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Accumulation by dispossession and hegemony in place: The Greek experience

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Abstract

Seeking to make sense of the Greek crisis Odyssey and the attendant restructuring of the economy, this article focuses on the spatial dynamics of the crisis. To this end, it builds on Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession and Gramscian hegemony to evaluate the crisis remedy administered to Greece. An attempt is made to demonstrate dispossession of land, public resources and natural assets as a hegemonic project, as it takes place, linked to specific 'spatio-temporal fixes' of capital during and after the crisis, to be either welcomed or opposed by different stakeholders in civil society and local communities. Assessing the new institutional setting that was enforced upon Greece by its creditors, the Greek case of land dispossession and grabbing is discussed, focusing on representative 'optimum' investment instances to question the rationale and the effectiveness of the emerging post-crisis neoliberal model of economic development.

Keywords

accumulation by dispossession, Greek crisis, hegemony, neoliberalism, spatio-temporal fixes of international capital

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Introduction

> The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows barren money with the power of breeding and thus turns it into capital, without the necessity of its exposing itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury. (Marx 1996: 742)

Facing the worst economic crisis in its post-war history, Greece in 2010 was the first and most severely affected member Eurozone periphery to receive successive bailout loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU) and the European Central Bank (ECB), collectively known as the 'troika'. Subject to IMF-style conditionality, successive economic adjustment programmes (EAPs), concluded between Greek governments and creditor institutions, accelerated the neoliberal restructuring of the Greek economy, ignoring its structure and historical specificities. Failing on their professed objectives, they entrapped Greece in a vicious circle of unsustainable debt, austerity and a 6-year recession described as 'one of the deepest economic slumps of modern times' (Wheatley & Barber 2012).[1] As the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2017)[2] nonchalantly concedes, 'extensive fiscal consolidation and internal devaluation have come at a high cost to society, reflected in declining incomes and exceptionally high unemployment'.

Emphasising Greece's flawed pre-crisis model of growth, institutional weaknesses and *domestic* policy errors, mainstream economics literature bypasses fundamental structural and global aspects of the crisis, and interprets it as a typical public debt crisis caused by large fiscal deficits, excessive borrowing and the dwindling competitiveness of the economy linked to low productivity and labour market rigidities (Alogoskoufis 2012; Katsimi & Moutos 2010; Meghir et al. 2010; Mitsopoulos & Pelagidis 2011; Nelson et al. 2017). Embracing the rationale of Greece's creditor institutions, these accounts assess the drastic restructuring imposed by the EAPs as requisite for recovery and present the crisis as an opportunity to launch a new model of development (Azariadis et al. 2010; Budden 2015; Roukanas & Sklias 2018; Tsakloglou et al. 2016; Valaskakis 2012).

On the contrary, radical (Marxist or otherwise) and critical perspectives propose alternative explanations. The causes of the crisis are sought in global systemic turbulence, in the fundamental contradictions of global capitalism and in the geographically variegated consequences of European integration and the architectural deficiencies of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (e.g. Lapavitsas et al. 2018; Vatikiotis et al. 2010; Vergopoulos 2017). Lapavitsas (2010, 2019), for example, finds the roots of the crisis not merely in the country's weak competitiveness or its domestic structural problems but also in unequal power structures within the Eurozone, imbalances and uneven trade relations between the core and the periphery in EMU. Two broad lines of policy proposals stem from this perspective, taking the form either of radical measures (e.g. Greece's exit from the euro, change of the dominant political-economic paradigm as in Lapavitsas's case) or of progressive and socialist reforms of the European governance. This essay falls into this second stream. The Greek crisis, in other words, is perceived as a crisis of the economic system, which operates within a specific political and social context.

The purpose of the article is to contribute to the discussion by adding spatiality and the importance of place and local structures. To do that, our analysis draws on the work of David Harvey and Antonio Gramsci. Both authors ground their theory on the geographical and historical specificity of capitalist accumulation. Our aim is twofold: first, to assess the relevance of their ideas in the context of contemporary, post-2010 financial capitalism by applying them to a country-specific case, and, second, to better articulate an explanation of the roots and effects of the Greek crisis and austerity remedies after 2010, located in specific time-spatial context.

We elucidate the processes of dispossession generated by 'spatio-temporal fixes' of capital (Harvey 2003, 2014) and deploy David Harvey's (2003, 2005) accumulation by dispossession framework as well as concepts of expropriation, land grabbing and enclosure. Extending Harvey's analytical framework, we consider Antonio Gramsci's original work (Gramsci 1971, 2007) and neo-Gramscian insights on hegemony (Jessop 1990) to argue that the restructuring remedy applied to Greece contains elements of a hegemonic project, which mobilises a vast exercise in dispossession premised on a narrative of developmental prospects. To this end, the new institutional setting enforced on Greece is assessed in terms of place-specific restructuring, considering modalities of imposition and consent, and interactions between the state and civil society/local communities. In particular, we examine accumulation by dispossession and hegemony, as it unfolds through privatisations and deregulation, inflows of large international capital and in specific places and localities.

Analysis is structured as follows: 'Theoretical background: Harvey's dispossession and Gramscian hegemony' section sets the theoretical framework and explains key concepts; 'Empirical evidence in the case of Greece' section offers an overview of the crisis in Greece, mainly explaining the remedy administered, while 'Three instances of crisis and rescue: places and spaces for sale' section analyses three significant spatio-temporal instances of dispossession in Greece in different urban and regional contexts. 'Dispossession and hegemony in situ: Greece as a grand case study' section discusses the findings, applying Harvey's accumulation by dispossession framework and the Gramscian conception of hegemony. 'Conclusions' section offers final conclusions and reflections.

Theoretical background: Harvey's dispossession and Gramscian hegemony

In his own words, David Harvey's (1996: 7–10, 2001: 17) work seeks to emphasise the significance of 'basic geographical concepts – space, place, time, environment' in articulating a 'general theory of dialectical and historical geographical materialism'. Central to this undertaking is the concept of accumulation by dispossession: 'the continuation and proliferation of accumulation practices which Marx had treated as "primitive" or "original" during the rise of capitalism' (Harvey 2003: 159). Invoking Rosa Luxemburg, Harvey (2003: 184–185, 2010: 310) reassesses ongoing 'predatory practices' of primitive accumulation as a key feature of capitalism, particularly after the overaccumulation crisis of 1973–1975 unleashed finance capital as the key driver of capitalist power dynamics, that were sustained by the neoliberal transformation of the state. In this context, accumulation by dispossession, inter alia, has fundamentally helped neoliberalism to consolidate exploitation and class power, enabling the channelling of wealth and income towards the upper classes or richer countries (Harvey 2005: 31).

Denoting various forms of spatial reorganisation and geographical expansion, 'spatio-temporal' fixes are indispensable to accumulation by dispossession that is driven by capital's need to offset the dearth of profitable investment outlets in tandem with problems of overaccumulation, namely, surpluses of labour (unemployment), capital (idle productive capacity) and/or surpluses of money capital (Harvey 1989: 343, 2003: 156, 109). Generalising Marx's concept of primitive accumulation as accumulation by dispossession, Harvey theorises an expansion of capital across all of its economic, political and ideological facets (Fine 2006: 143).[3] Thus, primitive accumulation embraces practices of privatisation, expropriation, commodification and monetisation affecting land, natural resources, various rights, labour power, human beings (e.g. all forms of trafficking), housing, nationalised industries, alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption, access to knowledge and asset-stripping devaluation effected through the process of financialisation (Harvey 2003: 145).

As Bob Jessop (1990: 209) emphasises, however, accumulation strategies and hegemonic projects are not identical, although they may overlap partially and/or mutually condition each other. Pursuing our argument that the restructuring remedy applied to Greece constitutes a hegemonic project involving a vast operation of dispossession implemented at huge social and human cost, we need to explore the broader implications and the legitimisation of this operation moving our analytical focus to consider Gramscian and neo-Gramscian concepts of hegemony.

As a form of class rule that combines the consent of dominated 'subaltern' groups, with coercion by the ruling class 'always looming in the background', Gramsci's conception of hegemony embraces two 'major superstructural levels': civil society, which is the 'ensemble of organisms commonly called "private", and that of "political society" or "the State"', including juridical mechanisms (Gramsci 1971: 12, 169–170). Emphasising Gramsci's geographical and territorial awareness of history and society, Edward Said (2000: 467–468, 470) notes that the Gramscian hegemony engages with the 'control of essentially heterogeneous, discontinuous, non-identical, and unequal geographies of human habitation and effort'. Gramsci as a spatial theorist, Jessop (2005) notes, displayed remarkable awareness of questions 'of scale, scalar hierarchies of economic, political, intellectual and moral power, and their territorial and non-territorial expressions' (p. 425).

Pursuing the expansion of a mode of production, social class forces can arrive at hegemony both within the confines of a state as national order and via a world order by constructing a historical bloc (Morton 2007: 122). More than a political alliance, a historical bloc denotes how social forces, which prevail in 'a specific national context, establish a relationship over contending social forces', synthesising diverse class interests – 'economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity' (Bieler & Morton 2004: 90; Gramsci 1971: 181–182; Morton 2007: 122). The underlying social relations of production organically connect civil and political society within the state form; the 'formation and superseding of unstable equilibria' between hegemonic classes and subordinate social groups define state dynamics (Gramsci 1971: 182). Discussing the structural selectivity of the state, Jessop (1990: 147–148) notes the ‘in-built, form-determined bias’ of the non-neutral state that ‘makes it more open to capitalist influences and more readily mobilized for capitalist policies’ rather than ‘equally accessible to all social forces and equally adaptable to all ends’.

While identifying hegemony as ‘ethical-political’, Gramsci (1971) recognises the economic nature of hegemonic projects that are necessarily ‘based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity’ (p. 161). As such, a hegemonic project requires elements that can be readily identified in the implementation, consolidation and discourse surrounding the Greek restructuring programme:

> [T]he mobilization of support behind a concrete, national popular program of action which asserts a general interest in the pursuit of objectives that explicitly or implicitly advance the long-term interests of the hegemonic class (fraction) and which also privileges particular ‘economic corporate’ interests compatible with this programme. Conversely, those particular interests which are inconsistent with the project are deemed immoral and/or irrational and, in so far as they are still pursued by groups outside the consensus, they are also liable to sanction. (Jessop 1990: 208)

Empirical evidence in the case of Greece

Crisis and remedy

Already by early 1830s, Greece exemplifies a country amenable to accumulation by dispossession of land and natural resources owing to its geo-strategic location, extensive property owned by the state and the church/monasteries, and its rich mineral resources (Hadjimichalis 2014a: 176). Hence, land dispossession is not a new phenomenon in the trajectory of Greek capitalism that features various forms of large- or small-scale grabbing of public land and resources by municipal authorities, the church, businesses and individuals deploying diverse means ranging from trespassing on public space and arbitrary/illegal building to false ownership rights; such tactics are fostered by political attitudes, including a marked indifference by the state to protect public goods (Hadjimichalis 2014b: 505–506). Often acquiring notoriety, these ventures include the controversial construction of the largest shopping mall in Athens by an influential ship-owning family or several scandals involving the church and some monasteries that figure among the largest landowners in Greece.[4] Since the 1990s, land dispossession in Greece has been reinvigorated during the ‘modernisation’ drive pursued by PASOK governments and the 2004 Olympics framework, which relaxed licencing procedures. Large-scale dispossession, however, replaced traditional grabbing modalities under the crisis while the EAPs set in motion the rapid devalorisation of land, domestic capital, labour, public and private assets in conjunction with the extended appropriation of rights over public space and resources (Hadjimichalis 2014c). As Lapavitsas (2019: 3) has argued, there are no mysteries about the Greek crisis. Greece has failed to compete with other countries of the Eurozone, and as such, its peripheral place in the EMU is of prime importance for its structural problems. The loss of competitiveness in the ‘periphery’ has tended to be reflected in the gain of competitiveness in the ‘core’. Thus, from 2010 on, austerity due to loss of competitiveness enhanced this 'periphericity' and helped to reshape the Greek economy through the acceleration of accumulation by dispossession. Greece has been transformed into a prime terrain for lucrative land dispossession typifying the dynamics between space, the politics of public debt and capital's 21st-century strategy to derive profits from rents (Hadjimichalis 2018: 71). Exploring contradictions between capitalism and the appropriation of nature, Konstantinidis and Vlachou (2017: 109) describe how the memoranda defined surplus value extraction by allowing access to capital in previously inaccessible sectors such as energy or water utilities. In this way, Greece's creditors intervene in intra-capitalist competition and in the capital–labour struggle, while advancing the project of neoliberal European integration.

Before and during the crisis, dispossession in Greece showcases a dual process of 'green' and 'un-green' grabbing conforming to the neo-liberalisation of public policy and capitalist restructuring: 'green' grabbing refers to the appropriation of land and resources for environmental ends, as with the creation of photovoltaic parks across Greece as opposed to the outright 'un-green' grabbing of natural resources, even in protected areas, with no ecological rationale (Apostolopoulou & Adams 2015; Fairhead et al. 2012; Siamanta 2017). Evidencing how capitalism seeks profits, not only by directly exploiting/grabbing nature but also through regulatory acts of conservation, 'green growth' projects were estimated to account for a quarter of the total investment between 2005 and 2011 in renewable energy as well as the exploitation of wind, solar power, biofuels and geothermal resources and so on (Apostolopoulou & Adams 2015: 18; Lekakis & Kousis 2013: 321).

Towards a neoliberal growth model: austerity, privatisations, deregulation

Enlarging the financial sphere, the acquisition of privatised assets offers international capital abundant opportunities to realise profits very quickly. One of the 10 key imperatives of the Washington Consensus, privatisation, is steadily imposed by the IMF on loan-receiving countries (Soederberg et al. 2005: 25). Accordingly, extensive privatisation operations were requested by the troika as a pre-condition for 'restarting' the economy through foreign direct investments conducive to primitive accumulation in historically prominent sectors of high profitability, such as real estate and tourism, and new ones such as energy production and raw material extraction.

Following the fulfilment of most conditions set out in the three memoranda, the proposed development scheme for Greece heavily relies on three basic pillars: first, on attracting large investments, mainly in tourism, real estate development, extractions, and the energy sector, including 'green' energy projects; second, on a mammoth privatisation plan where about 50% of targeted assets regard land, while 35% concern infrastructure (including water, health services and energy), and 15% public utilities and, third, on the existence of an appropriate legal framework to ensure the success of the whole operation. The massive privatisation programme undertaken in Greece spans rail and road transport, airports and ports, public utilities and resources, as well as public land and real estate assets. To attract large international capital and raise EUR50 billion by 2015, the government pledged to keep only minority stake shareholdings, losing in most cases all its holdings (Hellenic Republic – Ministry of Finance 2012). Forming an integral component of the land grabbing and dispossession operation in Greece, these investments are directly associated with the intensified commodification of nature and natural resources, and the redistribution of wealth between regions and social classes.

Even before the crisis, Greece was not a space closed off to foreign (mostly European) capital. However, the crisis accelerated the process of commodification of public goods. Thus, through EAPs, compliant Greek governments adopted or amended numerous laws to consolidate the rights of the private sector in exploiting land, nature and natural resources. As the state rolled back, the new legal framework privileged foreign direct investment in 'strategic sectors', sanctioning the sweeping privatisation of public land and utilities, enclosures of natural and public resources and concessions on sensitive protected ecosystems (Konstantinidis & Vlachou 2016, 2017). In other words, the development model proposed for Greece hinged on deregulating environmental and spatial planning legislation in order to reregulate it in a manner privileging capital at the expense of the public land, the environment and natural resources. These developments, then, paved the way for the commodification of public land and natural resources, offering new spatial fixes for 'renewed' primitive accumulation in the context of the new growth model for Greece.

First, key to the success of this 'vision' is the 'professionally-managed' Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (henceforth HRADF) entrusted with maximising asset sales to reduce government debt, and with promoting 'the business transformation of Greece by encouraging improved business practices and higher investment' (Commission of the European Communities (CEC) 2011: 20; MoU 2012). Replicating the German Treuhand, which implemented the privatisation programme of the former German Democratic Republic, the Fund is responsible for three asset categories connected with land exploitation: real estate assets (land and buildings), licences and concessions, and listed or unlisted shares.

Second, to guarantee the privatisation process for 99 years, the Syriza/ANEL government, under the 3rd Memorandum (MoU 2015), established the Hellenic Corporation of Assets and Participations (HCAP), a new hyper-fund to oversee HRADF, acquiring ownership of all assets of the Greek state so they can be sold off in the future. These include 70,000 real estate assets, including protected natural and archaeological sites, all major state-run enterprises like utility companies (electricity, water) and public transport (buses, metro, etc.) and state shares in banks.

Third, as intimated previously, the terms and conditions shaping the new 'business-friendly' environment were enforced by 'fast track' laws, in particular L3894/2010 and L3853/2010, as amended in 2013 (Greek Government Gazette 2013). Designating any investment exceeding EUR100.000, or creating at least 150 jobs, directly eligible for 'fast track' benefits, these laws concede to strategic investors unprecedented exclusive rights over mainland plots, coastal land, seashore, adjacent sea area, and sea bottom plots. Easing the 'express' appropriation of private property, they diminish compensations, modify property rights, transfer approval rights from local authorities to central government, shorten appeal deadlines, overrule environmental and construction regulations and grant generous tax exemptions and subsidies. In brief, enabling the enclosure of natural assets and resources to benefit large capital, 'fast track' legislation fosters primitive accumulation of capital for international companies, at the expense of small-scale family business which are the rule (821.209 out of 821.540) in the Greek economy (CEC 2019). This process entails direct (in terms of SMEs' profitability) or indirect (with regard to environmental sustainability) adverse effects both on micro enterprises (0–9 employees) and on the livelihood and the living standards of ordinary citizens. On the contrary, generous tax exemptions, subsidies and other incentives, such as the Development Law (4399/2016), the substantial reduction of labour costs and the flexibilisation of labour markets, mostly benefitted large enterprises (Apostolopoulou & Adams 2015). Furthermore, by granting tax exemptions amounting to 40% of the investment value and other benefits to 'strategic' investors, the state transfers private investment costs to Greek taxpayers in a country burdened with extensive tax evasion by richer strata of society and a regressive taxation skewed against the poor (Hartlief et al. 2015: 78).

Three instances of crisis and rescue: places and spaces for sale

The quarterly news bulletin released by HRADF resembles a shopping catalogue specialising in luxury items and prime quality goods, available for the taking. Prioritising the exploitation of land, a total of 412 properties across Greece, that extend over approximately 110 million m^2 of land and 516.000 m^2 of building surface, have been put up for sale, including protected Natura 2000 sites, beachfront areas and/or archaeological sites.[5] Variously distributed across Greece, ongoing or planned fast-track privatisations showcase a vast portfolio, including beachfront areas, hotels, 'green energy' projects, solar power stations, a gold mine and other extraction projects, the telecommunications network, shopping malls, thermal springs, the Public Electricity Corporation, water services in Thessaloniki and Athens, 10 more peripheral ports as well sea plot concessions for hydrocarbon exploitation.

Hadjimichalis (2014b, 2014c) illustrates further land grabbing in Greece, as international speculative capital seeks to secure monopolistic rents. Significant decrease in land and housing commercial values, about 20%–35% since 2008, and undemocratic and authoritarian institutional practices established by 'bailout' policies as well as private and public indebtedness enabled the implementation of a mass privatisation programme of public land and the drastic change in ownership rights on land and land-related assets.

Nowadays, across Greece, numerous projects benefit from preferential rights and scandalous advantages provided by Greek governments, through 'fast track' legislation or the commitments to the Memoranda and HRADF. Among these, three representative cases are discussed next, considering the time frame and progress of each investment, the economic, environmental and social impacts and the stance of local communities.

The former airport of Hellinikon and the Agios Kosmas coastal front, Athens, Attiki Prefecture

Several years after the closure of the old Athens international airport (in 2001), the degraded area of Hellinikon and Agios Kosmas beach, further devalorised by the economic depression, presented an exceptional opportunity for lucrative investment. Reflecting a neoliberal vision for urban development, this prime asset was marketed as the largest Mediterranean urban plot of public ownership, with excellent building facilities, only to be transferred by HRADF in March 2014 on the cheap to the sole bidder, a consortium of investors from Greece, Abu Dhabi and China controlled by the Latsis ship-owner family (Hadjimichalis 2014b). Thus, a potentially green public space of 620 hectare, in a privileged location, 8 km from the centre of Athens, was sold well below its market value, to be converted into a luxury tourism and real estate site with upscale hotels, residences, a convention centre, a casino and marinas, creating manifold outlets for profit making.

Since its inception, the project has been met by serious objections from scientific bodies and opposition by citizens committees, regional and local authorities. An initial plan of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) (2011) proposing a metropolitan park was dismissed by direct political intervention on grounds of national interest. Another research of the institution (Bellavilas 2013) warning that the price was too low was ignored; the deal with the investors would merely generate revenues of EUR300–500 million, while the cost of supplementary works and urban infrastructure would cost EUR2.5 billion to the Greek state.

Notably, a recent appeal by 521 bodies and individuals to the Council of the State (CoS) against the relevant Presidential Decree was rejected as the Eurogroup interceded threatening to suspend Greece's loan instalments, until all 'pre-requisites', including the Hellinikon investment, were met (Portaliou 2018). Concomitantly, the investors threatened (like another major international investor, El Dorado Gold S.A.) to abandon the project, in case their claims were not met by the government (Sverkos & Tzevelekou 2017). At present, the construction of the long-delayed project hinges on the tender for the casino.

Upon completion, the Hellinikon project is expected to significantly transform the Attica metropolitan region into an international tourism–transport–trade hub and to revive the 'Athenian Riviera' by attracting higher income visitors and tourists as happens in other metropolises in the European Mediterranean coast. In other words, the new development 'vision' for post-crisis Greece aims to create a large private space akin to a 'Qatar city' of excess luxury: an enclosure creating 'a city within the city', complete with new architectural landmarks, such as skyscrapers and other elements alien to the urban Attica landscape (Bellavilas 2013).

According to the investor and the mainstream discourse, the project, which amounts to EUR8 billion, will have multiple positive effects for the region of Attica and for the entire country. It is expected to reposition Athens 'as a world class destination',[6] attract one million new visitors to its new 'thematic' venues and units (casino, marinas, etc.), create 75,000 new jobs and contribute to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) by 2.4% and to tax revenues by EUR14 billion.[7] These are some of the reasons behind the inclusion of this particular investment to the country's commitments through the Memoranda. Nevertheless, as the project becomes part of the commitments for fiscal consolidation, spatial planning, property rights and the management of the site are transferred to the private investor and a new framework of privately induced city planning is established (Georgiadis 2018).

Despite the possible gains that remain disputable, civilians rise against the abolition of legislative and institutional framework for the protection of the commons and the natural environment, intensive construction and high-rise buildings in free space, the cutting off from the rest of urban tissue and against the impediment of free access to the shore (Portaliou 2018). The concept of juridical coercion to build consent is particularly pertinent. According to the local struggle committee, following the rejection of the appeal against the project:[8]

> The Greek people are aware of the recent intervention of the Eurogroup on the Greek issue for the auctions in the case of Hellinikon. The Eurogroup has pressed unacceptably, threatening to delay the 5.7 billion-euro loan installment, until the CoS issues a ruling for the PD. It is not only about the abolition of national sovereignty, imposed by the Memoranda Commitments, but also about the crude interference within the functioning of justice, which in this case has been acting in accordance with the wishes of the Eurogroup . . .

At another point, the same communication states that the ruling of the CoS for Hellinikon, 'fully adopting the arguments found in the studies of the private investor who buys public land, of an area as wide as the municipality of Athens for almost nothing, reduces public interest to that of mere business interest'.

Skouries: gold mining in Chalkidiki, Northern Greece

The privatisation of the Cassandra Mines, known also as the Skouries gold mine, in the Chalkidiki peninsula demonstrates all at once dispossession of land and resources, the intensity of primitive accumulation, and neoliberal policies to establish forms of extractive capitalism in a crisis context; in particular, it exposes another element in the new growth model proposed for Greece, namely, the intensified extraction of natural resources. At the same time, the Skouries case embodies the firm resistance of local communities against the irreversible destruction and the commoditisation of the area's sensitive ecosystem, its natural beauty and the loss of their livelihoods, which mostly depend on tourism, fishing, beekeeping and livestock.

The Cassandra mine complex involves the construction of an open pit gold mine, underground mines and processing plants over 26,400 hectares with important aquatic resources and 90% forest coverage, including Natura 2000 sites; the entire project is expected to yield 430,000 ounces of gold annually, with a potential for extracting also copper, silver, lead and zinc (Hartlief et al. 2015). While the area has a history of small-scale mining since the 6th century, the present story dates back to 1999, when foreign extractive capital (TVX Gold S.A.) obtained full mining concessions, triggering opposition from local communities that led to the decision of the CoS (613/2002) to stop the investment.

In 2003, the Greek State acquired the Cassandra mines from TVX Gold S.A. directly selling them for the ludicrous price of EUR11 million to the newly established Hellas Gold S.A, controlled by the Canadian Eldorado Gold S.A. (95% of the shares),[9] without any prior assessment or open call for tenders. In 2011, the government granted a 'fast-track' licence to Hellas Gold, approved the controversial environmental impact assessment (EIA) and designated Skouries as a mining area while a flash amendment in 2014 eliminated the national forest protection framework. Emphasising the far-reaching hazards of large-scale extractive mining in the area, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (UATH 2013) and the Regional Department of the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE/TKM 2011), among other research bodies, have cautioned against the detrimental environmental and social impact of Eldorado Gold's defectively designed mining projects.

It is also pertinent to recall that in 2012, debt-ridden Greece became one of the first member states to adopt a National Minerals Policy complying with the EU objectives (Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate Change 2015) that were set out in the EU Raw Materials Initiative (2008, consolidated in 2011). The latter aimed at promoting mining within the EU, particularly of metallic ores, including seabed mining, by putting in place a land use policy for minerals and a framework that facilitates their exploration and exploitation (Kadoglou 2017).

Controversy and social tension escalated under the Syriza–ANEL government which came to power in 2015, promising, among other things, to halt the project. Swiftly changing course, the government endorsed the Eldorado project but engaged in delay tactics amid legal pressure, damage claims and other threats by the investors who delivered an ultimatum requesting the approval of extended permits to expand its mining activities by September 2018. The ultimatum was withdrawn as an undisclosed agreement favouring the company appears to have been reached with the government (Alexandropoulos 2018).

Opposing the hegemonic growth model of extractive capitalism imposed on local communities, resistance against Eldorado evolved into an emblematic movement. Attracting international solidarity and acclaim, the Skouries anti-mining movement took various forms, including demonstrations, social media campaigns, joint action with scientific bodies and institutions, legal action, and networking/clustering with other movements (Hartlief et al. 2015; Tsavdaroglou et al. 2017: 8–10). It also embraced broader concerns regarding participatory democracy and intergenerational justice in managing natural endowments. Raising human rights questions emphasised by Amnesty International (2013), resistance by the local population and activists has met with repression by the state, police brutality, criminalisation of the protests and legal prosecution. At the same time, owing to the rhetoric of investors, Greek authorities and biased media about the benefits of the investment, particularly job creation, deep tensions emerged within local communities, even within families (Hartlief et al. 2015: 31–32; Hatzisavvidou 2017).

The Eldorado case amply illustrates global extractive capitalism in one of its spatial 'fixes' aided by the state and domestic economic and political elites. The means towards this end include generous subsidies from the Canadian government, scandalous legal facilitation, tax benefits/exemptions by the Greek state, as well as cross-border profit shifts of passive income (dividends, royalties, interest, capital gains) without being taxed, thanks to bilateral tax treaties and EU Directives (Hartlief et al. 2015). Notably, Eldorado Gold's Greek subsidiaries are wholly owned by three Dutch mailbox companies, which finance their Greek subsidiary Hellas Gold SA with bond loans, receive huge interest payments from Greece and send these on to another mailbox company in Barbados (Hartlief et al. 2015).

Presenting an obstacle to the mobility of international financial capital, local struggle committees have been accused as being disobedient and transgressive. As the former Minister of Public Order stated, addressing local activists in Ierissos, after a police invasion in the homes of protestors 'if any community, village or town in Greece, forms the impression, that it can apply its own Constitution and common law . . . it should be aware that this shall not pass' (Fotopoulos 2013).

In the media and public discourse, the case of Ierissos in Skouries has become the most notorious example of a rebellion space during the crisis. In some cases, protesting has been condemned and activists have been accused for fascist and criminal behaviors by non-state actors following government rhetoric (Apostolopoulou & Adams 2015), while moral and ideological representations and symbolisms have often been used to depict such behaviors. A common representation in the media is that of Ierissos as a Gaulish village. Tracing the ideological charge of such representations, Micha (2014: 67) explains how behind the walls of Gaulish villages in crisis-ridden Greece, 'everyday multiple and often conflicting claims, silent but persistent trespasses of dominant rules' challenge the 'representation of clear and legible socio-spatial divisions', as well as the attendant 'no alternative perspective' theory.

Itanos Gaia: integrated tourist development in Cavo Sidero, Crete

Approved via 'fast-track' legislation, the 'Itanos Gaia' investment by British Loyalward Ltd. concerns a mega luxury tourism and real estate complex to be located in Cavo Sidero peninsula, in the northeast of Crete. The area of rugged natural beauty contains the Vai palm forest and is designated a 'Natura 2000 network' site, enjoying archaeological and environmental protection. The initial plan included five hotels of a total capacity of 7000 beds, golf courses, a conference centre, two marinas, a complex of summer residencies and a spa of 'international standards',[10] only to be reduced to 1936 beds and one golf course later on, but occupying the same area (Hadjimichalis 2014b). Itanos Gaia project will be constructed on a 6.000-acre plot, with 28 km of coastline, comprising up to 108.000 m^2 of built space according to the investors (Minoan Group PLC 2019).

Cavo Sidero investment of a 267.7 million budget epitomises Greece's tourism-oriented new development strategy targeting economic elites, combining real estate, luxury and golf tourism developments and allowing the commodification of natural sites of ecological and historic importance (Tselemengou 2016). Yet, this undertaking threatens to destroy a unique large-scale cultural landscape where 7000 years of Cretan history and land use survives enriched by rare and endemic plants and wildlife: details of Neolithic, Bronze Age (Minoan), Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Cretan culture once lost, can never be reclaimed (Rackham & Moody 2012).

Garnering support by successive governments since its initial inception in the mid-1990s, the Cavo Sidero project has also met with strong opposition by parts of the local population and international environmental organisations, illustrating the complex power dynamics between Greek civil society, the state, an 'outsider' investor, an 'outsider' civil society and a particular Greek actor, the Greek Church, which owns the area of the planned investment (Kütting 2010: 140). In particular, concerns have been raised regarding its transparency/legitimacy, its socio-economic implications, the protection of the natural landscape and ecosystems, the sustainability of local resources and infrastructure, the archaeological and cultural importance of the area, the reliability of the investor and the dubious ownership of Moni Toplou monastery that had initially engaged in negotiations with the investors.

Local people, while anticipating some positive economic outcomes, have voiced reservations regarding environmental sustainability, participatory democracy and the political dynamics of local development as shown in a study by Andriotis (2008). The 'threat of a "luxurious ghetto" where foreigners will take the control of planning and development from the local people' (Andriotis 2008: 435) was one of the reservations reported. In addition, locals were concerned about the pressure over local and natural resources (electricity, water infrastructures), dubious benefits on local employment (e.g. as the new jobs will not be relevant to the locals' professional specialisations or qualifications) and 'economic leakages' as tourist resorts often keep visitors' consumption within, and as small tourist enterprises will face intense competition. More recent field research[11] conducted by the present authors has revealed that locals nowadays are more concerned about the great delay and about the intentions of future investors, since the project was first introduced nearly 30 years ago, while the developer is a small-sized British company, generating profits from financial activities in a secondary capital market of the London Stock Exchange (AIM) and is still in search for possible investors to realise the project (Minoan Group PLC 2017).

The case of Cavo Sidero, too, demonstrates how the Greek state intervenes to accommodate investors in various ways beyond merely privatising spatial planning (Kütting 2010; Tselemengou 2016). Following an appeal by environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and 294 civilians against the investment, the CoS in 2010, cancelled the project as 'unconstitutional'. The ruling presented the argument that the investment is moving against the regional spatial plan and pointed that the area is included in NATURA 2000 European network and as such any investment should be delimited into specific territorial limits.

Nonetheless, a modified plan was approved in 2016 and was inserted in the legislation for large-scale and strategic investments. Another appeal by 17 bodies and 123 civilians, requesting the cancellation of the relevant Presidential Decree (PD) and Special Spatial Plan for the investment, has been rejected by the CoS, bluntly reversing its 2010 ruling, declaring the PD un-appealable and granting planning permission. For some scientists and activists, this was a sheer act of expropriation of land aided by state institutions (Sfakianaki 2017).

Wider public opposition took place in this case through digital networks and the social media. As Briassoulis (2010: 294) reports, by 2010, the 2008 online petition against the project gathered 10.830 signatures from many countries. Circa 4000 of the signees posted comments that were further analysed to depict values and perceptions attached to place and welfare. As she puts it, 'the neoliberal version of development and progress was rejected, sometimes with sarcasm or irony, as environmentally destructive'; 'Save the nature – not the money!!!' exemplifies comments exposing the prime importance given to irreplaceable assets and non-negotiable core beliefs (Briassoulis 2010: 294–296).

Some notes on the local case studies and the relevance of theory

All above cases provide empirical examples of how dispossession takes place in specific localities and reveal new forms of conflict and means of imposition comprising of political discourse, journalism and juridical power. The latter also include the 'economistic' views of several actors such as creditors, corporate representatives and business executives, politicians, state policy practitioners, even the church, on the desired visions for future national, regional and local economic development, with benefits for all. In general, dispossession evolves as a slow process, accelerated during the Memoranda, with its beginnings going back to the 1990s and the first stages of the liberalisation of domestic markets and the beginnings of European Integration.

The process is evolving gradually in a clear geographical and historical context, with the two being closely interwined. The geographical context is marked by the divisions, coalitions and conflicts between power structures, peripheral and central states, international and national organisations and institutions, within the institutional context of the EU and the EMU. In addition, the geographical dimension becomes important as local societies, activists and other non-state actors express values and beliefs in favour or against the rescue remedies.

The historical context is marked by the institutional trajectory of the EU and by the rolling back of the central state, starting in the 1980s in the United Kingdom and the United States and spreading to all countries of the Western world. Particularly, the timely dilemma between goals and visions for efficacy and justice, for economic competitiveness and socio-economic welfare and solidarity is very important in order to understand the dynamics of dispossession in the case of Greece and other countries of the European South. With justice and solidarity principles fading in the background in the new system of economic governance and the turn to monetarist doctrines to defend the common currency, the democratic deficits in European decision-making become increasingly interwoven with the uneven economic and power relations between North and South (Hadjimichalis 2018).

Finally, hegemony is also promoted in all cases through the mainstream economic discourse using the influence of neoliberal ideas and economic culture. Those are embedded in strategies and beliefs of different actors within the country and at the international sphere. The prevailing doctrine argues that there is no alternative to the proposed growth model and disregards public opposition or activists' protests, as they are thought to be expressing marginal views and represent marginal interests. After all, the benefits are not to be discussed, they are already known and registered in international agreements, with new investments initiating a virtuous circle, generating more jobs and rapid growth, although income becomes more unevenly distributed across regions, classes and other social groups: in this sense, non-economic factors, such as the social welfare, are not to be addressed in the context of a discussion that is about growth and financial stability.

Dispossession and hegemony in situ: Greece as a grand case study

Greece's rescue remedy as accumulation by dispossession

Referring to Greece, Harvey (2014: 162) emphasises Greece's devastation and pillage resulting from 'the sinister and destructive side of spatio-temporal fixes' that are crucial 'in building a new landscape to facilitate the endless accumulation of capital and the endless accumulation of political power'.

Ushering this new landscape, the EAPs implemented in Greece effectively created optimal conditions for profitable spatio-temporal fixes within a neoliberal context of capital mobility. The EAPs imposed a procyclical fiscal policy grounded on severe austerity and internal devaluation; promoted a 'business-friendly' environment hinging on the deregulation of labour and product markets as well as the sweeping privatisation of state assets (IMF 2010; MoU 2010, 2012, 2015) and enacted extensive legislation to buttress accumulation by dispossession in discharging assets, including labour power at very low cost, allowing overaccumulated capital to grab and directly turn such assets to profitable use by dispossessing their previous owners (Harvey 2003: 149). This alleged recovery strategy subjected Greece to the most extensive and stringent austerity and structural reforms among all the indebted countries of the European periphery at huge social, human and economic cost, including a 6-year GDP contraction of more than 25%: assuming that Greece's economy will grow around 2% per year, it will need 13 years to return to pre-crisis levels (INE/GSEE 2016; Tamamović 2015: 65).[12]

Accelerating the neoliberal restructuring of the economy, purported rescue set off a vast operation of dispossession and appropriation, targeting salaries, disposable income, property and pensions, a vast array of fundamental rights, health, education and social protection systems, as well as public assets and public goods, including natural resources and spaces. The outcome was the creation of institutionally unprotected and devalorised labour surpluses ready to be exploited in profitable 'prime investment' schemes of dispossession, along with raw materials, low-cost land and natural resources. More specifically, the extraction of surplus value from the Greek labour force was mainly effected through unemployment, which still remains the highest within the EU, affecting mainly women and young people,[13] and the expropriation of fundamental worker rights via a draconian labour market restructuring to promote flexibilisation and deregulation in line with the agenda steadily advanced by the European Commission over the last two decades (Dedoussopoulos et al. 2013).

Furthermore, surplus value was extracted via the extensive income dispossession resulting from wage and pension cuts, cuts in social benefits and tax-led adjustment policies, all of which have adversely affected income distribution compounding the uneven allocation of the austerity burden: lower income brackets saw their tax burden increase by 337.7% while the respective increase in upper deciles was only 9% (Giannitsis & Zografakis 2015: 17–18; Papatheodorou 2015).

Dispossession as a hegemonic project: coercion and consent

For Harvey (2003: 28), institutional arrangements embedded within the state decisively facilitate capital accumulation. In this light, Greece's economic adjustment Odyssey helps elucidate the capital–state nexus, indicating the transformed role of state to enable accumulation by dispossession by exerting judiciary coercion.

Economic and social policymaking was de facto transferred from national to international actors, violating the constitutional order and deviating from proclaimed European and international standards of legality (Chrysogonos & Zolotas 2015). Under the conditionality of the memoranda, Greece's creditors explicitly requested 'adequate preparatory measures such as unbundling, legal and economic due diligence and regulatory reform' for the full success of the privatisation programme (CEC 2010). These were expressly transposed into national legislation as directly applicable rules by framework laws or specific fast-track legislation.

As a consequence, a new institutional framework premised on Maastricht and Lisbon criteria, which are integral to the neoliberal transformation of the European economy, ensured the application of four key policy objectives of the 'augmented' Washington Consensus: privatisation, deregulation, secure property rights and eliminating barriers to foreign direct investment (Rodrik 2006: 978). The privatisation and commodification of public land is a key feature of a 'renewed' primitive accumulation of capital, marking the neoliberal phase of capitalism (Harvey 2005). Enacting an institutional framework to accelerate privatisation operations, the government diminished state control over the use of land, nature and natural resources, enabling capital accumulation through their unregulated exploitation. This transformation, which can be conceptualised either as Marx's (1996) 'Primitive Accumulation' (pp. 704–707) or as Harvey's 'accumulation by dispossession', involved numerous mega investment projects in Greece, three of which have already been discussed in this article.

The Greek episode confirms the coercive nature of the imposed changes. Notwithstanding the neoliberal 'less' state discourse, the state in Greece emerges Janus-like: on the one hand, fortified, exerting juridical coercion to enforce accumulation by dispossession, and debilitated in forfeiting its policy making mandate as a mover of a neoliberal supra-national market discipline agenda and local caretaker of creditor/capital interests. At the same time, throughout the crisis, Greek state readily resorted to forms of direct repression, including the use of police force against popular protests and social unrest as the case was at Skouries. As noted in a European Parliament report (Kaltsouni et al. 2015), demonstrations against austerity measures were often addressed by 'excessive use of force, including the use of chemical irritants against peaceful or largely peaceful demonstrators, and the use of stun grenades in a manner that violates international standards'.

Finally, as the dominant class exerts its rule by force or coercion, 'ingeniously combined with persuasion and consent' (Gramsci 1971: 310), consent around this hegemonic project was manufactured through a technocratic depoliticised discourse to familiarise civil society with a hegemonic class strategy presented as the requisite response to exogenous pressures and various endogenous flaws (Amoore 2002). So, adjustment by accumulation is promoted as a rational and universal corrective that is at once benign and disciplinary: states and societies cannot but enforce the 'right' cure which also carries promises for the economy.

This discursive frame is buttressed by mainstream economic theory which, inter alia, claims to be 'scientific', value-free and universal. Depoliticising social and economic processes, an individualist discourse places responsibility of success or failure on isolated individuals and protects the neoliberal social order from social dissent, denying the role of collective capacity and action (Brown 2005: 42–43; Saad-Filho & Ayers 2014). Much like Gramsci's (1971: 12, 5) organic intellectuals who function as 'the dominant group's "deputies"' exercising 'subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government', a complex web of power and influence, with links in the mainstream of the economics profession and the media, domestically and globally disseminates this discourse and its attendant policy blueprints. Building 'transnational circuits of ideational and policy transfer', this web includes multilateral bodies, financial institutions, epistemic communities, policy think tanks, opinion leaders and expert technocrats who contribute to the dissemination and imposition of regulatory arrangements promoting their 'popular acceptance as necessary adjustments to ineluctable economic laws' (Brenner et al. 2010: 214; Peck 2008).

Regarding civil society, previous examples illustrate the dynamics of coercion and consent in the Gramscian sense. Our research demonstrates the coercive, predatory and disruptive nature of the spatial transformations in all three cases examined, generated to varying degrees opposition and resistance by local communities. Also, it traces how, in a context of overall dispossession aggravated by the crisis, the discourse about jobs, development, and economic benefits has manufactured consent among various stakeholders, dividing local civil society to a bitter degree as in the case of Skouries (Calvário et al. 2017; Velegrakis & Frezouli 2016). Thus, the idea that such restructuring is beneficial to the country and community acquires acceptability as Gramscian 'common sense', which, nevertheless, provides both the locus on which the dominant ideology is constructed and the site of resistance against this ideology (Simon 1982: 72, 29).

Our research indicates that the proposed development schemes, along with their environmental impact, will indelibly disrupt existing social relations and norms. Furthermore, the new enclosures are underway in the sense that they are oriented towards the disintegration of 'commons', namely, the 'social spheres of life the main characteristics of which are to provide various degrees of protection from the market' (De Angelis 2015: 145). This point can be further illuminated by the socio-spatial structuring of civil society, particularly at Skouries and Itanos Gaia, which provides a touchstone to assess the impact of the proposed restructuring. In both cases, social relations are based on place-bound communities, encompassing multiple social relationships (relatives, neighbours, co-workers, etc.), delineating a local system that is not directly commodifiable: lasting ties of reciprocity, trust, friendship as well as the local configuration of power and status often insulate the community from the commodity relations of a capitalist economy and from the 'capitalist production of a mode of consumption' (Urry 1988: 39–42). In this light, we can reasonably expect extensive dispossession to result from the unequal consumptive relations inherent in large-scale tourism, which commodifies cultural forms, histories, and landscapes, while the state enforces these processes, annulling common property rights in ways detrimental to the well-being of citizens (Kütting 2010: 84).

State, capital and the new spatial fixes

The crisis in Greece, redressed by the MoUs, accelerated the neoliberal transformation of the Greek economy, consolidating a hegemonic project through mechanisms of coercion and consent, which led to 'reconfigurations, new models of development, new spheres of investment and new forms of class power' (Harvey 2010: 11). Echoing both the enclosure movement that reached its peak in the late 18th-century England and John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939, these developments have endowed capital with new fixes/outlets of accumulation by dispossession and land grabbing at huge economic, social and environmental cost.

Our analysis has demonstrated how post-crisis Greece has been reshaped to accommodate spatial fixes by licencing international and domestic capital to accumulate by dispossession and profit in allegedly 'strategic' sectors, mainly tourism, real estate development, extractions and energy. To build up consent in civil society, this undertaking is marketed by creditors (IFIs), rating agencies, Greek governments, expert think tanks, the media and mainstream literature alike, as essential for recovery and indispensable for the new business-friendly development model of a 'competitive Greece'. Including organic intellectuals, the concerted mobilisation of these actors is suggestive of the operation of a Gramscian historical block. More than a mere political alliance, it demonstrates how 'leading social forces within a specific national context establish a relationship over contending social forces' (Bieler & Morton 2004: 90).

This operation helped to assemble ideal conditions for dispossession as a hegemonic project, creating lucrative fixes for capital. The appeal of such fixes, first, is enhanced by the massive devalorisation and dispossession of labour as well as of private and public real estate assets owing to the twin impact of the crisis and the policy mix applied as remedy. Second, our inquiry has demonstrated that dispossession is institutionalised and secured by institutions and a legal framework enacted by Greek governments under the guidance of the creditors, including the unprecedented 99-year-long 'mortgaging' of all public assets of Greece, to be sold each time the country fails behind its debt instalments.

As already mentioned, contrary to the neoliberal discourse about 'less' state, the state in Greece emerges fortified, albeit in a new role. Acts of coercion complement mechanisms of consent, as the state exerts outright repression and forfeits control over social, economic and environmental policy, as caretaker of creditor interests, re-regulator/enforcer of market discipline and conveyor of transnational policy transfer. Notably, Greece's mammoth privatisation plan and its preferential investment and tax regime have been determined and monitored under the coercive conditionality imposed by the Troika for releasing Greece's loan instalments. Furthermore, controversial tax regimes in the EU, for example, in the Netherlands and Luxembourg, as well as EU law itself provide global capital the means for various fixes in the form of tax avoidance and profit shifting (Hartlief et al. 2015). In sum, guided and coerced, the state as 'a purer catalyst of capitalist expansion than ever before' systematically intervenes to facilitate the privatisation of profits and the socialisation of losses, fostering accumulation by dispossession (Smith 2008: 260).

In the case of Skouries, intensive extractivism presents similarities with the 'new extractivism' observed in the Global South, in developing economies of Latin America.

The former involves export-led activities that substantially diminish natural resources as well as extensive incentives offered to foreign investors by over-indebted Latin American governments – often leftist or centre-left governments of the so-called 'Pink Tide' (Acosta 2013; Petras & Veltmeyer 2014). It also extends beyond minerals and oil to farming, forestry, fishing, other agro-industrial practices and a wide range of natural resources (Acosta 2013; Gudynas 2013). Current Greek experience is similarly oriented to exogenous factors for growth, as foreign international corporations are encouraged and given privileges to gain control over local mineral resources (Tsavdaroglou et al. 2017). Eldorado Gold plans to exhaust the mineral reserves by extracting roughly 380 million tonnes of ore over the life of the Cassandra mines, more than 10 times as much as has been mined in the region in the past two millennia (Wilton 2013). In September 2011, the Ministry of Environment designated Skouries as a mining area where mining takes precedence over any other land use, even in protected cultural areas and ecosystems, while land use designation regulations are to change wherever/whenever new mineral deposits are discovered (Kadoglou 2017).

Notwithstanding their differences, the three cases above also present significant similarities. All three demonstrate the entrenchment of dispossession over publicly owned land or the commons, obtained at prices well below the market value of the assets. All three investors benefit from a regime of preferential rights and indiscriminate fire sales of public property where national legislation is overridden or relaxed evoking special circumstances of 'national urgency'. In particular, the Skouries and Cavo Sidero planned investments expose how the 'fast-track' regime allowed the outright 'un-green grabbing' of public land and natural or cultural resources, notwithstanding that both cases include areas designated as Natura 2000 sites. As experts warn in the case of Cavo Sidero, it is 'simply not possible to develop more than one-third of a NATURA 2000 site, or any internationally recognized Geopark, without damaging its integrity' (Moody & Rackham 2016: 10).

As Harvey (2003) observes, 'accumulation by dispossession can occur in a variety of ways and there is much that is both contingent and haphazard about its modus operandi' (p. 149). The rhetoric of 'green growth' offers another fix for capitalism ushering green-grabbing; ironically, investments are now required to protect the natural environment, destroyed for so many decades under a specific mode of capitalist development.

Finally, all three cases examined illustrate the new proposed development model for Greece as it embraces the conventional conception of space as an asocial and ahistorical 'container' for economic activities. A mono-directional policy template prioritises efficiency, expediency and the enhancement of agglomeration economies with the ultimate goal to promote growth and competitiveness, leading to the economic resurgence for the system as a whole. Yet, as Massey (1999: 2) has emphasised, space is a product of interrelations, constituted through interactions and 'predicated upon the existence of plurality'; always under transformation, space is the sphere in which distinct trajectories and many voices coexist.

Conclusions

Drawing on Harvey's accumulation by dispossession framework as well as Gramsci's (1971, 2007) original work and neo-Gramscian insights, this essay has sought to elucidate spatial aspects of the Greek crisis. Arguing that the EAPs implemented in Greece accelerated accumulation by dispossession, our inquiry examined the dispossession of land, urban space and natural resources, as it *takes place*. The central argument is that the restructuring remedy applied to Greece constitutes a hegemonic project, which hinges on a vast exercise in dispossession promoted by a narrative of ostensibly beneficial developmental prospects.

As our analysis has shown, Harvey's and Gramsci's analytical notions are particularly relevant and insightful for explaining the course of modern financial capitalism and the 2010 crisis in Greece in the context of the Eurozone crisis, but also for understanding contemporary processes of unequal exchange and development. First, in post-2010 capitalism, dispossession proceeds not so much under the competition of powerful states and elites, as under the coalition of national state, international institutions and in the frame of a regional economic regime. Second, financial capital mobilities in the context of neoliberal globalisation, as well as emerging profit opportunities in the global periphery in tourism and energy industry, are some significant explanatory factors. Situating the Greek crisis within the existing literature on Greece, the Greek 'anti-crisis' therapy was discussed as an example of accumulation of dispossession, constituting a hegemonic project with regard to its rationale and overall modalities of imposition/implementation. The new institutional setting enforced on Greece to facilitate land dispossession was assessed in terms of historical background, as well as the role of different social groups, leading our discussion to the empirical demonstration of three instances of representative 'optimum' investment schemes that question the rationale and the effectiveness of the emerging mode of development.

Emphasising that 'crises are the irrational rationalisers of an always unstable capitalism', Harvey (2010: 71) prompts us to always question the object and the direction of the rationalisations, as these will define both how we exit from the crisis and the future character of capitalism. In the aftermath of the crisis, capitalism, in Greece and elsewhere, faces an exorbitant contradiction: regulations aiming to ensure favourable conditions of production inevitably degrade land, natural resources and the environment, which are all vital for the regeneration of capitalist accumulation.

Considering that creditors set the temporal horizon of Greece's privatisation, land grabbing and dispossession scheme at 99 years, there is cause for concern and reflection regarding the future path of the country's development. From a political economy perspective, development fundamentally embraces the values, needs and aims of a 'good society'. It is a collective endeavour. Hence, perceptions and attitudes of different stakeholder groups, first and foremost local communities, need to be further studied and interpreted. Above all, local communities should be included in determining the substance of local development and in decision-making processes involving large-scale development projects are concerned.

Finally, our discussion raises questions regarding deepening inequalities as visions of European 'convergence' seem to be replaced by new pathways and modalities of European regional 'divergence'. The policy template of the hegemonic project unfolding in Greece bears identical conceptual and ideological charge with strategies implemented under the crisis pretext in other indebted countries of the European and global periphery. Hence, the case of Greece and the other 'bailout' countries suggest the creation of a 'disciplined periphery' within international governance space amenable to quick and profitable fixes of capital. Such a space provides the perfect platform for transnational capital to amplify its gains, consolidate a privileged position and be internationally 'competitive' at the expense of subaltern classes. In other words, a periphery appears to emerge where 'governments, as well as firms and workers, are internally and externally disciplined by market forces, or, to put it differently, by the power of capital' (Gill 1998: 8). Future developments, then, provide a context for explorations of further research regarding accumulation and hegemony in the afflicted periphery.

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Notes

1. Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-economy-greece-comparisons/analysis-greece-heads-for-record-books-as-economy-slumps-idUSTRE81E09W20120215
2. IMF (International Monetary Fund), https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2017/02/07/PR1738-Greece-IMF-Executive-Board-Concludes-2016-Article-IV-Consultation
3. Fine (2006: 143) observes that Harvey's very broad definition of accumulation by dispossession that homogenises different and complex instances in the broader restructuring of capital of capitalism can reduce explanatory clarity blurring 'the relationship between the internal and external, not least as well-defined value analysis is abandoned'.
4. A major scandal during the years 2005–2008, involved the Vatopedi monastery of Mount Athos, charged with the illegal exchange of 3,000 hectares, including a lake with urban land near Athens, which quadrupled land values; several monks, a minister, lawyers and a notary went on trial. Before and after the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, several such cases indicated profligacy and questionable real estate activity (Kütting 2010: 158).
5. For details, see Hadjimichalis (2014a, 2014c), Konstantinidis and Vlachou (2017) and quarterly reports by Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HRADF) at https://www.hradf.com/en/category/nea
6. MIPIM 2018 Newsletter, March 15, available at https://thehellinikon.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/hellinikon.pdf.
7. Lamda Development, https://www.lamdadev.com/en/investment-portfolio/the-hellinikon.html, accessed 15 January 2020.
8. Press release of the Open Initiative to Save the Metropolitan Hellinikon Park 28 February 2018, at http://parkoellinikou.blogspot.com/2018/02/2822018.html#more, accessed 15 January 2020.
9. Five percent of the shares are held by the Greek construction firm Ellaktor S.A.
10. Enterprise Greece/Invest & Trade at https://www.enterprisegreece.gov.gr/ependyste-sthn-ellada/strathgikes-ependyseis/ependytika-erga/entagmena-erga, retrieved August 23, 2018 (in Greek).

11. Based on interviews conducted by the authors during February–August 2019 with non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives, elected members of local and municipal authorities and locals in the area of Sitia, Palekastro.
12. In particular, investment and export-led growth did not materialise: in the period between 2009 and 2015, real gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 25% while private sector real consumption declined 20% and real investments by 59.7% (INE/GSEE 2016). Notably, Greece's gross government debt increased to 179.0% of GDP at the end of 2016 as the debt-reducing impact of the large primary balance surplus was more than offset by the debt increasing effect of stock-flow adjustment (Angerer et al. 2018: 4).
13. In February 2018, the unemployment rate among women stood at 26.2% as compared with 16.4% for men, while the youth unemployment rate stood at 45.4% (it peaked at a staggering 60.5% in February 2013 (Angerer et al. 2018)).

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