that produce different spaces and temporalities, connected to different imaginations of political action and generative of affective atmosphere and agency. I have explored how these remembrance practices are heterogeneous and as such pertain to heterogeneous forms of resistance, and imaginations of political action. I have found that remembrance practices have taken on a different resonance since December 2008, when the murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos ignited mass response to state violence. Since 2010, the structural violence of austerity politics and the rise of neo-fascist violence has led to the anti-dictatorship uprising of the 1970s becoming more significant for people, as well as in popular culture more generally. Looking at the processes of political myth-making, I explored how they are meaningful practices



for participants not only in terms of content, but also in terms of the acts of creating them. The argument that runs through the chapters is that situated remembrance practices of political myth-making constitute forms of indirect resistance. For me, this is tied to a central question, which comes from the people I spoke to: how is it possible to maintain the capacity to resist in this period of precarious intensity (Athanasίου, 2014; Caygill 2013)?

Collective remembrance practices are important in that they provide rare occasions that bring diverse groups and individuals together, as is attested to in the stories told by participants. During my fieldwork, the only other space and time of such coming together was the anti-fascist demo on November 30th, organized to contest the Golden Dawn rally in Syntagma Square, and even then 'the Left' and 'the anarchists' marched in different geographic locales in central Athens. I explored the ways in which the annual coming together of the Polytechnic uprising commemoration acts as a resource for everyday political action, through being a 'battery' and also a pause for reflection, for 'letting off steam'. Working on myth is a pedagogical, creative, collaborative process through which the makers open up a critique of the contemporary socio-political situation. In considering the accounts of those who criticize this annual coming together as tradition, it is important to note that they nevertheless participate in the commemoration, attesting to the agonistic nature of the commemoration, as well as the sense of obligation towards these days. The diverse remembrance practices of political myth-making demonstrate the myriad entanglements of domination and resistance, which are mutually constitutive (Sharp et al, 2000). The heterogeneity of remembrance practices implies a heterogeneity of resistance, and the commemoration allows a space and temporality for the reproduction of resistant subjectivities. During the time of my fieldwork, in the midst of constantly being hit by more and more stringent austerity measures, and with youth unemployment at 65%, participants' continuing commitment to the annual coming together provided a space and time to maintain the capacity to resist, through practices that themselves attempt to resist the domination of official political myths. As such, the space and time of the commemoration acts as a resource of dignity and solidarity for participants.

## **Methodology**

In this project I have explored political myths that people invoke to reclaim the aspects of the Polytechnic uprising that are meaningful for their political projects. As I have shown, it is not solely the nation-state that works on political myth, although

most of the scholarship that has looked at political myth focuses on the national scale. I have attempted to show how political myths are created and shared at a local level, and the interplay and tensions between different political myths. Political myths, according to Chiara Bottici, are to be judged as to whether they open up or close down critique. I argue that all of the political myths of the Polytechnic uprising explored in this thesis open up a critique of the contemporary socio-political situation, the contemporary of ongoing crisis. It would be facile to merely state that the dominant political myths close down critique. Indeed, I have shown that to a certain extent, they mobilise people through affects of rage and indignation to participate in contestatory remembrance practices and to produce counteractive political myths.

My research used mixed methods to understand how participants invoke the Polytechnic uprising in the present, through analysing the ways in which participants engage in situated remembrance practices and create, share and interpret different political myths of the uprising. I have disentangled and examined competing political myths, which are 'worked on' by people with diverse imaginations of political action and different political aims. As noted, the people I spoke to are all active in the antagonistic movement; some are part of SYRIZA youth and ANTARSYA, and as such support electoral politics; others actively campaigned against voting in the European elections during my fieldwork. All, however, are invested in the notion of everyday political action in their local communities and workplaces. Yet the same could also be said of Golden Dawn whose discourse rests on being an 'anti-systemic' political party, and who provide social services using a similar discourse of solidarity. The strength of focusing on particular kinds of politics, on the self-identified spectrum of the 'radical Leftwing coalition' of SYRIZA to different strands of communism, the anti-capitalist Left, anti-authoritarian, anarcho-syndicalism, and anarchist groups, is that it gave me insight into the specificities of their material practices of invoking the Polytechnic uprising. I was interested to find out why and how future-oriented political praxis invokes images of the past. Part of the reason why I focused on these collectivities is because I share a similar ethical commitment to political action as an everyday practice and wanted to learn from them. However, I also focused on them because of the ways in which they all explicitly address the theoretical proposition introduced in Chapter One: How is it possible to break the mythical cycle of law-preserving and law-making violence? In the current context of October 2015, this question remains unanswered.

Reflecting on the process of doing this research, there are a number of limitations to discuss. In focusing only on people who participate over the three days of the Polytechnic commemoration and are involved in everyday political action, I limited my sample to those who have a stake in remembering the Polytechnic uprising, for whom it is important to spend three days at the Polytechnic campus. While it was my intention to explore these remembrance practices in detail, and as such necessary to focus on the collectivities that I did, in future research there are other groups that I would like to spend time with and interview regarding political myths of the uprising. Firstly, as informants had told me, I should speak to 'someone from the Right'. They were themselves fascinated to find out what right-wing individuals or groups might think. While I did speak to some people who do not, and would not participate in the annual commemoration, but had been to Syntagma occupation, I did not have the resources or the ability to undertake research of a similar scale akin to the material presented in this thesis.

This hints at another limitation. While my fieldwork took me to multiple sites across Athens, in this thesis I have written primarily about the Polytechnic campus and Exarcheia to show how political myths of the Polytechnic uprising contribute to the production of these spaces. As such there is a danger that the inter-connectedness of remembrance practices of the Polytechnic uprising with everyday political action outside of Exarcheia has been downplayed. Furthermore, in focusing just on 'politically active' Athenians I have perhaps attended to the loudest, most privileged voices. As Anna from the Anarchist Archive asked me, 'What does politically active mean anyway?' Indeed, while my interest in indirect forms of resistance comes from the people I spoke to, I have to acknowledge that I have been focusing on practices and narratives actively involved in sustaining political myths of resistance: as such, participants are experts in these repertoires.

### **Sociological Implications**

This thesis suggest that urban sociology ought to take political myth more seriously, and as such it builds on work that is concerned with the contemporary invocations of past contentious political action. My findings challenge the simplified and reductive historical accounts of the 1973 Polytechnic uprising and oblique representations of its 'symbolic' power within the 'collective memory'. Furthermore, my findings trouble academic accounts of urban contentious politics which romanticise the radical politics of Exarcheia and contribute towards political myths of Exarcheia and the Polytechnic,

by showing the complexities and contradictions of the production of these counter-spaces. I suggest that we have to be more attentive to the 'non-rational', to the imagination and affective atmospheres of such sites of urban contestation and how they produce spaces and temporalities. My work contributes to scholarship on urban political action in Greece that takes into account the multiple markings of the city (Tsilimounidi, 2013; 2014) and the traces of the past (Kallianos, 2013), as well as focusing on indirect resistance and the complexities, ambivalences and fragmentation of anti-austerity resistance practices (Theodossopoulos, 2014). The implications of my findings for urban studies suggest that political myth-making as a process need be taken seriously, as this approach can provide a productive framework with which to explore how images of past political struggles continue to be important for people involved in political action in the present. This thesis has shown that political myth-making is an antagonistic practice, through which people articulate political subjectivities. Discussing political myth-making and the encounters of remembrance practices as affective, this work contributes to work within political ethnography that seeks to explore subjectivity and agency. Lastly, this thesis contributes to the interdisciplinary field of studies of political myth, through using mixed ethnographic methods and focusing on contentious politics. As such, my research possibly opens up new agendas for further work on political myths, through focusing on their production and interpretation in everyday urban contexts. I hope to have shown how important political myths are in contemporary urban politics, and the critical role of audiovisual artefacts within them, which could be elaborated in relation to the connection with affective politics that I have begun to explore. This could be developed further in order to more fully understand the ways in which dominant political myths permeate our understanding of urban political action and everyday life.

### **The Unfinished Project of Austerity Politics**

Since my fieldwork ended, austerity politics and the different kinds of violence I describe in this project have deepened. In November 2014, over five hundred secondary schools across the country were occupied by students, in response to education reforms.<sup>118</sup> Also in 2014, the annual Polytechnic uprising commemoration saw riot police storming the Polytechnic campus, and images of students in clouds of tear gas went viral on social media.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> See Vassilopoulos J (2014) Students occupy hundreds of schools throughout Greece - World Socialist Web Site. *Wsws.org*, Available from: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2014/11/11/gree-n11.html> (accessed 21 November 2014).

<sup>119</sup> See Enet English (2014) Riot police attack students outside Athens Polytechnic. Available from: <http://www.enetenglish.gr/?i=news.en.home&id=2092> (accessed 3 January 2015).



68. Riot police storm the Polytechnic, Facebook November 2014

As a result, anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups attended the annual march to the American embassy en masse. This is because, according to participants, the level of state violence and the breaching of the Academic Asylum Law rendered remembrance practices of the Polytechnic uprising intensely meaningful once again. In March, a building of the Polytechnic, which is highly visible from Stournara Street, was painted overnight with imagery resonant of Picasso's *Guernica* to some online commentators. It sparked fierce debate in mass and social media about cultural heritage and respecting the honour of the Polytechnic as a space of mourning. The rector of the university stated that it showed 'a lack of good manners and culture, given that this is a monument', and a state prosecutor ordered an urgent preliminary investigation.<sup>120</sup> The Ministry of Education released a statement, declaring: 'In the case of the Polytechnic, one of the country's historic buildings, which holds a particular symbolism relating to recent history and struggles of the new generation, but which also has an aesthetic value, the Ministry believes the aforementioned action crossed the line.'<sup>121</sup> I could not get a sense of the scale or the imagery of the painting because of the way in which it enveloped the whole building, until the photos below were shared with me. The scale of the painting and the building in relation to humans is striking: for me, it symbolises the multitude and weight of political myths, and the gestures of movement in the painting speak to how these myths are

<sup>120</sup> See Ekathimerini.com (2014) Prosecutor launches probe into Athens Polytechnic graffiti | Kathimerini. Available from: <http://www.ekathimerini.com/168050/article/ekathimerini/news/prosecutor-launches-probe-into-athens-polytechnic-graffiti> (accessed 21 October 2015).

<sup>121</sup> See En.protothema.gr (2014) Athens Polytechnic: Reactions to mysterious graffiti (photos). Available from: <http://en.protothema.gr/athens-polytechnic-divided-views-over-mysterious-graffiti-photos/> (accessed 21 October 2015).

constantly in flux. A few days later, people from the occupied EMBROS theatre linked arms to protect it from being sprayed clean with water, but to no avail. This image captures the ways in which 'the Polytechnic lives' in the present, and how it remains a contested space. The state 'sees' the painting as disrespecting the Polytechnic as a monument, but for the people I have spoken to, 'uprisings do not enter museums'. Painting the building is rendered a subversive act, reinforces the Polytechnic as a living counter-space of resistance. Another layer of the palimpsest city, leaving only digital traces.



69a. The Polytechnic is painted, by Myrto Tsilimpounidi, 2015



70. EMBROS try to halt the Polytechnic being cleaned @DLamp





69b. Polytechnic by Myrto Tsilimpounidi

2015 has seen the election of SYRIZA and *Anexartitoi Ellines* (ANEL) Independent Greeks (a populist Right-Wing party) in January, the referendum in July on the conditions of Greece accepting the terms of the bailout – popularly viewed as staying in Europe, and the re-election of SYRIZA<sup>122</sup> and ANEL in September. While some people were celebrating the success of SYRIZA in early February, others were protesting outside refugee detention camps, calling on the party to keep its promise to close them. The protests caused tension amongst people: some deemed the pressure that was exerted on SYRIZA from the antagonistic movement so soon, inappropriate. Where are the people I spoke to now? In the summer of 2015, many were involved in providing everyday food, health and shelter provisions in Pedion Ton Areon, a park bordering Exarcheia where many refugees find shelter when they arrive in Athens. The state broadcaster ERT re-opened in June 2015, two years after being shutdown. The night they re-opened, the station screened a documentary entitled *The Lost Signal of Democracy*, focusing on the events since the closure.<sup>123</sup> The ‘time of crisis’ continues: political myths that have been meaningful for participants to create, share, and interpret, myths that make images of the past legible to people in contemporary

<sup>122</sup> Internal critics of the new bailout deal left SYRIZA, mainly Left Platform, to form a new party, *Laiki Enotita*, (LE) Popular Unity, with ARAN (formerly part of ANTARSYA) and others, on August 21. They received 2.8% of September’s vote, below the threshold of 3% to get a government seat.

<sup>123</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-33090373>

socio-political conditions, are still relevant. How the annual Polytechnic uprising commemoration will be policed in years to come, and the ways in which SYRIZA youth and members will participate given their previous anti-austerity stance remains to be seen. It is clear that given the social injustice and structural violence that permeate social life in Greece, that the multiplicity of political myths of the Polytechnic and the capacity to resist that the annual commemoration nourishes will continue to remain of significance.



71. Polytechnic cat



## **APPENDIX: Addendum to the methodological chapter**

In this section I will provide a detailed account of the logistics of the dissertation research. Ethnographic research was undertaken in Athens during three periods of fieldwork in 2012, 2013 and 2014, over seven months in total. Initial fieldwork was undertaken in October and November 2012, and then again in October, November and December 2013, and May, June and July 2014. This allowed for participant observation during two Polytechnic uprising commemorations, of everyday life in the area of Exarcheia and the Polytechnic, as well as interviews before, during, and after the commemoration. Before discussing how informants were approached and 'recruited', I will describe the demographics of those spoken to and observed in the research process, and discuss the relevance of the chosen sample, as well as the kinds of inclusions and exclusions that took place in the conducting and the writing of the research.

Table 2 on page 269, shows the name, age, employment / education status and political affiliation of the people who are in the thesis. The table also lists the type of research encounter, which I will discuss in the final section of the appendix. I will now discuss the demographics of the people spoken to. The thesis sample comprises of thirty eight people: sixteen women and twenty two men. In the table below I collate the demographic statistics

**Table 1: Demographic of informants in thesis**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage of sample (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	22	58
Female	16	42
<b>Status</b>		
Student	14	37
Unemployed	11	29
Employed	10	26
Pensioner	3	8
<b>Age</b>		
20s	14	37
30s	13	34
40s	3	8
50s	3	8
60s	5	13

The parameters of this sample were created with my research aims in mind; as stated on page 31 of the thesis, I was interested in the processes through which the Polytechnic uprising is invoked, and how these are meaningful for people who are involved in everyday political action. As such, the demographic that are represented

in the thesis are people who attended the Polytechnic uprising commemorations in 2012 and 2013, and are also engaged in other kinds of political action. By political action, my intention was to be as broad as possible, and hinged upon the person's self-definition of being 'active'. The people who are in the thesis are involved in diverse kinds of political action, ranging from going on demonstrations, participating in university occupations, self-organised social centres and medical centres. As such, the relevance of the demographic is their everyday involvement in political action, with five interviews that were not included in the thesis because of the interviewee's self-identified lack of engagement with everyday political action.

As can be seen, there are more men than women informants, which arguably reflects the milieu of the Polytechnic uprising commemoration. I wanted to ensure that I spoke to people of different generations, although the sample is weighted towards people in their twenties and thirties, who cumulatively represent 71% of the sample. However, taking into consideration the different waves of student movements in the early 1990s, the anti-globalisation movement in the late 1990s, December 2008, and anti-austerity movements since 2009, these ages groups have participated in a variety of different movements. I also wanted to ensure that I spoke to people with different political affiliations within the spectrum of the Left and anarchist movements as shown in the diagram on page 86 of the thesis. During the days of the Polytechnic commemoration I spoke to more people informally as part of observation and hanging around, and indeed managed to talk to someone from every group shown in the diagram. However, a lot of this material was excluded from the thesis, (totaling twenty persons), as well formal interviewed (totaling sixteen) for reasons of space, reiteration of themes, and irrelevance of material. 37% of informants were students, which reflects the dominance of student groups at the three-day Polytechnic commemoration, which takes place at the campus itself. Furthermore, because students do not have to finish their studies in three years, this extends the age group and generation which could be categorized as a 'student'. 29% of informants self-identified as unemployed, which reflects the high unemployment rate in Greece. Furthermore, although I have categorized 26% as employed, it has to be taken into account that many of the professions are precarious or freelance, as can be noted in table 2 where I describe their professions.

There are various limitations of the sample that need to be discussed. First, is that all of the people in the thesis are those who could physically go to the commemoration in 2012 and 2013. Although I also drew on Twitter and Facebook data, as well as blogs,

all the encounters represented in the thesis are with people who were in the space of the Polytechnic campus. Aside from a limited conception of 'participation', this is an inherently ableist approach, and furthermore one which prioritises those who were able to participate in the space of the commemoration in central Athens. As such it is limited to those with the resources to be in central Athens, and due to my limited fieldwork, only takes into account those who actively participated in the commemoration in 2012 and 2013. This excludes many people who are politically active, and for whom remembering the Polytechnic uprising may be meaningful. The Polytechnic uprising is commemorated across the country, and after Athens, most prominently in Thessaloniki and Patras. This thesis is highly Athens-centric, indeed focusing on the area surrounding the Polytechnic, Exarcheia, which is already over-represented in scholarly work. I discuss this limitation in the thesis to an extent, and while my fieldwork led me beyond this geographic site, I chose not to include other sites in the thesis because of space, and partly because I couldn't find a way to coherently address them. Furthermore, because of my inability to be in multiple places at once, I was not able to observe school celebrations of the Polytechnic uprising, which take place simultaneously with the commemoration events at the university campus, although I asked people about their experiences of this in interviews.

There are also limitations due to the way in which I 'recruited' informants (which I describe in the next section) which meant that the majority of people that I spoke to were part of a collective, with a few exceptions. This means that individuals who are not politically organized are not well represented in the thesis. Furthermore, all of the informants whose voices are present in the thesis bar one, self-identify as 'Greek' and this is not representative of people who are politically active in Athens, especially when taking into consideration people I met who are involved in anti-fascist and anti-racist activism, the many established community activist groups, as well as anti-detention and migrant and refugee solidarity groups. These groups are present on the 17<sup>th</sup> November march to the American embassy, as I describe in Chapter 5, but not during the days of the commemoration at the Polytechnic campus. Because of my focus on these remembrance practices, at the expense of the march, as well as the intensity of the political situation during my time in Athens, I chose to interview people who were present during the days of the commemoration. On the 17<sup>th</sup> November march, which has fifty times more people than the commemoration in the campus, I talked with a few 'second-generation' young people, which brought up issues around identification with forms of politics and remembrance, but I felt that I

did not have enough material to discuss it in the thesis. Considering these exclusions, a glaring omission is any discussion of the nationalism and 'Greekness' of the Polytechnic uprising in my interviews with research participants, and a more sustained discussion around this in the thesis itself.

The sample size represented in the thesis is quite small, but I spoke to as many people as possible during the commemoration days, and at the same time wanted to go into as much depth as possible. It is hard to estimate how many people attend the commemoration, as there are two parts of it: one with the passing crowd, and the occupied part, which I estimate at several hundred. The notion of saturation is key in qualitative research, although there are varying definitions of what this might mean. Bowen (2008) argues for 'sample adequacy,' which takes into account depth and breadth of information, and I followed the advice which O'Reilly and Parker describe, that 'data should continue to be collected until nothing new is generated; the point at which there are fewer surprises and there are no more emergent patterns in the data' (2012: 3). Within time constraints, I followed this approach, and as such the sample consists of participants who best represent the research topic and themes that emerged in the fieldwork.

**Table 2: Informants in order of appearance in thesis**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Political affiliation</b>	<b>Type of encounter</b>
<i>Dimitris</i>	65	Pensioner	Anarchist Archive	Interview / everyday
<i>Anna</i>	60	Pensioner	Anarchist Archive	Interview / everyday
<i>Leonidas</i>	mid 30s	Unemployed	Anarchist Archive	Interview / everyday
<i>Loic</i>	mid 30s	Film-maker	Unaffiliated	Everyday
<i>Katarina</i>	mid 30s	Postgraduate student	Unaffiliated	Everyday
<i>Antonis</i>	21	Undergraduate student	Anarchist	Interview / everyday
<i>Giorgos</i>	mid 30s	Graphic designer	Anarchist	Everyday
<i>Tassos</i>	Early 40s	Radio worker	Anarcho-syndicalist	Interview / everyday
<i>Elena</i>	mid 60s	Pensioner	SYRIZA	Interview / everyday
<i>Sotiris</i>	mid 30s	Unemployed	Anarchist / VOX	Everyday
<i>Laurent</i>	mid 30s	Unemployed	Anarchist	Everyday
<i>Natalia</i>	Late 20s	Undergraduate student	ANTARSYA	Interview / everyday
<i>Sofia</i>	Early 20s	Undergraduate student	EAAK	Interview / Polytechnic
<i>Ero</i>	Early 20s	Undergraduate student	EAAK	Interview / Polytechnic

<i>Irini</i>	30s	Undergraduate student	Independent / citizen journalist	Interview / everyday
<i>Konstantina</i>	Early 20s	Undergraduate student	Anarcho-syndicalist	Interview / everyday
<i>Aphroditi</i>	mid 30s	Translator	ARAN, part of ANTARSYA	Interview / everyday
<i>Alex</i>	Late 30s	Unemployed	Radical Left	Polytechnic
<i>Andreas</i>	Early 40s	Film-maker	Anarcho-syndicalist	Interview / everyday
<i>Leandros</i>	mid 30s	Unemployed	Anarchist bookshop	Polytechnic
<i>Diana</i>	early 20s	Undergraduate student	Law Left	Interview / everyday
<i>Dimitris Papachristos</i>	Late 60s	Writer	Unaffiliated	Interview / everyday
<i>Nikos</i>	mid 20s	Undergraduate student	Medical student, EAAK	Interview / everyday
<i>Chryssi</i>	Early 20s	Undergraduate student	Kokkino (part of SYRIZA)	Interview / everyday
<i>Lena</i>	Late 20s	Undergraduate student	Law Left	Interview / everyday
<i>Iannis</i>	Early 20s	Undergraduate student	EAAK	Interview / everyday
<i>Xenia and Thanos</i>	mid 30s	Unemployed	Workers Club	Everyday
<i>Stephanos</i>	40s	Works for Athens Marathon	Workers Club	Interview / everyday
<i>Matthaïos</i>	Late 20s	Unemployed	United Left	Polytechnic
<i>Vera Siderlis</i>	Late 60s	Artist	Unaffiliated	Polytechnic
<i>Christos</i>	Late 20s	Unemployed	United Left	Polytechnic
<i>Grigoris</i>	Late 30s	Civil Engineer	Worker's Club	Interview / everyday
<i>Andreas</i>	mid 50s	Unemployed	ERT occupation	Interview
<i>Sisi</i>	mid 50s	Unemployed	ERT occupation	Interview
<i>Panos</i>	Late 50s	Unemployed	ERT occupation	Interview
<i>Elena</i>	mid 20s	Undergraduate student	Italian anarchist	Everyday
<i>Lambros</i>	mid 20s	Undergraduate student	EAAK	Interview / everyday

Before starting fieldwork in Athens in 2012, I contacted people I knew who were involved in political groups, so that when I arrived in Athens I had some interviews scheduled, and from them I was put in touch with other people. This snowballing method was useful to an extent, in introducing me to 'gatekeepers' who could verify me as being trustworthy and assuage suspicion of me as a researcher, as I detailed in the methodology chapter. I began to "hang out" in Exarcheia, the area where the Polytechnic campus is to be found, as I discuss in the thesis. As such, I would hang out in different social centres, such as VOX and Nosotros, which were adjacent to the central Exarcheia square, as well as public space of the occupied park (Parko), the weekly fruit and veg market in Exarcheia, and the Polytechnic campus itself. Here I would strike up conversations, and become more visible to residents and students who I would cross paths with everyday. This meant that I could generate trust, and

these became spaces of everyday encounter, as well as places where I could conduct interviews with informants. Through Indymedia, Facebook and Twitter, where I slowly built up connections with Athenians, I was able to know more about upcoming events, demonstrations, strikes, and occupations. I began to go to demonstrations, and public political meetings at the Polytechnic campus to meet others, and find out what was going on in the area. This was a good way of getting involved, and meeting people before the Polytechnic commemoration. In Table 1 I list the sites and events that feature in the thesis.

**Table 3: Sites and events where interviews and observation took place**

<b>Date if relevant</b>	<b>Type of site / event</b>	<b>Site</b>
14-17 November 2012 and 2013	Polytechnic uprising commemoration	Polytechnic university campus
October 2012	Occupied university café	Athens Law School
Every Thursday during the twelve weeks of the university strike	Striking university workers would demonstrate, with students and others in solidarity.	Central Athens
30 <sup>th</sup> November 2013	Anti-fascist demonstration, against the Golden Dawn demonstration in Syntagma Square, who were contesting their leader's imprisonment	Central Athens
6 <sup>th</sup> December 2013	Demonstration to remember the death of Grigoropoulos	Central Athens
Weekly assemblies in the Architecture school of the Polytechnic campus	Architecture students would meet (over 100 had to be present to start assembly) to discuss the occupation	Polytechnic university campus
Monthly meetings	Assembly to organize against detainment centres	Polytechnic university campus
Fortnightly concerts	Raising money for imprisoned anarchists, anarchists on trial, the Navarino Park	Polytechnic university campus
October - December 2013	Occupation of Athens university	Polytechnic university campus, and Polytechnopolis outside central Athens
May - July 2014	ERT Open	ERT Occupied premises, outside central Athens
May - July 2014	Exarcheia	Local residents assembly in the square, followed by demonstration around the area
	Public spaces	Exarcheia Square, Parko (Navarino park), VOX social centre, Nosotros social centre, Floral Café, Anarchist Archive, Laiki (fruit and veg market), ADYE medical centre, Cafeneio, Exarcheia Choir

In the run up, and during the Polytechnic uprising commemoration there were many events and talks discussing the uprising itself, the ones through which I met and/or engaged with informants are listed below. All the events that are starred (\*) included speakers who had been involved in the 1973 uprising.

**Table 4: Talks / conferences where interviews and observation took place**

<b>Date of event (2013)</b>	<b>Title of event</b>	<b>Venue of event</b>	<b>Organisers of event</b>
October 30	<i>Violence, the Left and the Two Extremes</i>	Steki Metanaston (Migrants social centre)	Kokkino, Trotskyist group which is part of SYRIZA
November 9	<i>Workers and student struggle at Polytechnio *</i>	Polytechnic	OKDE Spartacus – Trotskyist group which is part of ANTARSYA
November 12	<i>40 years since the Polytechnio *</i>	Ektos Grammis community centre	ARAN – Revolutionary Left, part of the coalition party ANTARSYA
November 13	<i>40 years since the Polytechnio *</i>	Polytechnic	OKDE
November 15	<i>The two extremes</i>	Polytechnic	Anti-fascist Alliance
November 18	<i>40 years since Polytechnio – a critical appraisal *</i>	Andrasi community centre	Journalists: Iannis Kimpouropoulos, Thanassis Skamnakis, Artemis Psaromiligkon
December 3	<i>40 years since the Polytechnio Uprising * Conference</i>	University of Economics and Business (ASOEE)	SEK (Greek sister of SWP)
December 7	Political subjectivity and resistance during the crisis	Polytechnic	Athena Athanasiou

In the final section of this appendix I will discuss and differentiate between the different forms of interview material that are present in the thesis.

**Table 5: Forms of interview material**

<b>Form of interview material</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage of sample (%)</b>
Interview / everyday	22	58
Everyday	8	21
Interview	3	8
Polytechnic	5	13

There are different forms of interview material present in the thesis, which is clarified in relation to the anonymised informants in table 2, and also in table 5 above. Here I differentiate between persons with whom I had informal conversations during fieldwork, which I have labeled as “everyday”, and those with whom I also conducted

formal extended interviews, which I have labeled as “interview/everyday”. I have also made a further differentiation, which is particular to the researching commemorations, which I have labeled as “Polytechnic”. These are conversations that I had with people while hanging around the campus during the three days of the commemoration in 2012 and 2013, and which I have not categorized as interviews, because of their fleeting nature, and the lack of sustained engagement. Although some of these encounters were long in length, and constituted mini interviews, because I did not conduct extended interviews with them outside of the commemoration, I have chosen to differentiate them. I had many of these types of conversations, which proved invaluable, and instructive when coding the data, in finding emerging themes, but many of the encounters were not included in the thesis, due to repetition. As I have discussed, the commemoration was a key period for meeting people who would later become research participants, and whom I interviewed several times in different settings around Exarcheia. These interviews were conducted in cafes and social centres, and not always recorded depending on the wishes of the interviewee. There are three participants in the thesis who I have categorized solely as “interview” because I did not engage with them as part of everyday ethnography in the Exarcheia area during my fieldwork; our only encounters were in formal interviews, conducted at the ERT Open premises. I conducted more interviews with ERT Open members, which were not included because of space and repetition. To conclude this section, I should state that I was unsure how to introduce sections from extended interviews in the thesis, and often referred to them in an informal way, as a way of integrating participants’ voices into the research. Including fragments from everyday ethnography alongside material from interviews, while differentiating the forms of material proved difficult, and this thesis constitutes a first attempt at finding ways to write about people’s experiences as communicated through sociological research.



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