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**Children out of Place with Childhood:
Pupils' Assemblies, Direct Action, Serious Play and Public
Space in Youth's Autonomous Horizontal Politics in
Cyprus.**

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PhD in Social Anthropology

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June 2018

Thesis Abstract

Although children as active agents have been extensively studied within anthropology and social sciences in general, children as *public* actors –or as activists engaged with direct forms of politics and social movements– have been largely neglected. This thesis addresses this research gap by ethnographically exploring the politics of autonomous, self-organized youth and pupils in Nicosia, Cyprus and their processes of radical political subjectivization, as well as the role of public space in such processes of becoming. It further problematizes how national and international configurations of childhood and youth have been enabling or disabling this activism, and how they *govern* children and ‘minoritized adults’ through educational, gentrifying and other policies of the biopolitical sphere.

More specifically, the thesis critically explores how those perceived as minor subjects resist such governing through horizontal collective action and counter-cultural politics. Such politics involve the subversion of enclosed, ‘adult’ –nationalist, militarist, patriarchal, consumerist– establishments and notions of maturity in modernity, enhanced by Cyprus’s recent ethno-national conflict. Their subversion is achieved through *playful tactics* of street-partying, self-education, community formation and assembly, which are explored in this thesis, and through carving out temporal space for experimentation with alternative self-definitions. By exploring such politics my thesis significantly contributes to the anthropology of Cyprus through the study of *politics* beyond nationalism and ethnic-conflict frameworks as has overwhelmingly been the case so far.

Moreover, in my thesis, I treat youth and children as political categories beyond their socio-cultural framing within youth anthropology and explore the categorical framings youth use to constitute themselves as political actors following larger movements like May 1968, Greek Autonomia and Alterglobalization movement. I further critically re-consider recent theorization on direct action and prefigurative politics from the vastly underrepresented perspective of children and pupils’ activism. I argue that a theoretical over-emphasis on direct action as prefigurative significantly obscures, on an analytical plane, *the processes* young actors go through in order to become horizontal anti-authoritarian activists. Such processes of becoming, however, form a great part of their activist practice.

An 18-month ethnographic fieldwork process further revealed the role of public space and urban commons in the reproduction of autonomous youth initiatives and in processes of re-imagining the political and youth identity in late capitalism. By ethnographically exploring how a public square in Nicosia was produced into an alternative public sphere for youth anti-

authoritarian politics, I demonstrate how underage autonomous activists sustain their capacity to act, given their exclusion from dominant public spheres and inability to purchase space. I, thus, contribute to emerging ethnographic literature on squares as key spaces of social movement action and on spatialized public spheres. My findings led me to conceptualize squares as destinations instead of crossing points, as places of stasis, and to argue that *stasis* in public space manifests multiple radical potentialities and becomes resistance to neoliberal governmentality.

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Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the ongoing support I received from all the youth participating in this research, and in particular the youth of the Skapoula collective. This support was manifested not only in their willingness and availability to share with me their experiences of being youth otherwise in the context of Cyprus, but also in their keen and continuous interest in my research that manifested in numerous conversations, critical reflection, and enjoyable nights of fun and camaraderie. I am particularly grateful to the members of the Skapoula collective for welcoming me in their assemblies, for their friendship and invaluable companionship during fieldwork and beyond and for their untiring responses to my continuous queries throughout the years of my doctoral degree. For this and many more I will always be thankful to them. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Although doctoral theses are presented as individual work they are made possible with the ongoing support of people that share their energy, enthusiasm, care and insight. In the case of my thesis this support has been generously provided by my two brilliant supervisors Professor Jane K. Cowan and Professor Louiza Odysseos. I am deeply grateful to Jane K. Cowan for her great insights and her enthusiasm for my work and for providing uninterrupted motivation throughout my PhD, as well as a caring presence that I could turn to in moments of ambiguity and doubt. I am equally grateful to Louiza Odysseos for being there for me in many ways beyond the strict prescriptions of supervision duties. For lifting my spirits up innumerable times through her excitement for the work I was undertaking, for her provocative comments that pushed my thinking and critical inquiry into theoretical areas that I would not have otherwise experimented with. Despite the feelings of anxiety that often accompany supervision meetings I felt our supervisions being permeated by a deep feminist ethic that held an empathetic space for experimentation and frustrations every step of the way.

I am also deeply grateful to Dr. Olga Demetriou for her ongoing mentoring and friendship prior, throughout and I am sure well after my PhD.

I would like to offer special thanks to Marios Violaris who has been a critical interlocutor throughout fieldwork and beyond and who has provided significant support and connections on my initial entrance to the field as well as his friendship to this day. To Dr. Maria Hadjimichael for being an enthusiastic academic and activist interlocutor and for helping me consider new potential academic fields that this research could relate to. To Andreas Georgiou for helping me understand better the anti-authoritarian political field and for sharing his networks with me in Cyprus and abroad. To Kleitos Papastylianou for our critical conversations

especially at the initial stages of fieldwork and to Dr. Andri Georgiou for her friendship and helpful insights. To all adult members of the anti-authoritarian field in Cyprus that I have engaged with throughout the years I want to express my gratitude for our provocative conversations, common critical reflection and extensive support during fieldwork and beyond and for open-heartedly making me feel part of their community.

The DPhil community of Sussex has provided a warm, supportive and critical environment for conducting this research and our vibrant conversations have given me ongoing motivation and inspiration for completing this study. I am particularly thankful to colleagues and friends Idil Akinci and Caterina Mazzili for making me feel at home in Brighton, for their friendship and caring support throughout the post-fieldwork process. Special thanks go to Dora Sampaio for her kindness and support that she provided when it was most needed and to Yavuz Tuyloglu for being a wonderful office mate always ready to listen to my worries and offer guidance on my research path. For their patience, loving support and for lightening up my world I want to thank my dearest friends Chara Zymara and Loizos Loukaidis.

For financial support at the initial stages of my doctoral degree I am deeply grateful to the University of Cyprus' 'New Researchers' Scheme', as well as to the Royal Anthropological Institute/Sutasoma Award and to the British International Studies Association's Founders' Fund for financial assistance at the final stages of my doctoral studies.

Finally, this thesis would not have been possible without the ongoing support and love of my father Christos and the unconditional support, patience and encouragement of my sister Michelle and my mother Rita, on both emotional and material levels, who have accompanied me throughout this research endeavour and offered a loving shelter to return to when it was most needed.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: First encounters

I first encountered Skapoula in October 2011. I was walking with a close friend in the Faneromeni area of Nicosia's old town. It was before the trendy cafes and restaurants opened that currently occupy Faneromeni Square and several main streets within the old town. It was dark, probably late afternoon, when I saw a group of teenagers putting posters on a wall, and I stopped to read one. It was about schooling and the army, challenging the institutions quite overtly. Curious to learn more, I immediately asked for more information, and a teenage girl, who I now know to be Chloe, offered me a magazine.¹ The magazine was entitled *Skapoula*, which in Greek Cypriot slang means 'to conduct an escape', and which school pupils commonly use to indicate an unauthorized absence from school, in other words truancy. The magazine was defined as a 'self-organized pupils' magazine', another fact that added to my building excitement and overall surprise that such a group could exist within the context of Cyprus. I asked how much it cost and Chloe said 'it's for free or with a voluntary contribution'. Next to her, a hooded teenage boy listened to our conversation but kept his distance at the same time. I took the magazine and continued my stroll, sensing that something radically new was brewing there.

This research project was inspired by that short encounter on Nicosia's streets, which revealed the possibility that those conceptualized as 'children' could autonomously self-organize, in this case within the intensely patriarchal and hierarchal context of Cyprus. Inspired by this encounter, as well as by subsequent encounters I had with the Skapoula collective, I began to explore the political uses of the subject-position of the child and of 'childhood' and 'youth' as conceptual fields that can constitute governing techniques for managing adult and underage populations through what I term 'minoritization processes'. I was further led to inquire how children 'escape' and/or resist such governing, particularly children who aim to undertake autonomous horizontal non-institutionalized politics. In this exploration, I aimed to reveal the possibilities of emergence of underage anti-authoritarian activists and the factors that sustain their capacity to act. I further aimed to explore the limits imposed on children's political action by adult national and international discourses on childhood and youth, and to investigate the ways children negotiate, and even surpass, those limits. In what follows, I provide an

¹ All the names of people referred to in this thesis have been replaced with pseudonyms.

introduction to my research through a detailed discussion of the encounters that have led me to make specific methodological choices, which in themselves expose the framing of this research.

1.1. Methodological encounters: Ethnography with autonomous horizontal teenage activists

After the aforementioned encounter with Skapoula, which I learned was an autonomous pupil's collective with militant positions about the current organization of the educational system and a strong anti-nationalist and anti-militarist stance, I followed the group's activities through their Facebook page, and went to two subsequent Skapoula parties. One was held at Faneromeni Square for the purpose of raising funds for Skapoula's initiatives. Arriving at the square, I sat on a bench feeling quite awkward as everybody was happily dancing to the music coming from two loudspeakers installed by the youth themselves in a corner of the square. Other youth were sitting on the ground in different groups chatting merrily and enjoying their drinks. At one point a young man, approximately in his late 20s/early 30s, approached me and started a chat about why I was sitting alone, who I am and what I do. Feeling more comfortable, I started bombarding him with various questions: Who was organizing the party? How did Skapoula come about? Didn't they get any complaints about playing the music too loud?' Reacting to my overwhelming questioning, he asked if I was a police officer and, to my embarrassment, he started searching the bench that I was sitting on for any listening devices. I tried to remain cool, but fearing that he would notify the others about my presence, which would most likely destroy any smooth introduction to the field, I politely said goodbye and left before other people approached.

A couple of years later, I was in my first year of doctoral studies and in the process of looking for access points to get in touch with the Skapoula collective, which by then I had decided to study in more depth. I remembered that one pupil who was at those parties was attending a secondary school where there was a teacher with whom I co-organized workshops for pupils when I was working for an NGO in Cyprus. Through our cooperation, the teacher and I had become close friends. As she was in the extra-parliamentary Left, I felt comfortable asking her whether she happened to know about Skapoula and if any of her pupils were in it. She confirmed to be aware of the group and agreed to bring me in touch with a few pupils from the school that were members. At first, I felt reluctant to approach them through a teacher, as

the association of the teacher-position with authority might have implied something about my own positioning and stance towards them: that I was approaching them from a perspective of authority or even simply from an adult perspective. On the other hand, this teacher could vouch for my integrity as a person and as a professional, and she trusted the research that I was going to begin. Moreover, she was a radical educator herself, who taught anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-fascist education in her history classes, and therefore I considered that pupils who were engaged with Skapoula would respect her even if they considered schooling in Cyprus to be highly disciplinary and nationalistic in nature. Approaching a politically non-institutionalized, anti-establishment pupils' group through a person located at and, to a certain extent, associated with an institution was a risk. However, I tried to mitigate it by choosing a person who was far less institutionalized than many other teachers I know. In this sense, institutionalization was perceived as an axis on which people could negotiate their position between different degrees of institutionalization. In choosing to approach this group through a teacher-introducer, I felt that I was treating them with respect and trying to help minimize any potential doubts about my research purposes and my integrity as a researcher.

Of course, another way to approach them would be through my constant presence in Faneromeni square during their parties or their everyday socializing. However, I felt that it would take much longer for the group to get accustomed to me through everyday socializing which would then set the ground for me to get permission for doing research with them. In addition, it felt like I would be doing covert research by not revealing my researcher role until later. Furthermore, an attempt to be in the field without any sort of introduction turned out to be almost disastrous, judging from my experience at the first party I went to. Therefore, I considered that an introducer would most likely prove to be quite helpful.

Overall, my connection seemed to have worked. Through my teacher friend, I got in touch with Theseas, a pupil at her school who was an active member of Skapoula at the time. Theseas suggested that I pass by Steki Areos, a place where they used to hang out, to talk with the group's assembly and present my research. Steki Areos was located in a narrow street in Nicosia's 'old city' (παλιά πόλη), as the locals call it, a phrase which refers to the city located within the Venetian Walls built when Cyprus was under Venetian rule in the 16th century. The old city is located at the centre of Nicosia and is otherwise called 'Nicosia within the Walls' (εντός των τειχών Λευκωσία), as the Walls encircle the old city in a star-shape manner.

On the day of the meeting I decided to go there with my 22-year-old sister. I felt that being accompanied by a young person closer to their age might lighten the atmosphere and help

them to perceive me to be closer to them than what my age – woman in her thirties – might indicate. My sister and I searched for a while until we located the narrow street where Steki Areos was located. The buildings on the street were dilapidated apartment blocks where mostly migrants from non-European Union (EU) countries live.

Indeed, Cypriots evacuated much of the old city during the interethnic hostilities that took place in 1963 between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and subsequently in 1974 during a coup by a Greek Cypriot paramilitary organization seeking union with Greece. Turkey intervened militarily at that point and occupied a significant percentage of north Cyprus leading to a permanent physical division of the country, and Nicosia, including the old city, in half. Thousands of Greek Cypriots fled to the south at that point while Turkish Cypriots moved to the north. The southern half of Nicosia, in which Faneromeni Square and the locations described in this research are located, is under the control of the Republic of Cyprus (ROC), which is effectively governed by, and represents, the Greek-Cypriot community. ROC is the only internationally recognized state in Cyprus, as opposed to the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus that has not been granted international recognition. Faneromeni Square and the surrounding area is situated almost next to the border between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, which is patrolled by armed soldiers from both communities and the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). In 2003, after years of complete separation of the two communities, an access point was opened in the area to the west of the old city allowing civilians to cross to the 'other' side. In 2008 another access point opened, this time at the centre of the old city.

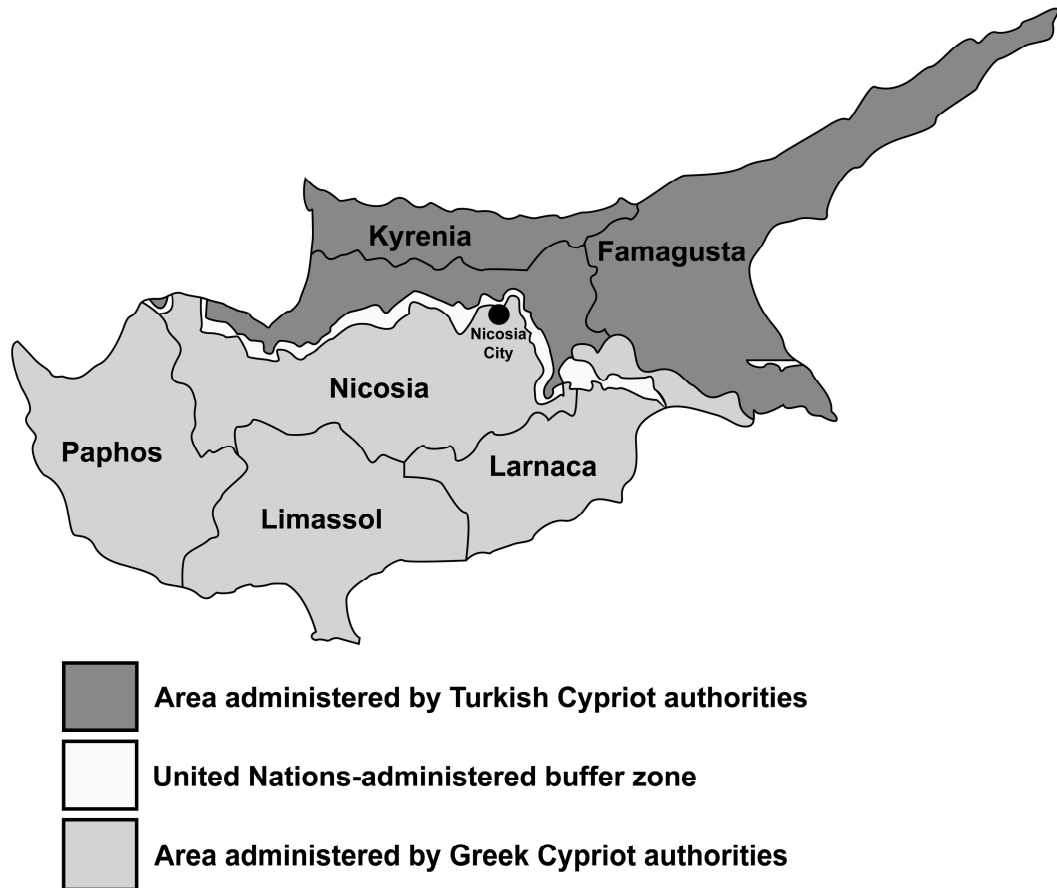


Figure 1. Map of Cyprus designed by graphic artist Michelle Stamatari.

Arriving at Steki Areos, we went through a narrow corridor that led to an opening where we could see a couch and a small table, both in bad condition. A door on our right led to a small kitchen where I saw a young boy with a black earring in the shape of a wedge standing behind a bench and making frappe (common cold coffee drink in Cyprus). The boy welcomed us with a big smile, and taking courage I told him that I was there to meet Thiseas and Skapoula. ‘They are all upstairs waiting for you,’ he said and nodded towards a tiny, circular staircase which led to the upper floor. As I climbed the stairs, I found myself facing a company of eight teenagers, two girls and six boys, sitting on a circular overworn couch in a low-ceiling room that led to a small veranda. It felt peculiar meeting teenage people there, out of the habitual contexts in which I used to do research with them before. The informality of the place and the encounter was so out of place with my intense self-conscious researcher positionality. I felt out of place but fascinated at the same time.

One of the boys, nicknamed Billis, was the most talkative, and he explained to me that it was an important moment in which to study Skapoula as the membership might change soon as he and another boy who was present, Raccoon (also a nickname), were supposed to enter the

army in the summer. In Cyprus, after finishing high-school, around the age of 18, boys are legally obliged to serve in the army for approximately two years. However, Billis and Raccoon told me that they were both planning to try to get exemptions from serving.

Skapoula was overtly against the army and obligatory military service from a conscientious objector perspective, a stance that they regularly wrote about in their magazine and in different leaflets that they were disseminating at schools or in the streets. It was the single voice among Cyprus' youth political initiatives that spoke openly against the army: a major taboo issue within Greek Cypriot society, as not doing military service is seen as unpatriotic and unmanly. However, the process for gaining conscientious objector status is hard, costly and time-consuming, so most Skapoula members preferred to use other means to avoid serving, as hundreds of other Cypriot youth do.

After an hour had passed, the conversation shifted from my research to a party that they were organizing, and discussion was focused on where they could get loudspeakers and which place would be most convenient for the party to be held. Realizing that the official assembly had started, I lingered to listen a little to the discussions that were taking place. They did not seem to pay much attention to my presence anymore, until a boy from the group, Aggelos, told me that I should get familiar with the topics under discussion in order to be able to participate in the assemblies that would follow. I smiled and wondered what kind of participation they might be expecting. Was I supposed to be fully part of the assembly, sharing my opinion with the rest of the group? Wouldn't that be like leading the research participants?

I later experienced that doing research with groups that attempt to implement direct-democratic forms of participation and decision-making, like Skapoula and other initiatives in the anti-authoritarian field in Cyprus, entailed an expectation that the researcher should share his or her opinion on the topics discussed and take an active part in the processes through which decisions are formed. This position stretched my understanding of what I was expected to do in the field, as I was confronted with the question of how to handle potential power dynamics now that I was given such an open space for participation in the groups' decision-making processes. What balance should I strike between my positions as researcher-observer and as a participant in decision-making processes that affected the actions of the group I was studying? How far was it ethical to intervene in the groups' decisions?

Such questions troubled me throughout the fieldwork process, as assemblies were quite regular for both the particular group I was studying and their wider community. I felt that participants demanded my political engagement as researcher in order to open themselves up

to being researched. They assumed that, as I wished to research them, I must be on the same political page as them. This was not far from the truth, as my seeking to do research with a non-institutionalized political youth group partly came out of my general disappointment in being able to effect change within institutional settings, as well as through the existing forms of 'representative' democracy. In a process of searching for alternative modes of political action and being, I came across Skapoula, whose members then introduced me to the wider anti-authoritarian Cypriot community.

It is important to note here that my initial interest to study the group came out of my perennial interest in the concepts of 'youth' and 'minors', as well as in infantilization/minoritization processes (political uses of the subject-position of the child) and in the ways these conceptualizations become lived experiences, defining and being defined by the people to whom they are assigned. I have been researching youth since my MA dissertation and during my professional career at an NGO, but until that time I approached youth from an institutional perspective. In other words, youth were defined by the very institutions within which our interviews and discussions were located: the school and the family home, as well as the educational curricula and policies that embraced them. When I encountered Skapoula, I was also looking for a different way to research youth. I was critical of the ways NGO work is undertaken, in which the opinions of youth are elicited through pre-set questionnaires, rather than in the context of their everyday environments. I was looking for something that was initiated by youth themselves: a different way to learn about youth's lives, a grass-roots approach to youth research, to study 'agency from below' as Stammers (2009) has termed it. This is what an ethnographic approach allows. I wanted the youth themselves to provide me with the topic of study, instead of studying youth through a set of criteria set out in EU funding schemes.

As noted above, much as Marianne Maeckelbergh (2009) describes in her book on the Alterglobalization movement, access to the Skapoula group depended on engagement. The participants of this wider anti-authoritarian community in Cyprus demanded 'a politically engaged form of ethnographic research' (Maeckelbergh 2009, 24). In contrast to Maeckelbergh, however, I was not an insider prior to doing research with the youth group and the wider anti-authoritarian community. Therefore, for me this form of quite participatory ethnographic research was unfamiliar, and I had to negotiate my position on the spectrum between observer and participator. Furthermore, unlike Maeckelbergh, I was dealing mostly with people who had just reached legal adulthood. Therefore, I was quite sensitive to the fact that, as a PhD student in my thirties, I might be perceived as 'more knowledgeable' than them.

Therefore, I tried to mitigate the effect that my presence and opinions might have on the power dynamics within the group by positioning myself not as an outside 'expert' but as an ally with an eagerness to learn about their activist lives. This was, after all, a group whose purpose was to escape adult authority in various settings and to be able to take decisions on issues that concerned pupils themselves, concerns that they perceived to be partly separated from adult concerns within the anti-authoritarian community. However, although age was important for setting the boundaries of the Skapoula group in relation to other adult collectives of the Choros (the name given to the anti-authoritarian political community in Cyprus by its members), its importance faded somewhat during social time, and common assemblies involving both adult and youth participants, at the square. As a result, Skapoula members were much more used to adults' presence within their social circles than I was used to hanging out with teenagers. Nonetheless, for most of my fieldwork, which included spending many hours with the youth, I was the only person over 22-years old constantly in their midst.

A strategy I developed to respect this sensitivity was to avoid expressing a strong opinion on certain issues at the beginning of a discussion within assemblies. In many ways this strategy was also pragmatic, as many of the ways of taking action that the group commonly used, like self-organizing a street party, were quite new to me, so frequently I felt that I did not have much to contribute in planning how a certain action could take place. Thus, the common practices used by the group to undertake action and effect change, and the way they conceived how activism should take place became the focus of my research rather than something to which I could effectively contribute. I did however feel more comfortable with participating in theoretical/thematic discussions of various issues of concern to the group. My sensitivity towards their underage youth status proved to work in some cases, especially at the beginning of the research where there was a mix of different personalities in the assemblies. Some felt quite comfortable with my presence there, while others seemed less comfortable expressing themselves in front of me: a couple of younger pupils even addressed me formally, using the plural form of 'you'.

At times, however, members of Skapoula and the wider youth community would comment on my reserved position in terms of expressing an opinion and would urge me to share my views on a topic more openly. In one particular case, I was asked specifically 'to break through my academic boundaries' and participate more actively, while at another point, they appreciated that I did not lead the process of decision-making, like a previous anthropologist had done while studying anti-authoritarian initiatives in the old city. As perceptions on 'proper' engagement varied, it was a constant worry to maintain the balance between being

researcher/observer of social processes and a participant within them. In fieldwork, however, these positions are never quite fixed, and the extended length of the fieldwork process contributed to the saturation of these 'boundaries' and to the softening of strictly-bounded categories of 'researcher' and 'research participant'. This, I would argue, seems to be particularly true when one finds oneself working away from enclosed/institutional/formal spaces, which tend to maintain an atmosphere of distance. In public squares and parks, by contrast, distance and role-play (researcher-research participant) begin to blur more quickly. The location in which the research process takes place, plays an important role in the type of treatment one receives. Most of my interviews were done in public parks which already provided for a more intimate and relaxed atmosphere than a school setting would offer, thus softening the boundaries of institutional identities: researcher and pupil/research participant.

What was the cause of my –only later-understood- relative conservatism in the way I participated in the field? For a start, it was my lack of experience with ethnographic methods of research. My academic background was not anthropological. I studied law in my BA, took some anthropology courses during my MA and did social research through my professional career, albeit within an NGO framework which privileges reports writing rather than doing research (meaning that we gather certain opinions about a specific issue and then publish a report with policy recommendations). Doing ethnographic work demanded that I approach research very differently and that I open up both public and private aspects of my life to engage with the research that was taking place. Research was not a series of one-off events. It was constant engagement. In other words there was no clear separation between my professional life as a researcher and my personal life, because at that stage ethnography was my entire life. In many ways I experienced ethnography as constant presence. I found ethnography to be a research method/practice of presence. As Malkki (2007, 178) notes 'anthropological fieldwork is not a straightforward matter of working. It is also a matter of living. Ethnographic research practice is a way of being in the world.'²

Another strategy I developed to address my interlocutors' youthfulness and particularly their *minor* status in a sensitive way was to consciously *not* address their parents to ask permission to conduct research with the members of the group. As I explained in the Research Outline and in the Ethical Review application:

² I discovered this through my fieldwork experience. It is among the issues that 'go without saying' in anthropology, as Malkki suggests (2007, 178).

‘In relation to the adolescents’ group (Skapoula), achieving consent can become complicated due to the fact that participants are underage (most of them are 16-17 years of age), and therefore conventionally the consent of their parents would have been required. However, due to strong opinions supported by the group in terms of the paternalistic nature of various institutions such as the school, asking for parental consent might be considered by the group as infantilizing them and thus be contradictory to what this project is trying to challenge. Furthermore, I maintain that a distinction must be made when one is working with adolescents, rather than with younger children, on how to negotiate consent as well as to the level of parental involvement in that negotiation, as adolescents have a stronger ability to form their own opinions, particularly adolescents who actively challenge the current status quo. For these reasons, consent will be requested solely from the adolescents in the Skapoula group in order not to discourage them from participating in the research’ (Christou 2014, 9).

Significantly, within the Ethical Review process required by the University, ‘children (under 18)’ are already constructed and thought of as ‘particularly vulnerable, or unable to give informed consent, or in a dependent position’ (Ethical review form 2014). Conceiving people under 18 as inherently vulnerable seems to call for paternalistic protection on the part of the researcher, which then interpellates the researcher (as a representative of an institution) into the role of the protector/parent, instead of an active co-creator in the formation of knowledge. In trying to escape and resist this interpellation, I challenged the presentation of my participants as ‘children’ e.g. as inherently vulnerable and dependent, by providing the space for them to assert their own opinion and potential consent on the proposed research. As one of the main aims of this project was to show that power positionality is constructed rather than given, and through this illustration to politicize what was currently ‘given’, I chose to expose and challenge the ‘minoritization’ entailed in the Ethical Review process. I do not claim that children are not vulnerable under any circumstances, but rather, I reflect critically on the position in which the researcher is placed towards children participants. I also challenge the indiscriminate attribution of vulnerability status to everyone under 18. In this sense, I aim to expose ‘vulnerability’ as another form of population conduct in a similar way to Butler (2013, 3), who pointed out: ‘We think about goods as distributed unequally under capitalism as well as natural resources, especially water, as distributed unequally, but we should also surely consider that one way of managing populations is to distribute vulnerability unequally in such a way that “vulnerable populations” are established within discourse and policy.’

My decisions above were an attempt to resist my own institutionalization and what I perceived to be a paternalistic and depoliticized perception of research participants through the indiscriminate attribution of vulnerability. This consideration essentially exposes another oxymoron that I reflected upon in preparing my Ethical Review application: that children are

considered as essentially vulnerable at the same time that they are considered as threats to a variety of actors, since what is exposed through the Ethical Review process example is also the vulnerability of the University as an institution. By declaring children as vulnerable the University simultaneously attempts to protect its own vulnerability towards potential claims of 'unethical research', thus maintaining a dominant political order. Non-vulnerable children become a threat to the dominant political and social order that depends on wider dichotomies, such as between child and adult, constructed in modernity, in order to provide a sense of stability while obscuring the production of inequality. Therefore, treating children as political subjects disrupts a persistent dominant order that places them in a minor position in order to maintain a stability of social roles; the University becomes part in maintaining that order.

In many ways this discussion on the Ethical Review process frames the main problem addressed through this research project: that we are always already confronting prior categorizations of people, about their political capacity, which work to depoliticize them and thus to structure their possibilities of action. How then might we treat children without simultaneously defining them as either vulnerable subjects or as threats? How might we break these strong metaphors associated with 'children' and simultaneously challenge the dominant social and political order of modernity?

1.2. Children out of place with childhood

It has been commonplace among researchers doing work on youth/teenagers and children in Cyprus to focus solely on the familial or school context and to a lesser extent on the political party context. By contrast, both in my first encounters with the Skapoula group and in my subsequent research with them, I engaged with those defined as 'children' in a completely different location of non-institutional space and time. This provided a critical vantage point for reconsidering our perspectives of children, where and when we research them, where we find them. Research with children or teenage youth in such 'unordinary' places has been conducted by anthropologists, among others, who did research on street children (those who effectively live and work on the street). These scholars have mainly analyzed their research through a child rights' framework, implemented by development agencies, as the vast majority of this strand of research is undertaken in developing countries. But what about our own European contexts? Our 'clean' streets? Our 'developed' educational and welfare systems? Observing children considered to be 'out of place' in Europe is a far rarer phenomenon. In a special issue in the journal *Childhood*, for instance, the term 'street child' was replaced with the term

'children out of place' in order to emphasize 'these children's (street children) apparent dislocation from the places that are commonly regarded as normal for western, modern, middle-class children – family homes, schools and clubs organized by adults' (Connolly and Ennew 1996, 133). The great majority of the articles in the special issue refer to children in developing countries. 'Children out of place', however, as the description above suggests, is a category that could apply to different groups of children, including middle class children who occupy the streets and are seen as contradicting the ideal conceptual and physical spaces children should occupy in the West. Such children can also be found in the European context since the modern construct of 'ideal childhood' is also applied within this context to measure 'deviant behaviour'.

In modernity, childhood has been constructed to symbolize the opposite of adulthood. Adulthood as the valid form of existence – in the modern Western sense of rational, individualized, independent, and efficient existence – as the credited subjectivity, is given presence, while childhood symbolizes the past of adulthood. The child of modernity does not 'exist' in the present (see also James and Prout 1997). When it comes to decisions affecting their own life and environment, children are not asked to participate and shape those decisions, especially within institutions such as the schooling system. That is because children are not taken seriously until they grow older, become 'of age'. Children who appear to live in the now, like street children, building alternative communities and life-ways, instead of being on a progressive journey towards adulthood, are seen as out of place. They are deemed out of place not only from the places constructed as normal for western, middle class children, as mentioned above, but also, I would argue, in terms of the normative conceptions of childhood. This parallels the symbolic placement of colonial subjects to a time in the past (see Fabian 1983) which results in their being marked as inferior, as 'occupying a less-evolved position' (Lesko 2001, 37). As Stephens (1995) and Lesko (2001) suggested, the conceptualization of modern childhood has been widely informed by European colonial experience, philosophy and policy, and vice versa. As Western notions of idealized childhood and domesticity informed Europeans' perceptions of colonial subjects (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1991), so did the treatment and developmental taxonomy of colonial subjects inform their notions of children back home in terms of the symbolic role the children played in this treatment. The child in modernity, much like the supposedly primitive colonial subject, is constructed as lacking the 'qualities characterizing adult European males' (Stephens 1995, 18), which are rationality and control of emotions. These qualities have been constructed as prerequisites to adulthood, and thus to notions of progress and development, and as assets to any form of 'serious' politics.

This thesis concerns children considered to be out of place within European cities; it aims to expose this colonial endowment and to encourage comparative approaches between 'developed' and 'developing' contexts. In general, research on children and youth as actors- and shapers of alternative life-ways within the urban context, which is where my research is situated, has emerged only recently. Skelton and Gough (2013) have noted the remarkable absence of studies on youth as actors within urban contexts in the field of Urban Studies. One exception that relates to the Western context, however, is research conducted on youth gangs, some of which involves teenage youth (though much more research on youth gangs, usually with minority youth membership, has been conducted in the US and Latin America rather than in Europe). Most of this literature, however, takes as a central point youth's association with criminality, rather than politics (see Decker and Weerman 2005; Rodgers 1999; Vigil 1988).

These studies of children and youth in 'unordinary places' emphasize that youth and children use public urban space either as a place to live and work (if we are talking about street children), or for consumption purposes, as passers-by to different entertainment establishments, or for criminal/deviant behaviour. This observation pertains to three areas where a significant amount of academic work has been produced in relation to youth/children as active participants in non-institutional settings: working street children (Aptekar 1988; Connolly and Ennew, 1996; Invernizzi 2003; Swart, 1990), youth gangs and youth cultures (the latter as particularly related with recent work that presents subcultures as based much more on aesthetics rather than politics, see Bucholtz 2002). The problem with these perceptions and academic choices is that the street/public space is mainly perceived as *relating to such kind of uses*, as a place of work or a crossing point to consumption, although in some cases it has also been suggested as a place of community formation (especially for street children), occasional mooring and intercultural exchange. It has rarely, however, been perceived as a space of social movement action, and non-institutionalized counterculture and direct politics for children/teenage youth.

Consequently, the child activist as public actor has been absent from much of academic research on social movements, but also from literature on children's engagement with the street and street cultures. This is because the child activist has betrayed the role assigned to him or her by adults. The child activist is *out of place with childhood*, and is thus a paradox that destabilizes the conception of children as transmitters of stable worlds (Stephens 1995) and as inhabiting a time past. The child activist wants to change things now and challenges established notions within society. Therefore I argue that *underage youth activism (outside*

institutions) is perceived as an abandonment of childhood, a perception that allows for different types of intervention that would otherwise be perceived as inappropriate to inflict on children. Alan Feldman (2002), one of the few scholars, to my knowledge, to have studied specifically the activist-child, problematized the category of ‘childhood’ as a rigid category identified only as a stage of social nurturance and social protections. He did this by observing how children were themselves attacked in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s when they challenged the status quo, politicizing ‘the two sectors of the public sphere to which they had access: the educational system and the streets’ (2002, 296). Thus, youth activism appeared as ‘the abandonment of childhood’ (2002, 298), which authorities interpreted as ‘allowing’ them to impose excessive force on these children to counter their resistance.

Could the lack of academic study of non-institutionalized (underage) youth activism be associated with the perception that these youth have abandoned childhood? Could this be why scholars of childhood/minors/teenagers do not consider such activism as a relevant subject of study? Or do they consider it to belong to another field of study not related to the study of those defined as ‘children’? Looking into the literature on social movements, student movements in particular, and non-institutionalized activism, I found sporadic references to children and high-school youth as being part of the struggles to redefine categories of identification and claim self-organization (Katsiaficas 1997). This literature presents the ‘university student’ as the dominant resistant actor, thus other categories such as ‘pupils’ became obscured. This is relevant for studies of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s which gave a primary role to university students as key actors in new conceptualizations of revolution, as well as for current research on youth movements and protests against the financial crisis and austerity measures. This obscuring of the child-activist continues today with an extensive lack of documentation of pupils and children’s struggles.³ Beyond academia, this perceived abandonment of childhood facilitates a space for a variety of authoritarian interventions or non-interventions that affect underage youth who attempt to act politically outside adult-managed spaces of action. Have we, as academics dealing with youth, been complicit in this by not documenting children’s and pupils’ activism? Or, when activists were acknowledged as children in these situations, were they then pathologized? The latter point is evident in studies dealing with children and youth who take up an alternative agency to the mainstream, such as youth gangs and child soldiers (Bucholtz 2002).

³ Pechtelides (2011) and Sklavenitis (2014) are some notable exceptions of recent work on pupils’ mobilization in Greece.

In a number of ways this project responds to this research gap in children's and pupils' activism by registering the struggles of non-institutionalized youth and pupils in the context of Cyprus and by problematizing how mainstream configurations of childhood and youth have been enabling or disabling this activism. It further aims to examine how children, as well as those characterized as children, otherwise called 'categorical children' (Feldman 2002), are being governed through mainstream conceptions of childhood, youthness and beyond. Childhood and adulthood, in this context, are understood as relations of power and as metaphors encompassing specific meaning that is strategically mobilized to either exert power over others or to express resistance towards specific ways of government. Therefore, they are not simply seen as chronological and legal categorizations, but as categories that can shift depending on various political purposes⁴.

This project further aims to explore the relation between youth's cultural and political practice and the use of public space. For many youth (underage or not), as it would be argued through this thesis, the streets form a primary place of *stasis* in terms of forming the location where they socialize and entertain themselves. Therefore, as it will be shown in the case of my youth interlocutors, the streets, and in this case Faneromeni Square in particular, becomes *not a crossing point, but a destination*. This stasis of youth and children in the streets I argue becomes undesirable for governmental authorities because of its potential to generate critical practices that challenge the establishment. It is further considered dangerous because it materializes the existence of difference from the population, and thus it is considered to put boundaries to the unobstructed circulation of the market, thereby contravening the needs of the neoliberal order. At the same time, the streets become a primary space of resistance for youth since their agency becomes thicker in the streets, in contrast to more institutionalized environments such as schools, due to the unstructuredness of the environment that helps youth escape various forms of surveillance and government, as well as own space. In their escape and alternative use of public space, children and teenage youth challenge adult spaces of political definition and their restriction to the private, institutional domain of life. They become public.

⁴ Especially in the case of a gerontocratic and patriarchal society like Cyprus, a precarious state in perpetual danger of being dismantled and where traditional authority has been associated with Orthodox Christian male religious leadership, maturity in politics has been associated with high-level institutional politics (Demetriou, Christou and Mavris 2011), Greekness, maleness and Orthodoxy. Grass-roots politics on the other hand have been seen as childish and have never essentially been afforded co-decision power.

Overall this thesis engages with the political uses of the subject position of the child and how it is used to discipline and govern those that *refuse to be the population* (Foucault 2007), those that *refuse to grow old* (Vaneigem 1963-65), in the sense of not succumbing to the dominant options for adulthood. It considers how authorities use that subject position to discipline and govern children and categorical children –those assigned to the time-space of childhood within modernity– in minor status through international and national discourses that inform this subject-position. When referring to people who are conceived as minors within society (including members of minority groups), there is a tendency to assert that these people are classified as such because they are perceived to need special protection or care. This definition of minor status however allows for a depoliticization of the tactic of minoritizing groups and a forgetting of the fact that ‘minor’ status is another constructed category created to signify and contain particular groups of people.

The project takes up the task of revealing processes of depoliticization through the minor positioning: How are children and those perceived as categorical children governed by overarching discourses that define them as ‘minor’ and simultaneously define the limits of their political action? And how do such ‘minor’ subjects confront and resist these limits? This thesis is about limits and the processes of overcoming –and becoming other than- them. It argues that limits to political action are not simply constructed through chronological categorizations of people as older or younger than 18 years, but through wider discursive constructions, such as that of vulnerable populations, that inform representations of childhood and youth. It further attempts to trouble constructions of maturity within modernity, and in the context of Cyprus more specifically, and interrogate how these constructions are associated with what are perceived as ‘serious politics’.

The main questions that guide the research include:

- How do anti-establishment, autonomous underage actors emerge and how are they sustained as political activists in the context of Cyprus and beyond?
- How do they gain presence in politics? What spaces become their ‘spaces of appearance’?
- What politics do they exercise to sabotage institutional definitions of their existence as well as adult conceptual and physical spaces of political definition?
- What are the governmentally prescribed ‘proper’ routes to political action for children and what happens when underage actors attempt to act in different, more radical ways? How have political agendas that deal with children (including teenagers), such

as human rights and nationalist agendas, been complicit in creating certain limits to the understanding of the types of political action in which underage youth can engage?

In exploring such issues, I rely upon existing literature focused on the political use of the subject-position of 'the child', as related to concepts of 'development' and 'modernity' in postcolonial contexts (Feldman 2002; Gupta 1998; Stephen 1995; Young 2001), in order to delineate how groups are treated as minors and categorical children through educational, gentrifying and other policies of the biopolitical sphere.

I further rely and expand on anthropological literature in the areas of childhood and youth, and reconsider recent theorization of the categories within anthropology, while proposing an expansion towards more radical political thinking of their analysis. In addition, other areas in which youth have been primary actors, like youth cultures and social movement literature, are critically explored. In terms of the latter, I reconsider recent theorization of radical antiestablishment movement activity, like direct action and prefigurative politics, from the perspective of children's and pupils' activism that is vastly underrepresented within this strand. By taking such a perspective, I aim to trouble the analytical potential of this theorization and expose potential shortcomings when it comes to understanding the experience of younger antiauthoritarian actors.

Moreover, in exploring the above questions, I engage with ethnographic and theoretical work on public space, and with what potentially forms a public sphere, as well as its spatial and temporal actualization. For the anti-establishment youth I was engaging with, *the present* was a crucial time-space for political intervention and for claiming the right to appear as political beings. The youth felt that the use of one's time was a deeply political issue and one of the key stakes, along with public space, they had to claim back from adult systemic authorities. The youth claimed this time as a time for play, for experimentation, and therefore in the thesis I consider these youths' activism and resistance through the prism of serious play. Serious play is play that goes beyond the borders of the frivolous and effectively challenges governmental authorities. To explore such issues I have engaged with the theories of Henri Lefebvre, the Situationists, as well as with Judith Butler's rereading of Hannah Arendt's proposition of the space of appearance.

For Skapoula, as a collective who wanted to carve out space for political presence, their time at the square, during the assemblies, and while carrying out Skapoula's activities formed a playful time-space beyond the rigid structures that overdefined their lives. Claiming an existence in

the here-and-now through their ludic activism, they rejected rational control, efficiency thinking, and dead time. In this sense, their practices, which included street parties, sabotaging adult-imposed definitions, playful community formation and relationality, can all potentially be seen as forms of serious play.

1.3. Thesis overview

In the chapters that follow I attempt to trace the discourses that form and govern minor subjects in the context of Cyprus and beyond, as well as to explore resistance to such governing and connected capitalist and nationalist practices and ideologies. More specifically, in chapter 2 I present and critically reflect on theoretical work that has informed the analysis of my ethnographic material. I engage with literature on the anthropology of youth, youth cultures and social movement, exploring how they used and conceptualized the ‘youth’ and ‘child’ categories. I then consider theoretical reflections on the concept of the ‘everyday’, particularly the everyday on city streets, in order to explore the subversive potential of a constant presence in public space and how it relates to the politicization of new antiauthoritarian activists. I elaborate on the concept of *stasis* in public space and its multiple radical potentialities, arguing that it forms a practice of resisting being subjected to minor status, capitalist circulation and scheduled time. Finally, I consider the role of play in the imaginative repertoire of anti-authoritarian politics and critically reflect on the limits that current theory on direct action and prefiguration might involve for the analysis of children’s anti-authoritarian politics.

In Chapter 3, I briefly outline the history of Nicosia since 1978, with a focus on the area around Faneromeni square. I elaborate on how the area has been a symbol in nationalist politics, as well as how it has been remade into a symbol of, and space for, grassroots, bi-communal rapprochement and anti-authoritarian activism in recent years. I further explore the dominant discourses and institutions that inform the child and youth categories in the context of Cyprus, attempting to delineate the limits that are imposed on children’s political action.

In Chapter 4 I continue with the description of the recent history of anti-authoritarian activity at Faneromeni, and elaborate on the emergence of Faneromeni’s youth community, highlighting important practices and sociabilities that were privileged in the exercise of youth antiauthoritarian politics. I demonstrate how the practice of *aragma* (mooring) – stasis at the square – facilitated the spatialization of a public sphere, thus enhancing the politics of

politically-excluded groups, such as underage youth. I further show how stasis formed a practice of resistance to the circulation of consumerism and scheduled time by putting participating youth and the body of the nation in crisis. Finally, I demonstrate how the square was embodied by the users and how such interaction between space and body informed the directness of political action and the subversion of mediated forms of being.

In Chapter 5 I focus on street parties as one of the most important practices of the Faneromeni youths' community. I describe in detail a particular street party organized by the Skapoula collective, through which I demonstrate how such practice constitutes a counter-spectacular form of youth participation in politics in contrast to spectacular forms such as participation in nationalism. I further show how the street parties form a light and playful way for youths attending them to be initiated into radical political subjectivization, and how they build and strengthen community through cooperation in setting-up the party and through the peer to peer transfer of minor knowledges.

In Chapter 6 I explore Skapoula's definitional politics as expressed through their written material, as well as how the Skapoula collective was conceptualized as a form of play through the claiming of communal time to allow for the construction of alternative worlds. Through such play, Skapoula carved out space for participation in politics by pushing the discursive boundaries of what can be perceived as *a concern of children*, thus subverting the envisioned limits of children's political action. I demonstrate how Skapoula mobilized the pupil category to be a starting point for political exploration, and how it actively infused it with different meaning by claiming it as a collective social position and a site of struggle. Beyond the pupil category, I demonstrate how Skapoula used childhood as a resistance trope against dominant options of adulthood that Cypriot society and neoliberalism offer. Finally, I explore Skapoula's participation in the Occupy the Buffer Zone movement.

In Chapter 7 I explore the practice of direct democratic assembly, as well as prefiguration and friendship, and their roles in the process of becoming anti-authoritarian, horizontal activists which teenage youth in Skapoula and Faneromeni were undergoing. I show how, in the process of overcoming certain power issues with regard to adult society and extending the field in which pupils and children can act politically, other more subtle issues relating to power dynamics within Skapoula go unmarked or do not receive equal attention. Furthermore, I exhibit how overarching political processes, such as rising fascism, gentrification and financial crisis, affect the internal dynamics of the group and the character of their politics. In this sense,

I demonstrate how prefigurative politics work in practice from the largely underexplored perspective of pupil activists.

Finally, in chapter 8 I summarize the main conclusions by bringing together the key ethnographic and analytical points of the thesis. By doing so, I expose how social sciences have ignored children as public actors and activists, and I argue that such lack of attention is grounded in modernist and colonial perceptions of the child. I argue that children who claim a role outside domesticity and the apolitical position implied through notions of immaturity, intellectual illiteracy and care politics are seen as out of place with childhood, a fact that contributed to academia's inattentiveness to children's politics. I further argue that public space plays an immense role in children's non-institutional politics, and thus the current dismantling of public spaces endangers the possibilities of children to become public, as in to become political and form critical publics. Finally, I argue that the process of becoming an anti-authoritarian, horizontal actor – that is the active process of becoming minor – forms a great part of underage youth's activism, which should be analyzed and valorized as such. I conclude with some reflections on potential future research.

Chapter 2

Theory Chapter

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I expand on a variety of theoretical work that has informed the analysis of my ethnographic material. I start with an outline of Foucaultian ideas on power and knowledge. Foucault's elaboration of power as government of the conduct of others has informed my understanding of childhood and youth as conceptual fields that can be appropriated by authorities, both local and global, in order to direct the conduct of populations in particular ways. Foucault's insight that to govern is to structure the possible field of action of others helped me explore hegemonic regimes of knowledge as forms that structure the possibilities of children for political action at the same time as producing exclusive conceptions of what childhood –and youth– should be. Power as government has roots in pastoral power, a type of power which is highly dominant within the Cypriot context, making the minoritizing aspects of care politics –the prominent form in which such power is exercised– a privileged way of managing recalcitrant others. At the same time the prominence of nationalism within Cypriot society makes it a fertile ground for biopolitical forms of managing populations due to the association of biopower with racist politics. Moreover, helpful for my thinking was also Foucault's insight that power works on an everyday level, on the level of everyday subjection. Therefore it is not about power that is inflicted in particular instances, but about power that works constantly on an everyday level and which is diffused within the social body. Such thinking about power works well with anthropological inquiry which takes the everyday as a primary field of exploration.

Foucault's theory of power as productive and conductive corresponds with recent thinking within the anthropology of youth and children, a field to which I turn next, which explores youth and childhood not simply as chronological and biological categories, but as categories embedded within fields of power that are highly entangled with issues of social worth, recognition, political voice and authority. I built on this work by outright claiming youth and childhood as political categories and sites of struggle whose meaning can be contested and resignified; I further claim that that the institutional versions of these categories form ways of

governing, in the Foucaultian sense, of children, youth and categorical children across the globe.

I then turn to literature on how these modes of everyday governing have been resisted by politically-marginalized groups using as a starting point my own observations in the field. The underage youth with whom I was engaging created another everydayness in the space of a public square during time when they were free from obligations mostly relating to different forms of schooling and the family. During this everydayness they subverted authoritative forms of subjectification and discursive frameworks about what youth and children could be. In this sense, I was led to inquire the concept of the 'everyday' and specifically how the everyday in public space related to emerging non-institutional children activists in the Cypriot context. In other words, by inquiring how children –a category vastly associated with the private sphere- were turning political, I saw that being, settling, pausing in public space, inhabiting public space in a regular, everyday manner was initiating a shift from being circumscribed in the private and institutional sphere to becoming public-in the sense of becoming political.

As indicated above, Foucault emphasized how power works on an everyday level, on the level of everyday subjection. If this is the case then by troubling the everyday, by making the everyday in the sense of the ordinary and the routinized a problem, such power can be resisted. This was the position of Henri Lefebvre and theories on the everyday that have critically interrogated the everyday for the express purpose of changing it and for reclaiming the everyday as a site of political intervention. Lefebvre and the Situationists believed that there is transformative potential within the everyday. By tactics that upset the order of the everyday these authors attempted to make people see things from a different perspective and thus initiate the politicization process.

I therefore engage with these critical theories on everyday life, as well as with social movements that explicitly politicized the everyday, and I attempt to relate these to the politics of children in order to theorize such politics –given also the absence of social research and theory that addresses children as activists. Situationists were widely read by youth at the square and this led me to engage with them in order to see how their writings affected youth's direct action politics and everyday challenge of the status quo. Fieldwork made evident that it was in the everyday in public spaces that youth had access to a wide and diverse social field that included both a necessity for self-managed practice, as well as interaction with actors youth would not have engaged with if secluded in private and institutional spaces. I observed

that when time available to be used ‘in our own terms’ is moved to the public space then there is almost an immediate inventiveness that needs to take place in order to arrange and use this time and to adapt our activities to the qualities of the space we inhabit. This inventiveness, as well as the undetermined interactions that happen on city streets, open space for experimentation as well as putting our already thought-through ways of acting and being into crisis. Such interactions and the opportunity for self-managing a space with peers enabled underage youth, as a politically-excluded public, to appear to each-other in a relatively open-ended field and acquire a social dimension. In theorizing the politics of appearance and presence of these youth, I complement critical theories on everyday life with the work of Judith Butler and her re-reading of Hannah Arendt’s work on the space of appearance.

Despite complementarity among the theories used in this chapter there are also tensions. Such tensions involved Foucault’s elaboration of government as a form of power that pervades all forms of human activity and even becomes self-government, and Lefebvre’s and the Situationists’ insistence that the everyday on city streets maintains transformatory potential through creative alternative uses of space and time (than the ones prescribed to them by adult authorities) and through the multiple encounters possible on city streets. Isn’t this everyday in public spaces also pervaded by the ways people are conducted? It certainly is and Lefebvre’s later work accounted for that (see Gardiner 2000). However, through my experience with youth in city streets I observed that these forms of conduct enter into a playful experimental mode and the binaries and order they are depended on becomes challenged. Therefore, despite the existence of conductive discourses, panoptican ways of invigilation (street cameras) and everyday self-regulation, when in public space this self-regulation is put into crisis because of the requirement to be inventive and the undetermined interactions that take place. This requirement I argue is enhanced by *stasis* in public space, a concept I elaborate in this chapter, by stopping the flows of routinized walking and scheduled time. Stopping opens time-space that can be taken up for creating alternative ways of being and for questioning prescriptions and ready-made self-formations coming for hegemonic discourse.

This time freed from institutional and scheduled activity I theorize as time for play. Skapoula as a pupils’ activist group was thought by its members as play, as political experimentation and this stance led me to explore their activism and the time dedicated to Skapoula’s activities as a form of –serious- play. During play, children maintain agency in the process of world-making. In a similar way, Skapoula and square youth created an alternative world for themselves and other youth in Nicosia’s old town. This alternative world-making is indicative of the form of politics undertaken by these youth, which included prefigurative politics and direct action.

Theory pertaining to such politics is critically explored in the last section of this chapter and is considered from the so-far under-explored perspective of children activists.

2.2. Governmentality, the production of subjects and the limits of reaction: Pertinent multiplicities, minoritization and those who refuse to be the population

In this section I will elaborate on the Foucaultian theoretical ideas that I have used and which have helped me understand and analyze forms of governing within the context of Cyprus. Such governing involved both local institutions such as the family, militarism and education, among others, as well as international discourses and policies relating to youth and childhood and neoliberal governmentality.

In the context of this thesis I use the term ‘government’ with the broader sense, as explored by Michel Foucault. For Foucault, “Government’ did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups of individuals might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick. [...] To govern in this sense was to structure the possible field of actions of others’ (1982, 790).

Foucault’s conceptualization of government included a shift in the way power has been conceptualized so far: from power being inflicted solely as an imposition/coercion to power working through the production of desires for new ways and habits of being which guided people’s conduct towards the pursuit of their achievement. Government ‘leads’ to ‘suitable ends’, with ‘lead’ meaning conducting/directing the ways that ‘things’ (humans and their relationships with the social and material world) should develop. Foucault uses the verb ‘to conduct’ in its double sense, to conduct in terms of directing others and to conduct in terms of conducting one’s own behaviour. The seminal phrase ‘the conduct of conduct’ illustrates the inextricable interrelatedness between the techniques of government and the conduct and self-government (or self-policing) of individuals.

The origin of Foucault’s concept of ‘conduct’ is traced back to pastoral power as exercised within Christianity which is effectively presented as a beneficent form of power, a power of care for the well-being and salvation of the flock, that through care politics, subjectified individuals to forms of obedience and surveillance –the latter through the compulsory extraction of truth (Foucault 2007). Pastoral power is further, according to Foucault, an individualizing form of power as is presented to care about the community as a whole but also

about each individual separately throughout their life. As shall be elaborated in chapter 3, the pastorate in Cyprus played, and continues to play, along with the state, a crucial role in the governing of the Greek-Cypriot community and of structuring the possibilities of action of its flock. That is because Christian Orthodox identity as elaborated by the Cypriot pastorate was heavily connected to Greekness, to the national identity. Therefore, 'salvation' in the context of Cyprus involved both attendance to a Christian way of life, but also a maintenance of the Greekness of the flock. In this way, the pastorate continues to play a role today in the governing of Greek-Cypriots, not only in spiritual terms, but also in political terms through nationalist politics. As the context of Cyprus is heavily gerontocratic and patriarchal, effective politics have been highly associated with a concept of 'maturity' which is in itself associated with old age, maleness, Greekness, and Christian Orthodoxy (Ορθοδοξία). That is why in this context governing through minoritization, through effecting the status of childhood on recalcitrant others, is a commonly used governmental technique.

Furthermore, according to Foucault, one seminal way of structuring the possibilities of action of others and producing desires and habits of being is through naturalizing forms of knowledge, political rationalities and presenting them as common sense. Such forms of knowledge appear as a 'politics of truth' and become an instrument of government that 'create a discursive field in which exercising power is 'rational' (Lemke 2002, 55). In this sense, in the context of this thesis, I have looked at nationalism, internationally and locally established childhood, and international human rights as regimes of knowledge that structure the possibilities of action of children within the context of Cyprus. I have looked into how this knowledge is presented as 'truth' and how it structures the field of politics of those defined as 'children'. As human rights conventions, like the Convention on the Rights of the Child, currently constitute forms of recognition of personhood valid on an international legal plane and relate to forms of identification of a variety of different groups, they can impose limits to the actions such groups can take. In the same vein, nation-states –and associated knowledge on origin and destiny- also constitute forms of recognition of personhood which inform subjectifying processes of groups in their territories.

Such subjectifying processes relate to processes of state formation that intensified between the 17th and 19th centuries during which individuals within territories start to be identified and formulated as members of particular state units. Revolutions against monarchical regimes in North America and Western Europe at the time 'inaugurated transformations from 'subjectship to citizenship'', which were then taken up by subjugated people in other locations of the world (Smith 2002, 107). At this stage, citizenship very much came to be identified with

personhood and subjectivity, thus those who were not attributed citizenship were not considered fully human or were considered subhuman (women, children, free slaves). In a way, citizenship politicized the concepts of personhood and subjectivity in the sense that those not eligible for citizenship were thus not considered worthy of political, and other, rights. Consequently, in the process of state formation, there was the formation of the 'other', of the non-citizen, or the one *not receptive* to citizen (adult) status due to a variety of reasons – these 'others' constituted fertile ground for disciplinary forms of power, because they were identified as needing to be disciplined into proper citizenship or that their perceived subhumanity should somehow be contained, controlled and managed so that it did not form restrictions to the circulation of those worthy of citizenship. In this sense, the recognition of different groups of people through rights and citizenship produced a number of hierarchies, which relate to their access to power.

Governmental techniques are thus profoundly linked to liberalism and the idea of the free, rational subject/individual. Foucault identified disciplinary power, as well as government's idea of freedom, as fundamental instruments of modern capitalism and the societies that formed on this basis (Foucault 1980b, 105). Thus, Foucault emphasizes that in the 18th century freedom (related to free circulation of the market, to a laissez-faire economy) on the one hand became a prerequisite for government, but on the other hand it was also severely restricted in terms of certain groups like children. In this sense, Foucault indicated that other forms of power, such as sovereignty and disciplinary power, become part of the workings of governmental power (Foucault 2001). Thus, law and disciplinary techniques many times have their place in producing the *governable, manageable* subject, through institutions such as the school and the factory. This subjectification through disciplinary techniques produces the labour power to be exploited by capitalism. As Lemke (2002, 58) points out, 'Foucault showed that labor-power must first be constituted before it can be exploited: that is, that life time must be synthesized into labor time, individuals must be subjugated to the production circle, habits must be formed, and time and space must be organized according to a scheme. Thus economic exploitation required a prior 'political investment of the body' (Foucault 1977, 25, quoted in Lemke, 2002, 58). Governmentality thus shows us, as Lemke argues, that 'political economy relies on a political anatomy of the body' (Lemke 2002, 60).

All this relate to another shift identified by Foucault which is connected to the new ways power is exercised. What is considered *pertinent*, important for government is no longer human beings as a series of people or groups of individuals, but as a population. Different

groups of people start to be subsumed under the overall category of population whose trends are then redefined as the norm. There is:

‘an absolutely fundamental caesura between a level that is pertinent for the government’s economic-political action, and this is the level of the population, and a different level, which will be that of the series, the multiplicity of individuals, who will not be pertinent, or rather who will only be pertinent to the extent that, properly managed, maintained, and encouraged, it will make possible what one wants to obtain at the level that is pertinent. The multiplicity of individuals is no longer pertinent, the population is’ (Foucault 1980b, 42).

As Foucault suggests bringing up the example of the scarcity-scurge, it is henceforth perceived as legitimate for some people to suffer hunger or death, as long as on a general level, on the level of the population, there is no longer scarcity. This idea is interesting especially as it relates to the concept of ‘pertinence’: if everything is measured against the survival of the category of ‘population’, then this pertinence of certain multiplicities of people might not at all be random but calculated on ethnic, religious or other grounds that can be effectively called upon to define a specific multiplicity of people and separate it from the population. All this are relevant to the idea that human beings are re-conceived in the 18th century as (biological) species, as Foucault proclaims (therefore, some species are more important, or better than others), as well as on the mercantilist thought of the time which introduced a sort of rationalization and the conceptualization of ‘population’ as a source of wealth and a productive force, therefore identifying ‘population’ with the dynamic and strength of the state and the sovereign. Thus, the trends within the population (mostly identified through the new science of statistics) started to become the norm with which the state identified itself, and anything deviating from that norm was redefined as *abnormal*.

Elsewhere, Foucault posed a similar question in relation to bio-power (‘the set of mechanisms by which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power’, Foucault 1980b, 1): how can the power of death be exercised in a political system centered on bio-power, which was conceptualized as the right to make life (Foucault 2003, 254)? Foucault believes that this is where ‘racism intervenes’- and with the emergence of bio-power racism is inscribed in the mechanisms of the state. He supports that the modern state can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism at some point. As I will argue in Chapter 4, Foucault’s thesis, that racism intervenes when the modern state wants to justify its distance from biopower, is evident in the case of the violence inflicted on anarchists or those perceived as anarchists. This is because anarchists and their practices are perceived as racially degenerate, as questioning and betraying the race- the

Greek nation and the white European race to which Greeks are seen as progenitors. Degeneracy is linked with race through a politics of blood and sex which aim to regulate behaviours, circulation and habits so that the purity of blood, and thus the vitality of the white race, is protected and enhanced (Foucault 1980a; Young 1995). The race needs to be cleaned from the elements that assumingly cause it to degenerate and to lose its vitality. Thus, the survival of the race depends on countering potential diseases and threats to its social body. From this perspective, the violence against anarchists and anti-authoritarian collectives is undertaken to restore the racial order that has been unsettled through the existence and actions of what are perceived as degenerate 'national' subjects.

In the same vein, Anna Selmeczi (2009) supports that bio-political abandonment (the power to disallow life or let die) is already inscribed within bio-power and it becomes justifiable on the basis of the above-mentioned distinction between the pertinence of the population and the non-pertinence of certain multiplicities of people. This non-pertinence is not random but it involves those kinds of people *who refuse to be the population* (Selmeczi 2009, 519, citing Foucault 2007, my emphasis), or I would add, who are perceived to not fit the norm, or to not catch up (in terms of socio-economic conditions) to what the population represents/is, therefore becoming superfluous or inconsequential for modern life. This happens because in current societies 'the desires of the population (are) reconstructed as the forces defining the collective interest' (Selmeczi 2009, 524), therefore 'everything that is not everyday behavior or automatic trends has been ruled out as *immaterial*' (Selmeczi 2009, 525, citing Arendt 1958, my emphasis). This is because their materiality if taken seriously lays the ground and makes specific, materializes, the existence of difference (from the population), which is considered to put boundaries to the free circulation of the market (goods, people etc), thus becoming contrary to the needs of the neoliberal order. However, as Imogen Tyler (2013) strongly argues, using the concept of abjection, the contradiction that might persist here is that on the one hand these groups' desires and opinions are maintained as immaterial, but on the other hand the same groups very much *matter* as instruments in the hands of states who depend on 'vilified others' in order to sustain and promote their own political projects and thus, through such vilification, shape and produce the desires of the population which are constructed as the forces that matter. It is this population's desires that politicians try to produce through the abjection of specific others mainly by engaging with tactics of neoliberal governmentality, such as gentrification for example, a tactic that will be touched upon in this thesis. In the same vein as Selmeczi, Tyler examines 'national abjects' which include the Gypsy and Traveller population of Britain, as well as disenfranchised youth in France, describing them as 'the

border subjects of the neoliberal body politic- those whose lives are deemed worthless or expendable' (Tyler 2013, 10). Thus, there is need to attribute to their difference a minor value, so that on the one hand this difference becomes worthless for proper socio-political consideration, and on the other it sets the grounds for the state, and in consequence the population, to draw their boundaries in relation to those that are conceptualized as pertinent multiplicities or peripheral subjects to the norm.

In the current study I aim to explore the effects that minor positionalities have on the formulation of political voice and the boundaries that are produced towards achieving and maintaining political agency. Furthermore, I examine how such minor positionalities are resisted at the level of the 'minor' groups themselves. In the following section, I outline and critically reflect on the interrogation and usage of 'minor' categories, such as 'child' and 'youth', primarily within anthropology, but also within youth and social movement studies.

2.3. Youth and children in anthropology

Youth and children within anthropology have been considered primarily as a socio-cultural category, rather than as a demographic or biological category. In attempting to answer the question 'what or who are youth?', anthropologists studying youth have concluded that 'youth' is a cultural construction which is defined differently depending on the context which we are referring to. In other words, anthropologists attempt to study youth and children beyond the rigid limits of age groups and cohorts but within specific relations and contexts of power through which 'youth' and 'children' are produced. As Christiansen, Utas and Vigh (2006, 14–15) suggest,

'the developmental and socio-biological understandings of youth are, in themselves, not capable of taking into consideration the manner in which definitions of youth and adulthood are intertwined with issues of power, authority and social worth. They are unable to illuminate the ways people strive to be included in or escape from the category of youth as well as the ways they move and are moved within generational categories'.

In other words, for anthropologists generational and chronological categories such as childhood and adulthood might *shift*, often strategically, to include members that at other points were included in the youth and adult categories (Bucholtz 2002). This shift must be accounted for as it often involves a type of politics that become obscured by an exclusively

chronological conceptualization of age. More specifically, Durham (2000; 2004) has argued, that youth works as an indexical term relating the speaker to a relational context, rather than working with reference to a fixed context. In this sense, the term youth is seen as relational but also as gaining a great extent of its meaning from situated use. Youth and children are seen as indexical of relations of power in the contexts in which they live in and their definition is often considered an effect of power relations themselves, such as relational dynamics between different generations can define what youth should be about and how their agency should take place, in which spaces and locations. Therefore, the very definition of who or what are youth is often contested between different social groups in particular socio-cultural contexts and is indexical of the ways social 'relations are situated in fields of power, knowledge, rights, notions of agency and personhood' (Durham 2000, 117).

Durham (2004, 593) has been one of the few scholars working on youth who has considered the use of the term youth in political terms:

‘Studies on youth must examine not only the experiences of 18 year olds and their reactions to and agency within a larger society but also the political and pragmatic processes through which certain people can make claims to being young or try to designate others as youth, for the very category itself is also under reconstruction in the context of such processes’.

For Durham, claiming the identity/category of ‘youth’, and I would add children, or designating others as ‘youth’ is associated to, or is in itself, *a political process*. This is a perspective that has not been touched upon or illuminated enough in former studies on youth within and beyond anthropology. My research builds on this conceptualization by studying a process of direct and indirect reclaiming and redefining of the youth/child categories, and the related pupil category, by a community of teenage youth. Thus, it is not only about a group making a claim to belong to the conceptual trajectory of youth. My research is about those called youth redefining the very category itself, as well as childhood, through this claiming, in forms that combine cultural and directly political practice. It is about being youth and children otherwise. In other words, it is a process of redefinition of the category itself through everyday counter-cultural practices and direct politicization of the category through distributed counter-talk against authoritative meanings. Therefore, in this project, I aim to emphasize children and youth as *political categories*, further than their socio-cultural analytical framing within anthropology and beyond. I argue that youth and childhood are not simply fixed categories to which one strives to belong, but can also be categories whose very redefinition becomes a political claim by those already defined as youth/children.

Furthermore, my study explores processes through which the 'youth' or 'child' status is bestowed upon certain adults, as well as youth, in an attempt to present them as inconsequential and immature, qualities that call for state care and discipline. The shifting quality of age categories is evident in such processes that I name as minoritization or infantilization processes which refer to political uses of the subject-position of the child. These processes and practices are employed in order to govern members or groups of the population as 'minor'. Conceiving groups of people as minors facilitates their incorporation into regimes of state care (cf. Demetriou 2013), and thus greater surveillance. Minor here is infused with the meaning attached to the category of children in modernity- as irrational, over-emotional and inefficient- a definition that calls for their greater 'development', rendering their present opinions or practices as unworthy for serious consideration. The construction of the child in modernity as situated in past time-the past of adulthood-, as has been elaborated in the introduction, is quintessential for the management of such groups. This temporal situatedness was identified as the projection of colonial-type of relationships into the structures and functions of postcolonial states (Samson 2001, Gupta 1998), as well as into the construction and treatment of women and children within Western contexts (Stephens 1995).

Gupta (1998, 11), in his work with rural people in north India, elaborated on this temporal situatedness and argued that 'if there is an enduring trope in development discourse is that which equates development with adulthood and 'underdevelopment' with infancy and immaturity'. For Gupta, the discourse of development came to replace the colonial discourse and structure, maintaining, however, many of its mechanisms in relation to the treatment of a number of 'vulnerable' others, such as children, women, indigenous groups. In this way, the category of childhood was placed upon certain adults perceived of being in need for further development and progress. Feldman (2002), who worked on the postcolonial context of South Africa, adopted the term 'categorical children' in order to indicate this status and this category of minoritized adults. Gupta (1998, 9) further associated this temporal situatedness with what he perceived as one of the most enduring dichotomies of this type of colonial bequests, the dichotomy between modernity and tradition, with the former 'associated with progress, development, 'the West', science and technology, high standards of living, rationality and order; the other axis – tradition – is associated with stasis, or even stagnation, underdevelopment, the Orient, conventional tools and technologies, poverty, superstition, and disorder'. Minoritization in this sense works as a governing technique with its origin traced back to colonial forms of governing.

Furthermore, the impact of modernity, neoliberalism and economic restructuring on youth and societies at large has led anthropologists to study the disappearances of age-related practices, as well as consider the 'crises' believed to be part and parcel of the socially constructed life-stage of adolescence, not as a sign of individual pathology but as a result of changing socio-economic conditions and cultural norms. Examples talked about in this sense are the disappearance of various rituals of passing from childhood to adulthood and the reconsideration of school protests and truancy not as pathological, but as reactive to the ongoing pressures of late capitalist education (Lock 1986; Ong 1988; Sharp 1990).

Overall, the term 'adolescence' is not so commonly used nowadays in anthropology as a category of analysis; indeed, a shift has taken place from studying 'adolescence' to studying 'youth'. According to Bucholtz (2002), this shift is important as the term 'youth' in contrast to 'adolescent' emphasizes youth as already fully-fledged social actors with their experiences being valuable to be studied and taken into consideration in the here and now. In contrast, adolescence as an age category has been mainly studied as 'a liminal position between childhood and adulthood' (2002, 529). This is problematic because it frames youth as not-yet-fully formed human beings and thus not as social actors in their own right, while it also defines youth mainly from an adult point of view. Furthermore adolescence, as a term related to youth's psychological unstableness, has been relatively blind to cultural connotations and diversity of experience, as well as to the shifting qualities of age categories mentioned above. For these reasons, I find the term unhelpful for anthropological analysis on the shifting meanings of age categories in a particular socio-cultural context. However, it can be meaningful for analysis if it frames institutional policies of how particular cultures/national communities manage and understand 'youth'.

On the other hand, the inclusion of teenage people within the larger category of youth, which can also include young adults, runs the risk of obscuring the particular treatment that teenagers might receive given that they are still legally framed within the category of childhood. The movement between defining them as children and defining them as youth can many times constitute a political move carried out by authorities, therefore analytical vigilance is necessary. To solve this definitional quandary I often employ through this project the awkward term 'underage youth' in order to sustain visibility on this double framing of teenagers as both (legally) children and youth.

Beyond these definitional complexities, Bucholtz (2002, 539) proposes an anthropological re-theorizing that would enhance the consideration of youth as active agents of culture, but also

would contribute in breaking the rigid cultural boundaries often proposed by the term 'youth culture', through research which considers the 'much more fluid and indeterminate collection of practices and ideologies that constitute culture in anthropology'. Therefore, I prefer a methodological focus on practices and ideologies of youth as cultural producers, rather than on youth cultures as bounded and enclosed concepts and cosmologies of practice.

Bounded concepts of culture relate to bounded conceptualizations of the field and Passaro (1997), in her work on homeless people, illustrated how doing research in the streets was considered as a risk within anthropological methodology due to perceptions of the street as 'uncontrollable environment'. As she describes, many colleagues and others believed that in many ways one needs to re-construct the laboratory or the village within which to be able to control research outcomes. The streets and public spaces are largely seen as 'uncontrollable environments', however I would argue this is largely from the perspective of the passers-by, not from the perspective of the people frequenting one such place and making such place their 'destination', a place of stasis, instead of a transitory crossing point. In researching Skapoula youth and the larger community inhabiting Faneromeni square, I did feel the urge to enclose them in a way within the subcultural terms of examining communities. In many ways they felt like a subculture and at times they defined themselves as such. However, I would tend to agree with both Passaro (1997) and Christiansen, Utas and Vigh (2006) that subculture, like youth culture, might work in exoticizing a group of people and rendering them disconnected with the wider societal universe around them. Despite Skapoula and Faneromeni youth actively assuming a distinctive identity to the one considered mainstream among youth in Cypriot society, the attention that they themselves have afforded in not being assigned rigid labels, but rather choosing to exist within a space where they could experiment, makes me want to take a step back from naming them in any rigid way. Instead, I would rather describe their cultural practices, rather than describe them as a subculture or youth culture.

The fluidity of their political identification was also used as a strategy that helped them bring close to them other young people from their school communities and informal spaces of interaction. Thus, the group was much more defined by its practices than by a rigidly defined ideological stance. Like many groups experimenting with direct democracy and action, as will be discussed later, their practice was their ideology (Graeber 2002).

Another important criticism of the term 'youth culture', I would argue, lies in the observation that many of these studies take their object of study as a given (Hodkinson 2007), without interrogating into the situated meaning and use of the term youth in the contexts that are

being studied. Furthermore, especially recent studies on youth cultures that do not take the socio-economic condition of participants into account, like previous ones did, seem to depict young people as too dependent on or influenced by the various fashions put forward by culture industries. As Bucholtz (2002, 541) mentions 'many analyses of contemporary subcultures are striking for their frequent assertions that aesthetics rather than politics dominates cultural practice, especially in cultural styles associated with the middle class'. The potential symbolic resistance embedded in these subcultures is quite different, as Bucholtz observes, from forms of cultural politics of youth that sustain an overt and direct political character.

Relevant to overt forms of political resistance is research conducted in the field of social movements whose object of study many times includes important sections of the youth population. Many of these movements have a large participation of young people. However, similarly with youth cultures literature, in many cases researchers who study movements, and even define their object of study as a 'youth movement', do not inquire what the category of youth means in the specific contexts under study, who might be considered as 'youth', and what are the implications for those defined as youth. Instead, they commonly define their object of study as 'youth' by using mainly chronological criteria (Juris and Pleyers 2009; Melucci 1989; Sotiris 2013; Wright 2000). Of course some of these authors work in cross-cultural contexts in which case it would be interesting to engage with potential global meanings of youth that might emerge from such spaces.

At the same time, Sotiris (2013) makes some interesting remarks about the shift in temporal situatedness of social movements in Greece after the late-1980s, a shift that happened in conjunction with modernization being more strongly associated with the fruition of neoliberal policies. As this fruition has been equated with progress by politicians and mainstream intellectuals, social movements that have been arguing against excessive measures of privatization and capitalist restructuring –that is student, worker and peasant movements– have been considered as 'inherently parochial and backward', therefore similar characteristics have been attributed to their participants (Sotiris 2013, 64). Taking it a step further to relate it to concepts of maturity and immaturity very much associated with a state's progress towards 'development' – which indicates "the West", science and technology, high standards of living, rationality and order' (Gupta 1998, 9)- it seems quite obvious why the riots of December 2008, related with the murder of a teenage boy by police, have not been considered as a 'proper' social movement or even analyzed in terms of the potential of being a movement, but instead disqualified as 'sporadic', 'irrational' actions and 'social anomie' (characteristics that relate to

the concept of 'youth' –as usually socially deviant actors- and children- as irrational and emotional). Despite the participation of hundreds of adults in the 2008 uprising it has been constantly referred to as a youth riot. In a similar vein, Durham (2004) examines how the riots that sparked by the murder of a 14 year-old girl in Botswana where described as 'youth riots' despite the participation of a variety of people, including older people, in the riots. Durham gives many explanations as to the why these riots where defined as 'youth': people participating such as the unemployed and the poor-villagers were seen as having the characteristics typically associated with youth, while the sexualized murder of the girl instigated anxieties relating to the main social problems internationally associated with youth, that is risky sexual behaviour and violence-deviance (Bucholtz 2002).

Disqualifying social movement actors, young or not, through minoritization is a common tactic of government that attempts to justify interventions towards the 'undisciplined' who are challenging top-down conceptions of progress. This tactic draws from the dominant discourses and the way the categories of children and youth have been constructed in modernity. Minoritizing movement actors justifies assertions of their politics as 'not serious', in terms of rationality and consistency, and therefore as inconsequential or even harmful to modern life. Moreover, as mentioned above, it can justify interventions for effective discipline of these 'children' to reflect their current place in modernity. As Stephens (1995, 6) noted, 'a growing body of literature on Western childhood suggests that the 'hardening' of the modern dichotomy of child/adult, like the modern distinction of male/female, was crucial to setting up hierarchical relations between distinct domains of social life –the private and the public, consumption and production, objective need and subjective desire –upon which modern capitalism and the modern state depended'. The maintenance of such boundaries therefore seems essential for the assumed stability of the Western world and for maintaining power.

The current upsurge in mobilizations across the world, like the Arab Spring and Occupy movements, with an extensive participation of young people, makes more pertinent the need to conceptualize youth and children as political categories, and as continuously shifting positions. It furthermore urges us to explore the shared categorical framings and knowledges which youth and children use to constitute themselves as political actors and further their political goals. Finally, through such exploration, it is important to consider how definitions of youth and childhood take place within complex processes of globalization and locality.

Durham suggests that youth 'enter political space as saboteurs; their potential for political sabotage comes from their incomplete subjugation to contexts and co-opters, and to their own

power for action, response and subversion in spaces of political definition' (Durham 2000, 113). Although she does not expand on the concept of the saboteur in her study, I find useful thinking through this double possibility, in terms of how youth both have the potential to escape from complete subjugation to overarching discourses defining their existence, but also for creative action and subversion of adult spaces of political definition.

Overall, Durham's major contribution is her theorization of age as site of political struggle. She focuses on Botswana where 'claiming the space of youth or elder, child or mature adult, is an ongoing political struggle' (2004, 601). In the context of this process these very categories become reconstructed. Despite this influential contribution in the field of youth and power, I believe greater consideration needs to be placed on direct political struggles engaging the meaning of age –and associated political uses of age categories- given the upsurge of global action engaging youth –and categorical youth- publics. As noted in chapter 1, anthropology and social sciences more generally have not addressed children as political actors. Children as activists –especially outside of institutional settings- are largely invisible from literature on youth in anthropology and social movements. Therefore in order to theorize, analyze and understand my youth interlocutors politics and the conditions of their emergence, I needed to turn to the potential times and spaces that sustained their capacity to act and to engage with theories that have explored such times and spaces. I further needed to relate these theories with children who actively attempt to be and live otherwise.

2.4. The residual everyday as time-space for subversive political energy

Where and when do children and by extension teenage youth find support for subverting spaces, physical and conceptual, of adult political definition? What sustains their process of becoming political, given that as categories they are widely associated with the private sphere of the home and the institutional sphere of the school? What enables such politicization and in which spaces and times do children, as a politically excluded public, have access for creative exploration and for doing things in their own terms? In attempting to answer these questions my ethnographic engagement has led me to explore theories on everyday life given that the everyday –marked as separate from the public/political domain which has been constructed as exceptional in modernity through special periods of participation in politics (voting periods) or

special locations (political party, parliament) to exercise politics- is the main field to which children have direct access.

Most of my time in the field was spent hanging out at Faneromeni square with the pupils that were involved in Skapoula as well as other, mostly teenage, youth. By pausing at the square, by making it a destination and a place of stasis (a concept to be explored in the next section) a community of youth transformed the space into an open-air place of sociability. Youth were bringing games to play at the square, while political discussion on public affairs was commonplace. At other times, square regulars were forming assemblies to organize an event, or discuss current affairs involving the square. By pause-stasis at the square, a different kind of everydayness was created, constituted by cultural practices and different types of sociability created by the youth themselves in interaction with the space of the square. I observed that this everydayness, which will be explored in detail in chapter 4, helped sustain the more direct political initiatives taking place.

In this sense I was led to explore the concept of 'the everyday' and what was it about this particular everydayness of youth at the square which allowed for a different way of being young, for the production of these particular cultural practices and sociabilities that held the possibility of subversive political energy. In looking for answers I found that the theories of Maurice Blanchot, Henri Lefebvre and the Situationists -the latter being authors widely read at the square and by Skapoula members in particular- reflected to some extent my experience. In what follows, I will engage with their reflections on the everyday, carving out what might seem relevant to the case I'm discussing. My inquiry concerns the potential that is held in the everyday in producing this subversive political energy, a question that was central for the theorists mentioned above.

Before embarking on this inquiry, I would like to briefly engage with how 'the everyday' has been approached within social studies. The 'everyday' and everyday life within anthropological and sociological studies has, on the one hand, more or less been taken for granted as a studied field of social life. On the other hand, the intention to engage with the everyday, in the sense of the ordinary way people go about managing daily life, exposes a deliberation of rendering such life as valuable and worthy of attention. It further exposes a belief in the potential for agency in everyday living.

Furthermore, the conceptualization of the everyday as a field of political action has been undertaken within anthropological studies and particularly those related with what has been termed as 'everyday resistance' in which key authors are James Scott and Michel de Certeau.

Everyday resistance relates to acts of insubordination within daily life that are often of an individual nature, such as desertion of conscription, sabotage of factory machines, foot dragging, and do not aim at direct confrontation with authorities (Scott 1985, 29). I found that this type of everyday resistance, particularly because it relates to an evasion of government/authority, does not account for more *creative* types of resistance, such as the creation of another everydayness, that I was studying, with potential for different forms of sociability and relatedness. Creative forms of resistance do not seek only to evade authority and governance, but they actively contribute in creating alternative time-spaces where experimentation with different, more democratic and humane, life-ways can be possible. On the other hand, the transformatory effect in the quality of daily living that such subtle evading resistance practices attempt to materialize can to a certain extent be related with the aim of creating another –more liberatory- everydayness.

The everyday has further been central to feminist scholars' and activists' attempts during the 1950s and 1960s to expose the everyday life of women in order to give visibility to the ways domination was inherent within everyday life-ways and practices. As Highmore (2002, 2) emphasizes 'this has never been a simple act of calling on an already understood daily culture- in many respects it has needed to produce that culture (as problematic) in the first place'. New social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, including feminism, brought everyday life at the centre of politics, in this case asking in overt ways for transformation in the quality of daily living. Similar attempts at exposing the daily life of pupils at schools as problematic have been undertaken by Skapoula and other pupils' collectives as it will be shown in chapters 5 and 6. In many ways, Lefebvre's, Blanchot's and the Situationists's writings were part of this surge of a reconsideration of politics taking everyday life at the core of their inquiries regarding its potential for revolution. I found their insights on the uses of daily time within modernity and capitalism and their emphasis on space to be illuminating of my own experience at the square. In this sense, I do not use their theories in any rigid way but as a way of illuminating my findings in the field.

Time at the square was part of daytime or nighttime during which these teenagers were not involved with any type of specialized activity, such as being at school or attending an afternoon class of different sorts. In other words, the time at the square was part of what could be perceived as time outside structured, specialized (constructed in relation to some expert knowledge) or institutional activity. Lefebvre, in 'Critique of everyday life' (1991a, 2002), describes the everyday as the 'residual', 'what is left over' when specialized and structured activity is subtracted. Although the two seemed to be constructed as separate domains, for

Lefebvre they consisted the totality of everyday life. Still, his main focus was on this 'residual everyday', what remains when specialized activity is subtracted from the totality of daily life. For Lefebvre the –residual- everyday 'is not in fact confined to the sordid and humble sides of life but its scrutiny involves the detection of unrealized possibilities' (Sheringham 2006, 144) for creativity and imagination.

Michael Sheringham (2006, 143) – who engaged with the work of Lefebvre and other key thinkers of everyday life- describes the residual everyday as 'emptiness' that has the possibility to 'be reconfigured as plenitude (αφθονία, πληρότητα) since it consists essentially in the capacity to be a receptacle, to create mediating space - a 'lieu de rencontre', a 'lien', a 'terrain commune', a 'rapport', and an 'ensemble de rapports' ('a space of encounter', a 'connection', 'a common territory', a relation and 'a collection of relations'). For Sheringham the content of this emptiness is open to be molded and filled in. There is creative possibility in this 'emptiness' for new forms of associating with life and for new forms of relationality, beyond the routinized and commodified forms of human activity established under capitalism and consumerism. Furthermore, for Lefebvre there is an ungraspable aspect to the everyday- always associated with the capacity for change and human possibility. The everyday is that which is formless by virtue of its residual quality, as well as receptacle to forms- but always something that at the same time escapes form (Sheringham 2006, 150). This creative power of the everyday is seen by Lefebvre, Blanchot and others as the source of the potential for resistance contained within the everyday. The everyday which escapes definitions and forms, which is in continuous flow is the space for Lefebvre where spontaneity and play become possible and where there is an experimental engagement between seriousness and play. Furthermore, the residual everyday is the time-space that is accessible to everyone, as it is found outside or in-between specialized and structured activities. It is the time therefore that children, along with other politically-excluded groups, can use in their own terms, during which they can experiment with hegemonic definitions and discourses that circumscribe their actions.

Blanchot (1987, 17), taking up this insight from Lefebvre on the capacities of the residual everyday, further emphasized its indeterminacy 'as central to the everyday's energizing capacity to subvert intellectual and institutional authority'. For Blanchot the everyday escapes, as it is lived-at the moment when lived it escapes every possible formulation- 'it being always before what affirms it and yet incessantly reconstituting itself beyond all that negates it. An

unserious seriousness from which nothing can divert us, even when it is lived in the mode of diversion' (1987, 16).

For Blanchot, as for Lefebvre and the Situationists⁵, the city street forms the quintessential space of the residual everyday (Blanchot 1987, 17; Sheringham 2006, 19). The flow and constant re-definition of the everyday is juxtaposed to the human movement and possibility for interaction and encounters in city streets that for Lefebvre allows access, and thus I would argue participation, in the multi-semantic field of social life (Sheringham 2006, 156). In city streets there is anonymity, anyone can be everyone, there is potential, 'emptiness' for playfulness with different roles, experimentation with definitions. Thus, the city street forms the prototypical space where the residual everyday can be taken up for play and experimentation. This is not to suggest that the residual everyday is free from forms of self-government or invigilation. Lefebvre, echoing Foucault, noted the importance of everyday life, beyond working-time, for the reproduction of capitalist social relations through forms of social organization and self-regulation (Gardiner 2000, 91). However, the everyday on city streets was seen as a time-space where such forms can be put under a critical and experimental mode and potentially subverted.

Furthermore, Blanchot, like Lefebvre, sees the city street as connected to the present in the sense that it forms a part outside the spectacle. Situationists believed that one of the mechanisms through which modern capitalist society works and maintains its power is through the organization of spheres of life and activity into spectacles (Plant 1992, 1). These spectacles reproduced life without any active participation of people within it. To this Blanchot brings the example of listening to the news or watching a street demonstration on TV. What is transmitted is a sense of communication, connection and participation that is not lived as there is no action on our part within it- it just gives us a fake/distorted idea of participation in civil affairs but in essence we are just voyeurs of images substituting practice with the 'pseudo-acquaintance of an irresponsible gaze' (Blanchot 1987, 15). Through these means that try to recapture the everyday, 'the everyday loses any power to reach us; It is no longer what is lived, but what can be seen or what shows itself, spectacle and description, without any active relation whatsoever' (Blanchot 1987, 14).

⁵ Situationists are the members of the Situationist International, a group of artists, activists and theorists that was established in 1957 in Europe. Its theory was influenced by Marxist thought as well as the avant-garde movements of Dada and surrealism. They challenged orthodox Marxism, and their political project involved a claim for creativity, pleasure, immediacy and autonomy as indispensable parts of everyday life and as essential ingredients for curing the alienation caused by capitalism.

Existence on the street however has for Blanchot (1987, 15) a different potential:

‘Man, well protected within the four walls of his familial existence, lets the world come to him without peril, certain of being in no way changed by what he sees and hears. "Depoliticization" is linked to this movement. And the man of government who fears the street-because the man in the street is always on the verge of becoming political man-is delighted to be no more than an entrepreneur of spectacle, skilled at putting the citizen in us to sleep, the better to keep awake, in the half-light of a half-sleep, only the tireless voyeur of images.’

The city street thus as the quintessential space of the –residual- everyday harbors the potential for radical political subjectivization. This is made possible if the ‘emptiness’ –the quality of the residual everyday- is taken up for creative exploration and treated, as Sheringham argues, as a space for interconnection and interaction -as a ‘terre commune’ in the sense of being accessible to everyone. This is facilitated by existence on the city street with the potential of various encounters and interaction. As explored in chapter 4, the everydayness at Faneromeni square, as part of the residual everyday on city streets allowed for this ‘*emptiness*’ which was then *filled* with creative playful practice by youth regulars in their own terms. This ‘ludic dimension’ of the everyday is related, as Sheringham stresses in his analysis of Lefebvre, to its internal dynamism ‘which functionalism –architecture and town planning would be salient examples- tends to filter out’ (2006, 153). For Lefebvre thus ‘play generously dispenses presence...functionalism tends to eliminate play’ (Lefebvre quoted in Sheringham, 2006, 154).

This practice of engaging with the residual everyday with a purpose of filling it with new practices or -as will be shown in chapter 4- retrieving old practices and forms of association that have been disqualified by modernity, is associated to the reclamatory work that Lefebvre conceived as essential for the work of the ‘critique of everyday life’. For Lefebvre, a critique of everyday life was not limited to an exploration of how capitalism intervened and managed the everyday social and cultural word (Elden 2004), but involved a transformatory politics. As Highmore (2002, 223) points out, for Lefebvre as well as for ‘those seeking a revolution of everyday life (a complete transformation of the very basis of our social life) the everyday needs to be understood for the express purpose of changing it’. In his first book on the ‘Critique of Everyday Life’ (1991a), Lefebvre related this with a process of achieving awareness of the alienation within everyday life. This alienation is seen by Lefebvre ‘as a lived reality, an experience of dispossession’ (with his references to Marx and his theory on alienation in terms of workers being alienated from the product of their labor) ‘that occurs in the very moment of imagined possession: in hit songs, verses learnt at school, financial transactions, shopping’,

(Sheringham 2006, 136). When they parrot ready-made knowledge at school, pupils are not the producers or co-producers of the product of knowledge, but consuming somebody else's product. In this sense they develop particular type of habits through schooling which direct them into being uncritical learners who lay their potential for participation in the production of knowledge into someone else's hands. Knowledge becomes spectacular with no direct participation of pupils within it. That is why –as it will be shown in the ethnographic chapters– Do it Yourself (DIY) practices by youth are so powerful; they are curing alienation through pupils having ownership over what they produce, including knowledge, and over their experiences.

In this sense there are convergences between the work of Lefebvre and Foucault, two scholars who attempted to build on the limitations found within Marx's work. What for Lefebvre was seen as an experience of dispossession through imagined possession, Foucault has termed as ways of being conducted by overarching discourses and forms of knowledge that set the limits of action of modern subjectivities. In other words, the non-participatory ways in which we spent our leisure time and working time which lead to alienation, Foucault would describe as ways of government, of everyday subjection into an apolitical, individualized subjectivity.

For Lefebvre, as well as the Situationists, who saw revolution not as a one-off event but *as a gradual everyday process of appropriation*, the latter was to be achieved through critical practices that *filled* the space of the everyday, contributing thus to its transformation. The 'critical everyday' consists of a process of appropriation that contributes in 'overcoming the scissions and contradictions of human reality' (Lefebvre quoted in Sheringham 2006, 141). In chapters 4 and 5 I will argue that the everyday at the square and on city streets can be seen as one such process of appropriation. Among the 'scissions' and 'contradictions' that were being challenged at the square was an important binary of modernity: the child/public actor (activist) binary. Teenage youth at the square saw that they could be both and therefore challenged one important illusion on which modernity is based on. By bringing a category associated with the 'private' sphere, such as children, to the public they problematised the public/private dichotomy and the enclosure of children into particular, apolitical roles.

When we study the child and the political uses of 'the child' as a conceptual category, as well as children as activists, it is inevitable to go back to theories on everyday life that emphasize the displacement of the everyday as a possible field of intervention for achieving transformation and social change. This is because exploring children politically means going back to the ideas that triggered the movements of the 1950s and 1960s and the revolution in

politics that came about when the everyday spheres of life, those considered most mundane and apolitical, such as the familial home, were re-thought in political terms as sites of political oppression and lack of privilege. The child as the quintessential category associated with the private sphere needs to be rendered public- or at least there are children and teenage youth who attempt to render it public- and this I would argue predominantly takes place on city streets. Lefebvre has suggested it: 'the street renders public' (quoted in Blanchot 1987, 17).

The Situationists (Situs), who became active during the periods of the 50s and 60s when the personal was being claimed as political, emphasized youth as key social actors in the process of revolutionizing the everyday. Raoul Vaneigem, one of the key members of the movement, emphasized how youth were not satisfied with the selling of the modern idea of happiness through consumption as this neglected the present (1963-65, 33). Although idealizing youth to a certain extent, the visibility given to youth as social actors, as well as Situs's emphasis on acting in the here and now, was informed and has informed the major uprisings in France in May 1968. Key actors in these uprisings were university students. This key positioning of youth as social actors during this time has nourished, I argue, future initiatives, such as that of Skapoula pupils, as it carved out space for youth as important actors in the political arena. Still, as I will argue later on, children as pupils, including teenage youth, were somewhat submerged under this overall 'youth/university student' category.

Furthermore, the Situationists made some other key points relating to childhood, capitalism and maturity that are worth exploring. According to both Vaneigem and Guy Debord, capitalism colonizes everyday life and renders it in time past, connects it with underdevelopment. Much like colonialism has produced the colonized states as underdeveloped, Debord suggests that the same happened with everyday life (Debord 1967). This justified an accelerated intervention at the level of everyday life, beyond labor time, through routinized forms of organization and commodification of space and time. This increased commodification and routinization resulted in the "emptying out' of the richness and complexity of daily experience' (Gardiner 2000, 13). It has depleted the everyday from the potential of producing its own meaning, of being seen as the active field of creative intervention and social change. This is partly done through constructing the residual everyday-Time outside specialized activities- in commodified terms. This Time in the spectacle also becomes a commodity, it is broken down in quantifiable blocks, it becomes 'a thing', a saleable good: package holidays, all-inclusive shopping malls, theme parks are brought as examples

(Plant 1992, 28)⁶. The poverty of contemporary social life was attributed by Debord to the scarcity and commodification of creative time and of forms of play-pleasure. This means that 'with the consolidation of consumer society there is no active participation in commodified forms of leisure, space, entertainment' (Gardiner 2000, 90). This also means for the Situs that despite rapid technological advancement the vast majority of people still struggle to survive while survival ideology is reproduced through contemporary menaces such as epidemics, nuclear war etc (Plant 1992, 22).

Consuming time through the spectacle renders one, on a level of appearance, with mature, adult status (Vaneigem 1963-65). Consuming time outside these terms is deemed unacceptable, abnormal, childlike. As Sadie Plant (1992, 28) suggests 'carnivals and festivals are outlawed when they threaten to transgress the spectacular forms of pseudofestivals in which the only available roles are those of audience, consumer, star'. In their role as consumers 'workers are treated as grown-ups with a great show of solicitude and politeness' (Plant 1992, 20). Of course this is temporary, in the sense that it manifests as long as one has the ability to consume, has purchasing power. In the same vein, I argue that the colonization of everyday life by the market renders categories of lived experience as marketable: youth for example becomes a category for which a great number of commodities are produced and youth-specific locations and time are further constructed in package forms. In this sense life-time is synthesized into consumption-time for which habits must be formed along with the relevant organization of time and space which structure the possibilities of action for youth.

Vaneigem suggests that consumer society has 'invented 'the teenager' as a new class of consumer' and this 'fosters premature senility' (1963-65, 75): this is because youth consume a reality outside of their own making, with minimal levels of ownership, agency and participation. In their role as consumers they become premature grown-ups (as mentioned in the previous section age categories shift depending on power dynamics within societies). This premature senility is fostered through 'the absence of self' (Vaneigem 1963-65) that is why the here and now, the present, is considered as a resistance space for the Situationists, the space where one has immediate access.

Vaneigem (1963-65, 97) connects the present with play and creativity, but also with childhood as a stage which escapes 'adult time':

⁶ This is associated with what Lefebvre saw as the separation of leisure and working time within everyday life, another illusionary binary, and the rendering of leisure as a break from the everyday, as the non-everyday. Instead, both Lefebvre and the Situationists argued that festivity and play should be embedded within the everyday and not seen transcending it.

‘The child’s days escape adult time; their time is swollen by subjectivity, passion, dreams haunted by reality. Outside, the educators look on, waiting, watch in hand, till the child joins and fits the cycle of the hours. It’s they who *have time*. At first, the child feels strongly the imposition of adult time as a foreign intrusion; he ends up succumbing, and *agrees to grow old*. Not knowing conditioning’s subtle ways, he allows himself to be snared, like a young animal. When he finally possesses the weapons of criticism and wants to aim them at time, the years have carried him far from the target. In his heart his childhood lies an open wound’ (my emphasis).

This idea of childhood as a field which escapes adult time, positions childhood with a potential subversive energy to the alienating, adult and spectacular forms associated with time and life itself. Escaping adult time was a key resistance practice for the pupils of Skapoula (skipping school) as the group’s very name suggests. Childhood here is used as a metaphor and an allegory of counter-spectacular adult time. Following Vaneigem’s thinking, I ask: what about children who refuse to *grow old* in the terms of adult society and the spectacle? What about those who embrace an active childhood as a resistance practice, resisting the top-down available options of how to be an adult?

Furthermore, Vaneigem sees ideology and particularly historical ideology, meaning grand historical narratives, as other forms of spectacular time, of suppressing the present by identifying the past with the future, thus resulting in a denial of life. As he suggests the sole reason for this is ‘to prevent men for making history themselves’ (1963-65, 103). The historian organizes the past by constructing classifications that isolate and fix events, stopping them from ‘breaking out again on the streets of our daily life’ (1963-65, 103). The fact that fixed categories and historical monumental events start to break, to become contested, when they are brought to the public space and discussed in the fluid and undetermined arena of the residual everyday on city streets, is something that I have witnessed during my time in the field and that I explore in the field chapters. I argue that rigid categories of identification tend to break on the street where, as Blanchot argues, people occupying it are always on the verge of becoming political.

2.5. The spatialization of the public sphere: Stasis against circulation

My entry point to theories on space and how space is made and appropriated comes from my experience of public space as a *resource* for underage youth who want to get involved in anti-establishment politics. It is through this experience that I started to become engaged with issues around space. That said, my ethnography is not an ethnography of space per se. However when asking the questions: ‘how are anti-establishment underage actors sustained as political activists?’ and ‘what sustains their capacity to act?’, it was made evident that public space and its availability, and public resources, as well as the creation of community facilitated by occupation of public space, play an important role in sustaining these youth’s political existence.

Being born and raised in Nicosia and living in the city continuously until the age of 18 I crossed Faneromeni square many of times throughout the years. My walking through the square and the old city, at all times purposeful, had always another destination: attending an event close by or going shopping in the nearby shops, while at a younger age visiting with my grandmother a well-known confectionary to eat galaktompourek⁷. It was not until the innumerable hours spent during fieldwork at the square that I realized its transformation by the youth regulars into a place of *stasis*, of aragma (mooring). For them the square was not a mere crossing point to various locations within the old town, ordered by the ‘scheduleliness’ of institutions of work, school or consumer pleasure and leisure. It was the destination itself. The limited ethnographic research on squares, prior to the Arab Spring and Occupy movement, showed how squares had formed the spaces of sociability mostly of underprivileged and/or socially marginalized groups such as the poor, seniors of the city as well as teenage youth (Low 2000). However, that previous research has not conceptualized squares as destinations, as places of *stasis*. I believe there is significant analytical potential in looking at them in that specific way, recognizing the power that comes from the constant presence of people in a public space and the potential that this occupation of public space enables.

The concept of *stasis* has often been used with negative connotations. In research on space and place it has been related to fixity and immobility that contravenes the porousness and dynamism of relations within space, as well as the fact that places are more and more defined by transnational relations that travel across the world through networks of connectivity (Dhaliwal 2012; Lefebvre 1991b; Massey 1994). Immobility and stasis have further been associated to those who lack the means to be mobile within the city and thus not able to

⁷ A traditional dessert.

benefit with the freedom associated with movement (Skelton and Gough 2013). Stasis has also been associated with backwardness and tradition and often posited as the opposite of progress in the Western linear sense, and as characterizing those that seem to perform life-ways against the neo-liberal ethic (Gupta 1998; Sotiris 2013). This neo-liberal ethic conceptualizes cities, and especially city centres, as mobile zones of circulation for the purposes of efficiency and consumption (Bulley 2016). This relates to Foucault's discussion of circulation as part of biopower, a form of power that works through biopolitical practices which aim at 'organising circulation, eliminating its dangers, making a division between good and bad circulation, and maximizing the good circulation by eliminating the bad' (Foucault, 2007 quoted in Aradau and Blanke 2010). Bad circulation was associated with those perceived as dangerous and risky for the social body of the nation-state, as materializing impediments to the flows of capital, commodities and normative ideas on the exercise of proper citizenship.

I use stasis here in another sense, not implying fixity or boundedness, but as a resistant practice aimed at pausing the constant flows of consumerism and the routinized schedules of alienated labour and leisure that are fragmenting life while at the same time minimizing the space for creativity outside the rules imposed by capital, privatized and institutional ways of being. Stasis here is related to the practice of *aragma* (mooring) that took place at the square. *Arazo* is a Greek word that means spending time idly, but not necessarily passively, to relax but also to anchor somewhere, to find refuge. It relates to the slowing down of time, and I would argue, to an emptiness that can be filled in one's own terms, associated with the residual everyday mentioned above. Stasis comes from the ancient Greek verb *ἵστημι* (- ἵσταμαι in passive voice) which on the one hand means 'to stand', 'to make something stand', but also 'to be', 'to exist', 'to have a presence' (ipostasis). The English expression 'to take a stand' comes from the Greek concept of stasis. Stasis also means 'revolt' –as in 'standing up to'- and *Stasiastes* in ancient Greece were the rebels that turned against the city-state⁸. In the case of *Faneromeni* youth however, revolt takes a different meaning to overthrowing authority. Their revolting takes the form of pausing, of stopping the flows of regulated time by 'being there'/anchoring at the square, at a space meant for everyday crossing for work or for forms of consumer leisure. In this way their stopping -stasis in the public space- halts and subverts the circulation of capital and organized temporality. It constitutes a form of resistance to what is defined by authorities as 'good circulation', as well as to the disciplined discourses and practices of cleanliness and morality that support such circulation. In this sense stasis is both a

⁸ Douzinas (2012) has also conceptualized stasis as revolt in his exploration of *Aganaktismenoi* (Outraged) movement in Athens.

critique and disruption of 'good' circulation, but also a rupture of the process of production of disciplined subjects that sustain such circulation.

Stasis opens up a space for critical reflection through standing still allowing for different ways of being to emerge out of this pause and become present. As Athanasiou (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 150–151) has mentioned 'the very practice of *stasis* creates both a space for reflection and a space for revolt, but also an affective comportment of standing and standpoint'. These other ways of being connect with Ancient Greeks' rendering of stasis as *nosos* which meant a disease both in the individual body and the social body of the Polis (Rinella 2010, 53). This *nosos* was understood as a type of *crisis*, a disruption in other words in the otherwise presumed healthy organism of the state. Thucydides in particular thought of stasis 'as a defective form of politics' (Rinella 2010, 53), thus pathologizing the stasiastes as having a psychological and mental disturbance. Thus, the subversion of circulation and of the production of disciplined subjects enabled by stasis in public space enacts stasis as revolt but also as *nosos* (disease) of the governmental mechanisms of the state and corporate power. At the same time it enacts stasis as crisis and as presence by putting the subjects in stasis into a critical mode and allowing them to articulate a different type of presence, to become present in their own terms instead of the terms of governmental prescriptions.

Thus, stasis has multiple meanings, as a pause, a stand, as 'just being' (being idly but not passively), as indicating a presence but at the same time a rebellious presence, a presence in revolt, in crisis and as crisis. As will be thoroughly explored in chapter 4, the slowing down and emptying of time at the square through stasis at the square allowed for a different type of presence, as well as new sociabilities and ways of being to emerge and take shape. These ways of being, of being otherwise, form a crisis in the social body of the nation-state, but also to the authoritative circulations of capital, and institutional and individualized ways of being, and scheduled time. Stasis and *aragma* can thus be seen as resistant practices, that through the grounding in place, allow, as Dirlik (2011, 57) has argued, for 'some control over the conduct and organization of everyday life', a control that comes from below rather than from 'those placeless abstractions such as capital, the nation-state and their discursive expressions in the realm of theory'. Stasis, as grounding in place, renders new meaning to public space at the same time as resisting 'the emptiness out of meaning of place' (Tonkiss 2005) by the placeless abstractions mentioned above. This has also been the aim of the worldwide occupation of squares and other public spaces through the Occupy movement. As Bulley (2016, 246) argues 'Occupy dwells in and seizes space in order to halt, to simply 'be', and thereby *not* circulate, *not* consume'. According to Harvey (1989, 238), further alter-globalization movements have

stood against-understood here as both taking a stand and halting- the 'restless flow of capital' and 'the systematized organization of space and time'.

Through stasis in the public space another type of space has the potential of being constructed by the users, the stasiastes of that place that often challenges the dominant order in the city. In chapter 4, I will show how, the occupation of public space allowed for community formation and for specific self-organized practices and alternative horizontal sociabilities to emerge out of a direct relation between the space and the body and become present. Such spaces that prioritize use value over exchange value and oppose the predatory logic of capitalism Lefebvre has termed as 'counter-spaces'. Counter-spaces are conceptualized by Lefebvre as spaces of play, as 'deviant or diverted spaces, (which) though initially subordinate, show distinct evidence of a true productive capacity' (1991b, 383). Counter-spaces oppose what Lefebvre defines as 'abstract space'. This 'dominant form of space, that of the centres of wealth and power, endeavors to mould the spaces it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces), and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters' (1991b, 49). Abstract space homogenizes difference and obscures lived experience of place which is vanquished by abstract conceptualizations. These dominant conceptualizations of space, which materialize through architecture, social engineering and urban planning, leave limited room for lived experience of spaces according to Lefebvre. These dominant conceptualizations he names 'representations of space'.

Counter-spaces constructed through stasis in the public space re-create public space as a forum of play, experimentation and community formation, as a potential common space. Common spaces have been described as 'those spaces produced by people in their effort to establish a common world that houses, supports and expresses the community they participate' (Stavrides 2015, 10). Stasis in public space is potentially productive of a commons in terms of the inventive uses of space that necessarily emerge among users and the interactions that are facilitated through pausing and inhabiting the same space. Such uses and interactions can produce common practices and understanding about managing a public space and thus contribute to community formation. For Stavrides (2015) common space is porous, open to constant definition as it constitutes a social relation which is dynamic between a group of people and the space itself. The community created through commoning- the active process of creating a space as commons- can provide an essential resource for those attempting to perform non-institutionalized politics. Especially for the case of anti-establishment underage activists, who often lack the financial means to sustain their actions, urban space can further

provide material resources that they can use to support their actions, as will be shown in chapter 5.

To conclude, space reclaimed as commons provides the disenfranchised a space to challenge the abstractions that guide daily life and articulate new stands (stasis), principles and practices to manage it. Such abstractions relate to happiness constructed through excessive consumerism, the form of commodity and image, but also to abstractions relating to nationalism, that construct youth in Cyprus as an abstract category, not connected to youth everydayness and lived experience. Thus through grounding in place, youth have the possibility to subvert adult spaces of political definition, as well as gain presence and a sort of control over the meaning they want to give to everyday life. This relates to the other quality of stasis which is 'to be', 'to exist', 'to gain presence'.

2.6. The politics of presence

Public space reconstructed as counter-space, as a forum for articulating new stands and challenging dominant definitions that inform lived experience can be thought of as the spatialized form of alternative public spheres and the basis for emergence of counter-publics. According to Low exploring the making and remaking of public space 'provides a unique window on the politics of the public sphere', pointing out that there is a gap in research on the forms of spatialization of the public sphere. Instead, there is much more emphasis on its more abstracted aspect on the level of communications media constructed as the main locale of public exchange (Tonkiss 2005). The consideration of the groundedness of the public sphere can thus be seen as a political move against another form of abstract space in the Lefebvrian sense, where politics are constructed as a sphere that lies outside lived experience, and where access to this public sphere is only allowed to the privileged few. The consideration of the spatialization of the public sphere has re-emerged to a certain extent through the Arab Spring and Occupy movements and their use of public space as a public forum. What the occupation of squares emphasized is that public space turns into a public sphere when the latter 'is characterized by political exclusion' (Low, Maharawal and Dalakoglou 2014, 24). Children and teenage youth, and other disenfranchised groups, as publics excluded from the abstract public sphere mentioned above, which is characterized by adultism, find refuge (arazoun, ἀράζουν) in public space. The metaphor of adultism here indicates the dominance in the political sphere of

those perceived as able to conduct serious politics, able to handle issues of life and death, able to decide on behalf and for others, mainly represented in the body form of adult, older, white, males. Seriousness is thus as a concept indicating responsibility and rationality connected to and materialized through such kind of bodies.

Stasis in the public space thus allows for presence, for the politically marginalized groups to appear. Here I relate the concept of presence to the 'space of appearance' as has been elaborated by Hannah Arendt and re-discussed in the context of the Occupy movement by Judith Butler. Butler (2011, 2) uses Arendt's insight that 'all political action requires 'the space of appearance'', but emphasizes in contrast to Arendt that this space is not only constructed through speech and collective action, but that it is also material, as action is necessarily bodily, and cannot happen without the mobilization of space. For Arendt 'to act and speak politically we must 'appear' to one another in some way [...] which means that for the body to exist politically, it has to assume a social dimension' (Butler 2011, 6). The streets, provide the quintessential space for those perceived as apolitical or prepolitical bodies, like children, 'to assume a social dimension' in order to be able to exist politically. By appearing en masse in the public space, bodies are supported by that space but also re-claim the space as a space of appearance, as a public sphere and thus challenge the normative spatiality and political legitimacy of the organization of power. In this way 'the limits of the political are exposed' both on spatial grounds but also in terms of the limits of who can appear politically –and what practices and experiences can be classified as political- and under which terms:

'Such a struggle intervenes in the spatial organization of power, which includes the allocation and restriction of spatial locations in which and by which any population may appear, which means that there is a spatial restriction on when and how the "popular will" may appear. This view of the spatial restriction and allocation of who may appear, in effect, *who may become a subject of appearance*, suggests an operation of power that works through both foreclosure and differential allocation.' (Butler 2011, 6, my emphasis)

Skapoula, as a pupil's group, challenged the widespread perception of schools as apolitical spaces by making their own subjectivities visible in the public space, as well as through the undertaking of 'serious' issues such as nationalism and militarism preserved for the adult public sphere. In this way, they were challenging their own status as supposedly a-political beings –children and pupils- defined by widely-held discourses around age and possibility, where the edge of acting politically is not only constructed in terms of numbers (above 18 for example), but it is also constructed through the norms of what is considered 'proper' political behaviour for youth and underage youth in particular.

In this way the boundaries of who may become a subject of appearance acquire an age dimension, and children as primarily conceptualized within the private and institutional sphere are conceived as monads, secluded from the social dimension necessary for political existence. They appear as monads, in private individual ways. The child as pupil within schools remains individualized- she/he is still not conceptualized in communal ways, but rather as a subject of an individual trajectory. Neoliberal schools and education hardly create publics, except perhaps the public of the national imagined community (Anderson, 1983). The child as a category associated with the private sphere becomes public once children occupy public space. As argued before, when on the street, categories of definition associated with the private sphere break and become open for re-definition. They have the potential to become communal as subjects under those definitions start appearing to each other and try to create sense in common.

A relevant question to ask in this context is what constitutes the public sphere in Cyprus and what are the cultural associations related to the concept of the 'public'. How do they influence who becomes a subject of appearance in this context? As Low (2006, 4) suggests public space 'has very different meanings in different societies, places and times' and the cultural assumptions related to public space will thus help a lot in understanding the public sphere and its limits. In Cyprus, street mobilizations were historically associated with the Left (Panayiotou 2006, 269). In the Greek-Cypriot community however the national cause (initially related with Enosis –unification- with Greece and currently redeeming what are perceived as Greek ancestral lands from Turkey) was historically supported by the Ethnarchy –the heads of the Christian-Orthodox church who were also historically heads in political matters and their close cooperators, the Greek Cypriot Right. Strong anti-Leftist, anti-communist feelings have historically taken root on the island, as the Left is associated to a threat on the perceived Hellenic roots of Cypriots and thus to their own existence, as they adhere to a civil, bicomunal Cypriot patriotism, rather to a sectarian, nationalist one (Panayiotou 2006). The street as a space is thus connected with degradation of national adherence and of Orthodox Christian ethics associated with privacy and propriety, especially as related to and exemplified in certain social categories as women and children. The street, the public space is associated with dirt, with low morality- in Cyprus when a woman is called 'tou dromou', literally meaning 'of the street', means she is a prostitute- a 'koini', literally a 'common woman', as opposed to the privatized, individualized wife. In this sense there is a privileging of the private realm in Cyprus, a realm which still maintains to an extent its communal nature through well-connected families, but which secludes this communal nature within familial and domesticated settings.

The street is valued as a space only on the occasion of national and military parades orchestrated to celebrate glorious historical events that sustain the myth of the great Greek nation.

The primacy of the private realm in Cyprus and the lower value placed on public space is further evident in Cypriots attitudes towards the streets, as a space to be constantly littered (Argyrou 1997), as not belonging to their repertoire of care. It is also evident in the lack of governmental care and pressure from below for public means of transportation and in the primacy of private car ownership. All this suggest a culturally low value assigned to concept of the 'public' and the public space which is further emphasized through a touristification and depoliticization of former peasant and traditional collective spaces such as 'panigiria' and 'kafeneia'. This suggests a modernist privileging for privatized public spheres, where political discussions are held in closed spaces, among the few who are deemed appropriate for such a role. These privatized public spheres include the parliament, politicians' offices and TV sets that host political panels. This preference for a privatized public sphere can be explained to some respect by the fact that the public sphere as the space for deliberation on communal affairs was historically dominated by the clergy and subsequently by the middle and upper class political elite therefore was at a distance from the people. Alternative public spheres however persisted through local syllogoi/leftist clubs which function as kafeneia (coffee shops), frequented by lower classes, and express 'the subculture of the Left' and its 'political and cultural autonomy', (Panayiotou 2006, 270) to this day.

With this context under consideration, stasis in Cypriot streets renders one as essentially antinationalist, as a waste-dirt, as insignificant, as low in morals, as common but with negative connotations. The public in this way is not a space that Cypriots appreciate and believe to sustain a powerful political dynamic. That is why they continuously give their power away in politics done within enclosed, institutional spaces. Children occupying public space in Cyprus and making it their space of appearance challenge in fundamental ways what is perceived as dominant public sphere and its associated ethno-national and religious limits. Their stasis in the public space indicates an attempt to carve out space for presence in Cypriot political life and in this attempt they are supported as bodies by the material provisions of the public space. In other words, the youth attempted to sabotage adult spaces of political definition through transforming a public space into a commons, a shared space open for re-definition and serious play.

2.7. *Serious Play*

As discussed previously, Lefebvre and the Situs associated presence, the here and now with play and saw the here and now, the everyday, as the primary field for political intervention through its ability to be molded in different ways than those which are institutionally imposed. The emptiness of the residual everyday allows for a time to play and this residual everyday, as discussed above, is primarily spatialized in city streets and public spaces. For Johan Huizinga (1949), who studied play extensively, play extends beyond the sphere of human life as it is also practiced by animals. In this sense, play forms a practice that troubles the idea of rationality and rational structures, it indicates that 'we must be more than merely rational beings' (1949, 4). For Huizinga one of the basic characteristics of play is imagination and make-believe. He asserts that when the child plays they know that they are only pretending. However he is quick to point out that this knowing 'does not prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness [...] The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid. The inferiority of play is continually being offset by the corresponding superiority of its seriousness. Play turns to seriousness and seriousness to play' (1949, 8).

Play in this sense challenges the rationality and seriousness embedded in the structures that govern our daily lives and opens up space for imagining and living alternative worlds. Childhood constructed as the quintessential time for play in the West allows for such experimentation and imagination with alternative types of being. As David Shepard (2011, 28) suggests following Freud the child maintains agency during play, an agency that is hardly found in other areas of their lives:

'In play the child is free to traverse the edges of pleasure and reality, dream and material worlds, and even self and external object. Here the 'real' objects are incorporated into a world of make-believe where the child maintains agency- the playground functions as a psychic space for creative exploration of 'complete freedom'.'

Play in other words allows for direct participation in the making of alternative worlds. It is a creative as well as pleasurable practice. It furthermore allows a playful attitude with definitions of self as during play the child experiments by taking up different roles that can alter at any different point. In this way play is malleable and open to change. This is mostly the case for informal play, not play confined into specific rules that are largely inflexible. As Victor Turner (1982, 39) suggested less socially established forms of play like 'unorganized children's

play or mere dalliance' can be seen as 'time wasted' by adult institutions⁹. I would argue that such forms of unsanctioned play are only permitted to children since the latter are deemed as apolitical beings, and with the precondition that this play remains frivolous and does not slip into seriousness. Play or play-time is usually considered as something risk-free for the state/society/various authorities. When however unsanctioned forms of play challenge in an open fashion the established order, when play crosses into seriousness, or threatens the seriousness of the establishment, and children are seen to engage in *serious play*, these forms are less tolerated and call on harsher treatment, even towards those that seem to occupy a primary position in state care. When play gets serious normative definitions of children within the system also change, or are invoked as 'correct', and I would argue that abandonment of childhood (status) might take place which facilitates the punishment or pathologization of children who have been caught up to engage in improper play. These issues will be explored in chapter 6.

As mentioned above, the Situationists and Lefebvre saw play as directly relating to presence, to lived experience, therefore they thought of it as a space and practice of resistance. Lefebvre urged for the creation of urban counter-spaces which he saw as spaces of play that could produce new forms of interaction and cultural experimentation countering those of the spectacle. Raul Vaneigem (1963-65, 87) considered that active participation could only be based on play and that through playful tactics such as diversion and subversion of the status quo societal conditioning can be challenged:

'The function of conditioning is to place and displace everyone along the length of the hierarchical ladder. The reversal of perspective entails a sort of anti-conditioning, not conditioning of a new type, but playful tactics: *diversion*. The reversal of perspective replaces knowledge by *praxis*, hope by freedom and mediation by the will of the here and now.'

The emphasis on the here and now as the space for self-realization through play was a key principle for the Situationists who considered lifestyles based on consumerism as an absence of life itself, as dead time. How one's time was occupied was therefore seen as something deeply political and the messing up/diversion of routinized time or the refusal to succumb to conventional uses of time as resistant practice. That is why the residual everyday formed such a key space for revolution.

⁹ That is why he makes a separation between pediarchic play –led by children themselves (from the words αρχή και παιδιά)- and pedagogic play (like sports, with an aim to instruct, to form children into specific subjects).

Moreover, for the Situationists revolution should be identified with carnival, and thus play, instead of being identified with self-denial through the request for human sacrifice. For Vaneigem, 'the call for self-denial always amounts to an attempt to make inhumanity attractive', therefore, 'the refusal of sacrifice is the refusal to be bartered' (1963-65, 56–59). This very much relates to the ideology of nationalism as promoted within Greek-Cypriot schools and society at large, that portray the sacrifice of one's self for the nation as the ultimate form of self-realization (given that giving oneself up for the country you become the ultimate Greek-Christian, the ultimate adult). This sacrifice provides for another absence of self, literally denying life for a place in a museum as a hero. Life of children in Cyprus within schools is museumized to a certain extent by preparing them for heroism through a nationalistic education to which they have not been part of. Children are absent in the construction of this education and nationalism. When children are allowed to march in mass in the streets, during national parades, is again in a museumized form, separated in regiments, in an automated synchronized walk. This walk of the city is recognized as emblematic, as of high-value while walks that resemble the urban flâneur are considered with suspicion.

Furthermore, Situationists' connection of revolution with carnival and play exposed a long-time intellectual effort within French theory which attempted to expose the fragmentation of everyday life experience through the separation of work and leisure. Constructing leisure, and pleasure, as extraordinary, as a break from the everyday was seen as part of the workings of capitalist power (Sheringham 2006, Plant 1992). Lefebvre and the Situationists asserted that the de-exoticization of leisure and pleasure is important for living a full life; therefore it should be re-embedded in the everyday, this time not as an extraordinary -cut-off- activity but as part and parcel of everyday living¹⁰.

Ludic action is thus seen as the means of escaping and subverting the forces that deny life and presence. These forces are manifested in an all-encompassing spectacle which commodifies various aspects of everyday life and a hierarchical society which imposes the terms of how to live one's life, and decides on the normative and available options for self-realization. Many of the movements that followed the revolutionary activism of the 1960s inserted aspects of play into their practice, which as with Situationists emphasis on praxis in the now, emerged out of a general disappointment with the traditional Left. This disappointment consisted in what was perceived as a lack of creativity from the Left, seen as always reacting against the domination

¹⁰ Here the Situationists although inspired by the thinking of Huizinga on play, mark a separation from him theoretically as Huizinga considered that one of the characteristics of play was its quality as an action 'which is different from 'ordinary' life', (Huizinga 1949, 4). He did not consider that this construction of it as extraordinary was part of the workings of capitalist power.

of others rather than creating new meaning (Vaneigem 1963-65, 16). It was further based on the rigid hierarchical organizational structures that governed the Left suffocating wider participation.

2.8. Making the case for multiple politics of subversion: Direct action, prefiguration, identity politics and a politics of becoming

A theory of practice with intervention in the now, without mediation, informed many of the social movements created after the 1960s. This practice is directly linked to the make-believe quality of play that has been transformed into a creative, often ludic activism, identified as prefiguration (Shepard 2011, 33). In play, another world is created based on imagination and a will for experimentation. Prefiguration is a praxis of creating alternative worlds: 'Prefigurative community formation assumes that the means of organizing are as important as the ends. Here those involved must actually create the world they want to live in as part of their actions and organizing' (Shepard 2011, 33). This new form of activism is very much a relational one: it is based on new forms of relating to one another that challenge privatized individualism and the need for mediators. It consists of 'movements that are creating the future in their present relationships' (Sitrin 2006, 4).

Direct action, horizontal forms of decision-making, and the activist concepts of DIY and immediacy, the latter understood as both intervention in the here and now and without mediation (Bey 1991), along with prefiguration, are considered as the heirs of this 1960s political thinking described above. As Vaneigem (1963-65) pointed out knowledge, which also included theory, is substituted by praxis; indeed for many activists that do their politics outside institutional structures and forums, like antiauthoritarian pupils' collectives, 'ludic activism functions as a lived theory and practice' (Shepard, 2011:15). A primary practice through which this ludic activism has been materializing is the practice of street parties. Street parties taking advantage of the fluid quality of play, between seriousness and unseriousness, and the fluidity of definitions on city streets, use playfulness and spontaneity to challenge serious political issues of our times. Such activism has close relations with anarchism which has always prioritized action to ideology and total theory, reflecting a tendency 'towards a kind of inspirational, creative play' (Graeber 2009, 221).

Prefiguration, understood as politics in which ‘the means used to organize within the movement should reflect the ideals desired outside the movement’, was key to groups constituting the New Left during the 1960s and 1970s (Maeckelbergh 2009, 16), including anti-nuclear, feminist’ and peace movements. Beyond movement organization, prefiguration was further implemented at the level of everyday life through squatting movements and a Do it Yourself (DIY) practice which flourished in Britain and Germany during the 1980s and 1990s (McKay 1998, Katsiaficas 1997). These latter practices informing autonomous and antiauthoritarian movements involved direct self-organizing and involvement in all aspects of life, including entertainment/leisure. George Katsiaficas (1997, 17) characterizes their political practice as *subversive*, aiming to transform ‘public participation into something completely different than what is normally understood as political’. Prefigurative politics are further associated with horizontalism. The latter entails a practice of non-hierarchical decision-making and thus of actively pursuing equality through direct democratic practice, skipping the need for mediation or representation.

Direct action has been understood as prefigurative in the sense that the desired end must be reflected in the methods of organizing for and reaching that aim (Franks 2003). For Graeber (2009, 210) direct action ‘is a form of action in which means and ends become effectively indistinguishable; A way of actively engaging with the world to bring change, in which the form of action –or at least the organization of the action- is itself a model of the change one wishes to bring about’. This definition is basically the same as the one for prefiguration. Graeber points out further that direct action, especially in its classical anarchist sense, is a form of action that does not solicit the state for its realization. Instead, ‘direct action is the insistence when faced with structures of unjust authority, on acting as if one is already free’ (2009, 203). Therefore like anarchists, the direct actionist does not seek to bring about change by seizing power, or soliciting power, but by creating alternative structures of democracy and community and acting as if the state or other forms of power do not exist. In attempting to define direct action, Graeber (2009) makes a distinction between civil disobedience and direct action by referring to this exact creativity that informs direct action. Furthermore, direct action must be distinguished from indirect types of resistance such as evasion of government and/or of majority culture through a politics of disappearance, or through other tactics which were described by Scott (1985) as everyday forms of resistance that do not actively seek to bring about social change. It must be also distinguished from symbolic resistance which mainly involves resistance to majority culture at the level of style.

This inextricable link between direct action and direct democracy with prefiguration, however, has fallen under criticism on the basis that it sidelines and undervalues analytically the politics, and therefore processes, of becoming. According to Razsa and Kurnik (2012), this is done through an understanding of direct action as ‘acting as if one is already free’ (Graeber 2009, 203). The direct actionists with whom Razsa and Kurnik (2012, 252) have been engaging do not see themselves as ‘already free’, but instead ‘ground their critique and the articulation of the possibilities of change in their current circumstances, from within the contradictory predicaments in which they now find themselves lodged’. Therefore they see their struggle for freedom as ongoing and messy, a struggle and activist practice which is constantly redefined by the engagements they have with one another and with authorities. For Occupy Slovenia activists such engagements included ‘encounters with difference that allow for becoming-other-than-one-now-is’ (Razsa and Kurnik, 2012, 252). Thus their struggle is not defined by a clearly predetermined idea of freedom. Prefiguration however seems to imply that there is a clear vision of what the ideal future should look like (Razsa and Kurnik 2012).

Building on this criticism, I would argue that this emphasis theoretically on the link between prefiguration and direct action undermines analysis *on the processes of becoming an anti-authoritarian activist* that many young people go through. Such processes are important to be accounted analytically and politically in order to further our understanding of the struggles of different type of groups, such as children, but also in order to contribute in refining our concept of freedom. Especially for underage youth that attempt to be involved in non-institutional politics, the process of becoming an antiauthoritarian activist forms a large part of their politics and activist practice which would call for theoretical and analytical attention. Such processes and relevant theoretical discussion will be thoroughly taken up in chapter 7.

Another critical point I would like to raise regarding direct action as prefigurative is the emphasis placed on the state or corporate power as the main forms of authority with which activists are engaged with. I think this perception is informed from an adult point of view of society and does not consider the capillary forms that power often takes which can trouble the forms that direct action takes. As mentioned above, my youth interlocutors were many times acting as direct actionists in the conventional sense, skipping state officials in implementing their actions. However, the need to negotiate or ask for access to implement actions at times was needed from other types of authority which embodied adult privilege. This involved negotiating for permission with actors like a kebab restaurant owner who had his restaurant within a public park (obviously with the permission of the municipality) and once denied Skapoula members from having a party there, as well as an elderly fascist resident near a

school where the youth wanted to organize an open futsal day. Both of these adult males acted with substantial authority when youth attempted to negotiate holding an action in spaces considered public. Such authority is sustained by wider perceptions associating male adults with the public domain and children with immaturity, underdevelopment and domesticity. These negotiations between children and adults expose a need for at least a re-consideration of direct action on an analytical plane by taking into account the social position of the activists and the distinct power dynamics that they have to face. It also involves a view of power as multiple and diffused within the social body (Foucault 1982), therefore there might be other 'intermediaries', beyond the state and corporate power, that pupil/children activists at least must take into account when implementing a direct action.

Chapter 3

Situating history, childhood and youth, and activist practice in the Cypriot context and in Nicosia's old city space

3.1. Initial reflections

I am often surprised that most recent academic work I have read on Cyprus and its history is in the great majority told from the perspective of nationalism and the Cyprus problem. Although scholars have acknowledged that there is a lack of historical, sociological and anthropological accounts on the histories and everydayness of Cypriots, very little research goes beyond ethnicity to focus on subjects such as gender, leisure, religious practices, childhood, and familial relations. Most academic work, especially anthropological research, is overwhelmingly focused on the Cyprus problem and the associated nationalisms that assumingly have led to it. Even politics, as an area of research in the anthropology and sociology of Cyprus, is to a large extent researched, and thus defined, through the prism of nationalism studies and ethnic conflict frameworks (Bryant 2004; Calotychos 1998; Hadjipavlou 2007; Loizos 1988; Mavratsas 1998; Papadakis 1993; Papadakis 2005; Papadakis et al. 2006; Sant Cassia 2005; Spyrou 2010).

In a relatively recent volume on the anthropology of Cyprus (Papadakis et al. 2006, 15), the authors recognize the gap in research mentioned above, however they assert that, contrary to other established European republics, history is still lived in Cyprus: it is not considered a thing of the past. However, the history that they refer to is the history of attempting to become a unified state (on the part of Greek-Cypriots) or an internationally recognized state (on the part of Turkish Cypriots), and the 'end' of history would come about by overcoming the Cyprus problem. Although this perception of history highlights the reasons why issues other than the Cyprus problem are marginalized in Cyprus, at the same time it is partly contributing to this very marginalization of alternative histories and present struggles that might be of course associated to, but are not overwhelmingly, nor exclusively defined by nationalism.

By viewing history as essentially a teleological process of becoming a state and overcoming the Cyprus problem, the state condition becomes naturalized and normalized. In other words, 'the state' or 'the nation-state' stops being a frame to use in order to explain and understand human action, but becomes that which governs the 'natural' movement of history. Claiming that history is still lived in Cyprus –by contrast to established republics, comes from the idea

that the condition of being a state is the natural condition to be in or to pursue. The theorization of utopia in this specific way leaves little room for other possibilities to emerge and neglects the fact that not everyone perceives the condition of statehood to be necessarily desirable, normal or beneficial.

This extensive preoccupation with the Cyprus issue is understandable to a certain extent as the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities have continuously struggled over the past century for legitimization of their presence in Cyprus. This has led to an overwhelming top-down construction of the past as a 'narrative of national struggles' (Papadakis 1994). Therefore, the History of national struggles, or rather History defined primarily as a narrative of national struggles, takes precedence as it concurrently structures and legitimizes the desirable future that the two communities are arguing for (Papadakis et al. 2006, 6). This History takes precedence over any other as it is fully preoccupied with what the future should look like.

In this fixation with the interrelation between a particular past and future, the multiplicity of the present seems to evade us. The presence of living social actors and their current struggles with issues that are not exclusively defined by ethnicity and national identity but by other categories of identification became secondary at best in relation to studying institutions and actors involved in safeguarding the legitimate claims based on a historically pure and continuous ethnic past. Furthermore, any attempt to overcome the Cyprus issue and focus on issues such as racism or sexism, or to promote reconciliation and peace by sidestepping the state, for example through civil society efforts, was constructed by authorities as 'disloyal' to the nation. In other words, as effecting trauma to an already traumatized society, whose primary aim should be to survive and not to be preoccupied with less significant others (see also Demetriou and Hadjipavlou 2018).

This is why it is crucial for social research and anthropology in particular, to start focusing on other actors and other histories beyond that of the Cyprus issue, as well as to avoid identifying the latter as the History par excellence of the island. Although valuable research has been done in this area showing how various actors, in the present and recent past, contest this history, it is important to acknowledge that it is only one part of many other aspects of life and it is also a part in which common people's experiences have been largely left out, especially post-1974. What I mean by the latter point is that the history of the Cyprus problem cannot be identified as the only 'living history' as even this history has been conducted to a large extent

with the exclusion of the Cypriot people. No truth commissions have been set up in Cyprus, nor have there been any courts of transitional justice and official forums in which this history and its trauma could have been discussed, investigated and shared among the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, and other communities sharing the island. Instead, history is in the hands of the few adult authorities, like political party leaders, leaders from Greece and Turkey, and heads of the Orthodox Church, who claim to *know better* than the people themselves.

Overall, my reflection here aimed to emphasize that the view of Cypriot history as teleological, as mainly a process ending with the solution of the Cyprus problem through achieving statehood – a view emphasized in the anthropology of Cyprus through an overwhelming preoccupation with the Cyprus issue – contributes to naturalizing the conditions of statehood and nation-states instead of only using them as categories of analysis. The prioritization of this history over others and its teleological rendering obscure current issues and struggles of living social actors who are not solely defined by nationalism. This prioritization misses alternative considerations of utopia and other ways the Cyprus issue might have been managed or already ‘solved’ through the everydayness of Cypriot people in their own terms.

In this chapter, I attempt to briefly outline the history of Cyprus and Nicosia, and the Faneromeni area in particular, especially from 1878 onwards. I highlight different institutions and social forces that have been active around Faneromeni to indicate how the place has been symbolically and physically marked and claimed by various actors and movements that emerged at different times.

3.2. History of Nicosia, the old city and Faneromeni area since 1878: The borders, spaces and enclosures, the symbolic space of Faneromeni square and how it is marked

In 1878 the British colonial government undertook the administration of Cyprus following an agreement with Sultan Abdul Hamid of the Ottoman Empire, while in 1925, Cyprus became an official British Colony. The seat of the first Governor of Cyprus was located in Nicosia, the capital of the island. At the time, Nicosia mainly referred to the city within the walls that were built by Cyprus' former Venetian rulers to protect the city from potential enemy attacks

(Marangou 1995). Between 1878 and 1960, the city's population expanded almost five-fold following constant internal migration from the rural areas to the city. Much of the information about the city and its people from the time came from the censuses conducted by the British government. In the first census of 1881, Nicosia's population was 11,536, while the census of 1946, just after the end of the second World War, counted 34,485 residents (not including the suburbs that had started to grow in the meantime). The walled city at the time had a population of 24,967 (Phileleftheros 2012).

Multiple ethnic groups inhabited the walled city of Nicosia. Compared with other cities in Cyprus, Nicosia had the largest population of Turkish Cypriots, and many of them lived in mixed neighbourhoods with Greek Cypriots, particularly in areas that were in the commercial centre of the city. At the same time, there were neighbourhoods that had a large majority of either Greek or Turkish Cypriots, while other communities mentioned in the census and inhabiting the old town space were Armenians, Maronites, Latins, and Jews.

Researchers of Phileleftheros Media Group compared the data of the different censuses (2012) and found that Faneromeni area had a stable population between 1881 to 1946, the majority Greek Cypriots, and it constituted one of the largest parishes in the walled city. In 1872, in the place of a former Greek Orthodox female monastery, the authorities of the Orthodox Christian Church of Cyprus built the Church of Panagia (Mother Mary) Faneromeni (Παναγία Φανερωμένης), known as Faneromeni Church (Keshishian 1989). 'Faneromeni' means 'the one who appeared', because according to legend the icon of Panagia appeared by itself at the place where the church was built. The Church of Faneromeni is the largest Orthodox church within the walled city of Nicosia, and it owns much of the land and the buildings around it, which currently house shops, offices and other landed property (Keshishian 1989).

The area within the forecourt and the vicinity of the church is heavily marked by symbolism connecting the space with Greek national history and with ancient Greece. On the east side of the church, a marble mausoleum was erected in 1930 to mark the 100th anniversary of Greek independence. The mausoleum hosts the remains of Archbishop Kyprianos and other prominent members of the clergy and Greek Cypriot society who were executed by Koutsious Mehmet, the Ottoman Governor of Cyprus in 1821 (Keshishian 1989). On the north side of the church are the offices of OXEN (Ορθόδοξη Χριστιανική Ένωση Νέων, Orthodox Christian Union of Youth) and rooms where they teach catechism, (known as 'Κατηχητικό' in Greek, that is religious instruction into Christian rituals and the Bible) which were built in 1953-1954, during the years of EOKA struggle (Church of Cyprus 2015). EOKA stands for National Organization of

Cypriot Fighters (Εθνική Οργάνωση Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών), and was a Greek Cypriot guerilla organization whose aim was to liberate Cyprus from British colonial rule and unite the island with Greece. Seven members of OXEN died during the EOKA struggle and a column was erected recently in the same space in their honor, therefore inextricably connecting the Church of Faneromeni with the EOKA movement. EOKA embodied the nationalist aspirations of an important section of the Greek-Cypriot community and its actions targeted not only the British rulers, but also Greek Cypriot communists and Turkish Cypriots. In a special issue on the history of Faneromeni area (2007), journalist Chrysanthos Chrysanthou notes that Archbishop Makarios III, who was a founder of EOKA, delivered several speeches at the church in the 1950s, calling on Cypriots to resist British rule. In 1954, Makarios famously made the 'oath of Faneromeni' in which he swore to remain faithful to the national aim of union with Greece. Later on, when he was president of the Republic of Cyprus, political opponents accused him of violating the oath by agreeing on Cyprus's independence and actively pursuing its preservation. Furthermore, according to Chrysanthou (2007), the archpriest (αρχιερέας) at Faneromeni was the one who led the process of oath-taking for the EOKA members during the struggle. To this day, a number of celebratory ceremonies, indicative of important national days, like 25 March (to mark the beginning of the Greeks uprising against the Ottomans) and 1 April (to celebrate the beginning of the EOKA struggle), are held at Faneromeni church and are attended by esteemed members of society, the Church and members of the political elite.

The school of Faneromeni, *Parthenagogeion Faneromenis* (Παρθεναγωγείο Φανερωμένης, Maidens' school of Faneromeni), is located on the east side of the church. The school started working in 1859 as an all-girls school, and the church donated the school building. In 1925, the church financed the renovation of the school building which was given a neoclassical architectural style, with its façade resembling an ancient Greek temple (Church of Cyprus 2015). Well-off Greek Cypriot residents whose daughters attended the school funded the school, while the Faneromeni church committee also made substantial contributions.

In general, the Church of Cyprus was managing issues pertaining to the education of Greek Cypriots since the Ottoman Empire, and prominent members of the church took the most initiatives to found schools and provide educational materials (Persianis and Poliviou 1992). A number of teachers, who also participated in the management of the Faneromeni School, were employed from Greece and were asked to implement the Greek educational standards of teaching. Members of the clergy and other people in managerial positions desired that Faneromeni School maintain the standards of the Arsakeio School in Athens, and they sought to gain recognition for Faneromeni School from the Greek government. This aim was

eventually realized, and a well-known newspaper at the time praised the achievement emphasizing the Greek identity of the school (Constantinou 2012). An interesting fact was that Faneromeni School worked for a number of years as a school using the peer education method. Due to the lack of female teachers, pupils progressing to the upper classes of the then primary school were subsequently responsible for teaching their peers (Constantinou 2012).

The strong desire of the administration to have the school adhere to Greek standards reflects how crucial Greek education was for the clergy and the Greek Cypriot elite at the time. According to Rebecca Bryant (2001; 2006) who conducted research on education in Cyprus during colonization, the way education was envisioned for Greek Cypriot schools shows that Greek Cypriots, or at least the elite, believed that humans are born social beings rather than individuals, meaning that they are born with some innate characteristics reflecting their belonging to certain communities, which then need to be cultivated through education, to reach full potential. Bryant argues that ‘Greekness’ was considered innate in Greek Cypriot youth and Greekness represented humanity for Greek Cypriots, because Greeks were believed to have brought civilization to Europe. To be Greek is to be civilized, noble, educated, and selflessly defending one’s country. Bryant (2006, 53–54) suggests that Greek Cypriots believed that ‘humans are, by nature, ethnic subjects, members of their race, and education is required to achieve their higher end’, thus to deny them of a Greek education meant ‘to deny them full humanity’.

‘Youth’ (νεολαία) as a category and term appears as early as the 19th century, in ecclesiastical writings (Persianis and Poliviou 1992, 37), and is associated with a predetermined route to contributing to the maintenance of the glory of the nation and even sacrificing oneself for that ideal (Bryant 2006).¹¹ Youth is constructed as an age category, usually indicating people of school age, whose main purpose should be to become the nation’s guardians and successors. Therefore, in Cyprus the category of ‘youth’ gained space and visibility in association with the nationalist cause: the Great Idea (Μεγάλη Ιδέα).¹² If Greek education equals civilization, then youth is marked as a time-period of ‘becoming’ Greek and thus fully human. Of course this category of youth, as the future defenders of the motherland in 19th and early 20th centuries

¹¹ See Bryant (2006) for excerpts relating to Greek Cypriot schooling during British colonial rule that exemplify Greek Cypriot instruction into the ideals of the nation.

¹² The aspiration of Greece, until WWI, to unite all Greek-speaking people in what were perceived as historically Greek territories.

Cyprus, had a class dimension as only children whose parents were wealthy enough, usually city residents, could attend school without having to work to contribute to the family income or to simply survive. For many children in rural areas, school was either not an option or they could only finish primary education. Many children at this time were working as servants in houses of better-off Cypriot and British urban dwellers. The girls were called *dhoulas*, meaning slaves (Argyrou 1996; Phileleftheros Media Group 2012), while many others worked in the agricultural sector along with their parents. An important, though unspecified, number of youth between the ages of 13 to 17 also worked in the mines that started operating in Cyprus beginning of the 20th century (Antoniou 2004).

Therefore, on an official level, the categories of youth and childhood were claimed as patriotic and served national interests. Youth at this level was a transitional stage to one's destiny of becoming a proper member of the Greek nation. In this sense Greekness itself, associated with full humanity and civilization, seems to also be associated with adulthood. Building on Bryant's (2006) assertion, that achieving full Greekness was perceived as the ultimate life purpose of Greeks-Cypriots, a status connected with defending what were seen as historically Greek lands, I argue that this achieved status is directly associated with achieving adulthood in the Cypriot context. This was made all the more evident through the status granted to young EOKA fighters within the EOKA movement. As Markides et al. (1978, 67) pointed out in their ethnographic work in the village of Lysi, a wholly Greek Cypriot populated village and a stronghold of the EOKA struggle during 1955-1959, EOKA youth were appointed to high-level ranks taking 'decisions of life and death':

The EOKA movement geared the important political constituencies towards the younger age groups. Remember that the EOKA campaign was carried out by youths in their early twenties and late teens. Two of the EOKA village chiefs who practically ruled the village during the Emergency years 1955-1959 were still in high school. Those were individuals who made decisions of life and death, on who was to be the next Head of the village, on who was to be barred from political participation and so on. The continuation of the political anomaly in Cyprus maintained the political involvement of its youth. Thus, whoever aspired to political hegemony in the village had to have some influence over that age group from which underground 'heroes' were likely to be recruited'.

As described, EOKA youth were elevated to an adult status and put in important political and strategic positions. This elevation happens, I argue, because by sacrificing themselves for the national struggle, they directly achieved full Greekness, i.e. full adulthood. In other words, the oath EOKA fighters made in Faneromeni, mentioned above, resembles an emergency ethnic ritual of transition to adulthood carried out within the context of an emergency period. This

association of Greekness with adulthood, as well as the association of Faneromeni area with social movement action seems to have continuities to the present day.

3.3. Perceptions of children and youth in the Cypriot context and beyond: What kind of discourses and regimes of knowledge constitute the Cypriot child?

In the present day, boundaries around children's political activity continue to be drawn by national discourses that specifically define what should be proper and improper political behaviour for those defined as children. After Cyprus's independence from Britain in 1960, inter-ethnic hostilities broke out between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Turkey subsequently intervened militarily in 1974, leading to the physical division of the island, where Turkish Cypriots administer the north and Greek Cypriots administer the south. At that period, the school curriculum in the Greek Cypriot community, which was already nationalistic, became even more so, and served to indoctrinate children into what has been defined as the primary political goal of the nation: to liberate their land from Turkish occupation and return it to its rightful – Greek Cypriot – owners. These definitional politics largely confined children and teenage youth to a narrative of being the saviors of their 'lost' homelands and being the ones who should 'Never forget and fight' ('Δεν ξεχνώ και αγωνίζομαι'): a common motto used by Greek Cypriot educational authorities post-1974 to indoctrinate young Cypriots into the moral cause of liberation from Turkish invaders.

Spyrou (2011, 533), who researched children and nationalism in Cyprus, has argued that, in this way, 'nationalism provides an overall framework for the construction of childhood and for the kind of children the nation wishes to have'. Building on this argument I claim that it also constructs the types of participation children are envisioned to have in the public arena of the nation-state. Drawing boundaries around children's political existence as the symbols of the redeemed nation-state legitimizes children's resistance only when its purpose accommodates these national goals. Other types of resistance become delegitimized, subversive or degenerate, or even escape the conceptual field of possibility.

At the same time nationalism is not acknowledged as a process of producing political subjectivities or as a type of politics in general, but it is rendered anew and naturalized as a matter-of-fact patriotic aim that everyone should undertake irrespective of potential political inclinations within children's own families and communities. In fact, this 'patriotic' indoctrination exposes not only a perception of children as the future saviors of the nation, but

a perception of children as apolitical, as impossible to have any political inclination that might run against this top-down definition of their existence. In the same way, schools, as the quintessential institutional spaces where Cypriot children spend so much time, are also considered apolitical spaces, concerned with 'truth', despite the heavy nationalist political agenda that the Ministry of Education overtly and quietly inserts in its curricula. Thus, the pursuit of nationalist goals is removed from the sphere of politics, while children, being overtly defined as apolitical, are properly legitimized to take up that pursuit. In this way children are enlisted in the nationalist project which, although it must involve recognizing the children as incipient political subjects at some level, it is done on the condition that the political character of the project is denied or hidden.

An overwhelming consumerist culture seems to be drawing further boundaries around the meaning of the child-youth category in Cyprus, with largely depoliticizing effects. The 1990s saw the development of intense consumerism within Cypriot society, where status symbols were linked to the acquisition of certain possessions such as cars, mobile phones, computers and clothing (Kitsios and Kauffman 2008). Consequently, status and agency within the youth population were also affected and thus defined by consumer practices such as wearing known brands. The affordability of computers made them a common item in many Cypriot homes after the 2000s, and children at the time were the first generation growing up in front of a computer screen, thus becoming further confined within the home. At the same time they had access to unlimited information and the possibility to network across the world on the internet. Furthermore, during this decade, an increasing number of private entertainment establishments, like night-clubs, were developed and targeted youth in particular, making socializing in these particular locations the normative ideal for Cypriot youth (Argyrou 1996).

Beyond night-clubs, chain coffee shops also become popular social places for youth at this time. Starbucks was the first one to open in Cyprus in 2003, with many other franchises coming along soon afterwards. The coffee shop industry has accelerated from 2011 onwards, and in relation to its size, Cyprus has an enormous number of coffee chains. Also, whereas customers of similar coffee shop chains abroad mostly get 'take-away' coffee, in Cyprus going to a coffee shop is a type of recreation. According to RAI Consultants' chairman (Newpost 2013), Cypriot consumers have moved towards this type of recreation because coffee shops can offer recreation for three to four hours even if they only consume one cup of coffee. This low-cost form of recreation has made these chain coffee shops haunts of underage youth, as well as young adults who come with their friends to spend time there.

Spending a long time drinking coffee, instead of the 'take-away' trend in other European cities, is a particular Southern Mediterranean habit. *Kafeneia*, the indigenous coffee houses where locals, the majority being men, used to spend hours of their day, have been essential spaces of the public sphere in Cyprus and highly politicized venues. According to Nicos Philippou (2010, 94), *kafeneion* was 'an institution introduced to Cyprus during the Ottoman period'. *Kafeneia* were frequented by the working classes and were places for political discussion and sociability. The institution was much loathed by the local puritan elite of the time as contaminating the morals of Cypriots, youth in particular, through performances of popular entertainment, such as Karagiozi (shadow theatre with Greek and Turkish origins) and, also through the performances of various travelling theatre performers and storytellers. Merchants also passed by and had their rest there making *kafeneia* an important contact point with the outside world. Radio too was a medium first introduced to the Cypriot public at the *kafeneion*. Beyond the loose morals associated with the *kafeneion*, it further formed a place of what were perceived, by the hegemonic class, as corrupting 'undesirable habits' like gambling, smoking *nargileh*, and card playing.

Foreign observers during colonial time also criticized what they perceived as locals *wasting time*, instead of *passing time*, by spending long hours in the *kafeneia* and being occupied with the above undesirable habits (Eftychiou and Philippou 2010). Locals passing time at the *kafeneia* and their exchanges on political affairs – blind to the colonial gaze – was thus defined as *idleness*, which Westerners considered reprehensible and related to the island's Ottoman past.¹³ The hegemonic Greek Cypriot elite also considered such idle habits to be undesirable remnants of the Ottomans, inhibiting progress which was embodied in Greek ideals.¹⁴

Despite this, according to Philippou (2010, 95), *kafeneia* formed places for transmitting nationalist ideas. Literate people would 'translate' current affairs from the press for those who could not read, since *kafeneia* formed places of assembly of the people. Around the 1920s, during the upcoming leftist labour movement, *kafeneia* were transformed into forums 'for dissemination of ideas and for reaching out to the working classes' (Philippou 2010, 95). In the 1940s and 1950s, *kafeneia* were divided according to political affiliation, between right-wing (nationalist-minded clubs, εθνικόφρονα σωματεία) and left-wing (σύλλογοι), and some of

¹³ *Kafeneia*, are reproduced today for rural cultural tourism, devoid of political paraphernalia, and made to look 'traditional' with rustic items which were traditionally used in villages in order to create a 'proper', authentic rural experience for tourists who are paying for that (Eftychiou and Philippou 2010).

¹⁴ This kind of association persists today. If someone is called *Anatolitis* –from Anatolia – it indicates a person who enjoys being lazy, does things slowly and expects others to serve him (*Anatolitis* is commonly pronounced using the male grammatical gender).

which still function today (Panayiotou 2006). This separation also forms a reflection in the Cypriot context of the divisions emanating from the Greek civil war (Markides et al. 1978), but also of a more coherent organization of the left which exacerbated into a series of strikes during this time (Varnavas 1990). Overall, the kafeneion was a place to 'transcend boundaries' (Philippou 2010, 96), most notably the boundaries imposed by local hegemonic norms of propriety and geographical boundaries through the medium of the radio and contact with travelling groups. Moreover, in the kafeneio the working class transcended their hard everydayness by indulging in the imaginary, playful, yet often highly political worlds of the Karagioz, and travelling musicians and performers. In other words, kafeneia constituted spaces of alternative education and enabled transmission of information from the outside world.

A few kafeneia that opened in old Nicosia after the war and division of 1974 have maintained this tradition. A family who were members of the extraparliamentary left opened one in their own home next to the Green Line. The owner, Simis, said they opened the kafeneio as a means to survive, but also to have a place for themselves and their friends where they could socialize as there was nothing of the sort after the war. The kafeneio itself was named 'Green Line' and it continued some of the sociabilities and features of old kafeneia. Many talks were organized there on a variety of social issues, ranging from environmental concerns to the Cyprus issue, and many alternative bands and musicians played there. This attracted a number of people who were looking for alternative places of sociability in Nicosia and who were concerned with social, cultural and political matters. In 1995, Simis¹⁵ opened another kafeneio next to Faneromeni Square called 'Kala Kathoumena'. This kafeneio, which continued the tradition of organizing political discussions, poetry nights as well as nights with rebetika music, became a focal point of youth and older people who were looking for alternative places to socialize beyond the luxurious chain coffee shops and night clubs that started springing up in Cyprus during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Simis in one of our talks described the concept of the kafeneio that he tried to rescue, albeit in a modern form:

The importance of a kafeneio is whether it can create relationships among the people coming there, nothing else. Kafeneio has always been this way. You meet there and you chat. I start a conversation on a topic for example, and someone jumps in to respond, then another one and they get to know one another in this way. Next time they meet there again, they become friends. Some of them even marry each other.

The multinational franchise coffee shop, however, is not a space conceptualized for community formation. Instead, people come and spend their time in the private company of

¹⁵ I kept the original name of the owner of Kala Kathoumena as he is well-known among the residents of central Nicosia.

their friends or on their 'devices', while the surroundings are empty of any political content or any local affiliation in contrast to indigenous kafeneia. They are also 'clean' and tidy places with attractive furniture as opposed to the perceived 'vulgar' aesthetics of the traditional kafeneion with plastic chairs and furniture set around in a disorderly fashion (Philippou, 2010). With the opening of the trendy coffee shops, kafeneia were seen as places for the older generation – another age category that loses its political resonance. Much like romanticized representations of the institution found on postcards promoted through the local tourist industry, they were conceptualized as belonging to the realm of tradition, to a time past, despite their persistent existence today in villages and towns. Instead, hanging-out in chain coffee shops was sold as modern and fashionable and created a simulation of connection to the outside world through the chain idiom.

These consumer-related values, practices and social spaces described above reconstructed the types of leisure entertainment for Cypriot youth, and although there might be some agency found within them, I would argue that they further enclose those of the child and youth categories within the private sphere of shopping malls, chained coffee shops and night-clubs where the music is so loud so that nobody can be heard. As many public spaces are becoming privatized through encroaching capitalism, so are the categories of children and youth that occupied former open-air spaces. Until the early 1990s, it was relatively common for Cypriot children to play outside in neighbourhoods and fields close to home. Increasing privatization and urbanization has led to these places being built up, thus privatizing spaces children regularly occupied, such as neighbourhood parks and informal, outdoor playgrounds. Contributing to this, is Greek Cypriot society's accelerated obsession, post-1974, with educating the next generation, which was seen as reflecting a family's upward mobility, among other things. Children started to spend most of their after-school time doing homework and being secluded within private cars to be ferried to various afternoon classes (private tuition, *φροντιστήρια*) that filled their schedule.

For children, the streets and public spaces have largely lost their meaning as places for passing time and imaginative play, and are mainly used for transportation within the private space of the car.¹⁶ Historically however, as depicted in many studies in the contexts of Greece as well as Cyprus, the street had also another meaning, that is being overwhelmingly identified with dirt, sexual promiscuity and a general lack of morals (Dubisch 1986; du Boulay 1974). Strong

¹⁶ The World Road Statistic Report 2007 of the International Road Federation placed Cyprus as the country with the highest rate of car ownership in the world with a rate 742 cars per 1000 people. The Eurostat Urban Audit 2015 ranked Nicosia as the European capital with the highest number of people going to work by car (91%).

distinctions between the private and public domains associated women to the former and men to the latter, revealing in this sense a moral geography of space (Cowan 1990). More specifically, the morally rightful place for a woman was to be in the house, the cleanliness and tidiness of which also reflected her moral character (Dubisch 1986; Vassiliadou 2004). In this sense, women who spent too much time on the streets were seen as shameful and immoral. To the extent that the house was a feminine space, children, who were the primary responsibility of women, were considered *prokommēna* (prudent, in Greek, '*prokommēna*' is derived from the word 'προκοπή' meaning 'progress') if they stayed in the house. Girls, especially, were to stay close to the house and could not wander around too much. Children's cleanliness also reflected on the mother and how focused she was on the affairs of her home, rather than being preoccupied with 'other things' and letting her children 'wander loose' (ξαπόλυτα). Boys, however, were to a certain extent praised for being out in the streets and generally enjoyed more freedom since this was seen as a sign of healthy masculinity.

Cypriots considered cleanliness a moral issue associated with the home, while they did not preoccupy themselves with the upkeep of public space and habitually littered the streets without much consideration. That attitude is slowly changing since the 1990s with the advent of the global ecological movement and a concern to maintain Cyprus as an attractive tourist destination (Argyrou 1997). Overall, streets and the outside are still associated with dirt, litter and loose morals and therefore not perceived as belonging to the repertoire of care of the people and owned by the people. The feeling that one cannot find *προκοπή* (progress) on the streets still persists today. And those who habitually occupy the streets are labeled with similar negative connotations.

The 1974 war and its catastrophic financial consequences for the Greek Cypriot community, as well as the trauma it inflicted on the national self renewed society's urge for *προκοπή* and stability, especially through the tourist industry. There was also a return to Greekness and Greek education as the ultimate route for achieving *προκοπή* as well as the route for achieving what was constructed as Greek Cypriot children's ultimate goal: to be the ones who set free and redeem (λυτρώνω) their country 'from the Turkish yoke' (από τον Τουρκικό ζυγό).¹⁷

¹⁷ This type of wording is commonly found in Greek Cypriot history textbooks and in a series of textbooks entitled *I never forget and I fight* (Δεν ξεχνώ και αγωνίζομαι), published by the Ministry of Education with the aim to cultivate an agonistic consciousness in youth for reclaiming their 'lost homelands' from Turkey. Furthermore, 'λύτρωση', meaning redemption, has strong religious connotations for Greek Orthodox people. According to the Bible, Jesus Christ sacrificed himself in order to redeem the people from their sins so that they can enter the gates of heaven. Greek Cypriot

3.4. Brief history of the bicomunal movement, the anti-authoritarian community of the old city, and youth politicization at Faneromeni square

3.4.1. An upcoming civil society in the 1990s

The 1974 war caused the imposition of a physical border between the two communities across the island, known as the Green Line or Buffer Zone. After the leadership of both communities made several failed attempts to achieve a political solution through high-level negotiations that took place under UN auspices, the late 1980s saw civil society's first efforts at reconciliation in the Cypriot context. What is now known as the Bi-communal movement, or the movement for Rapprochement (Επαναπροσέγγιση), was initiated by Cypriot, American and British academics and diplomats. Conflict resolution training took place in the Buffer Zone, led by two women scholars with US funding (Economidou 2002), and abroad in Western educational settings. Following these, a number of bi-communal exchanges were set up targeting various sectors of the population, including youth and students, women, educators, environmentalists, business professionals, among others. These workshops and contacts were funded by donors such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the European Union, Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), USAID, and Fulbright Commission, while funding support also came from national governments through their Cyprus-based embassies (Economidou 2002; Loizos 2006). Such exchanges were frequently hindered by failures in the negotiations, while activists were often stigmatized by nationalists, who considered such activism a betrayal to the country. Nevertheless, a number of Cypriot young adults had the opportunity to engage with members of the other community and become peace activists. In the 1990s, efforts to make bicomunal contact increased while a number of other changes in the socio-political and technological landscape enhanced the potential for broadening the movement. Such changes, eloquently described by Loizos (2006), include the fact that more young Cypriots were going on to tertiary education, most often abroad in Greece, the UK, the US and Eastern European countries. At the same time, the internet was introduced in Cyprus in 1993, easing communication among communities and activists as well as contact with the outside world. There were also many more media outlets, including left-wing radio programs. Simultaneously with these developments, the first grassroots left-wing groups and initiatives not directly associated with political parties started to form in both Nicosia and Limassol.

schoolbooks often depict Cyprus as having been crucified by the Turks in 1974 and waiting for redemption by its 'true' and 'rightful' offspring (Christou 2006).

In this way, the Cyprus issue started slowly to become owned by the people without the mediation of political parties. At the same time, the NGOs and the funded initiatives emanating from this reconciliation movement were mostly dependent on external funding; therefore, their priorities were largely set by their donors. Even so, the momentum built by such bi-communal contacts, as well as other factors leading to changes in the socio-political and communications landscape mentioned above, contributed in the emergence of the left-wing and anti-authoritarian groups in the walled city of Nicosia, to which I now turn.

3.4.2. Claiming the old city and Faneromeni square as a space of non-institutional social action

In early 2000s, Turkish Cypriots held mass demonstrations against their regime's negative view on a UN reunification plan for a bicommunal, bizonal federation prepared by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Following the demonstrations, in a surprise move, the leader of the Turkish-Cypriot community, Rauf Denktaş, relaxed the restrictions on movement between north and south and allowed people to cross for the first time since 1974. Many in Cyprus assumed that Denktaş's move to open the border was an effort to ease the tensions caused by these mass demonstrations and counter the momentum of the Turkish Cypriot peace movement. In April 2003, the Ledra Palace checkpoint, located just outside the walled city of Nicosia, was opened, making bicommunal contact easier than ever.

During this period, individuals who identified with the extra-parliamentary Left (εξωκοινοβουλευτική Αριστερά), from both the north and south, transformed a place in the walled city of Nicosia and close to the open checkpoint into a bicommunal cultural center (also called 'kafeneio') in an effort to gather leftist people not active in a particular political party and extra-parliamentary leftist groups. The cultural centre was named Kardaş (the Turkish word for 'brother'). A Greek Cypriot anarchist group, named Anarchist Nucleus of Cyprus (Αναρχικός Πυρήνας Κύπρου), also held assemblies there (Ioannou 2007).

In spring 2004, weeks after the Greek Cypriots voted against the Annan Plan,¹⁸ the Republic of Cyprus joined the EU, albeit EU status was suspended in the northern part until a solution to the Cyprus problem is reached. Around that time, new members entered the assembly of Kardaş and they organized a number of events, like film screenings, discussions and parties, to

¹⁸ During referenda that took place respectively in both communities, 65% of Turkish Cypriots voted in favor of the Annan Plan while 76% of Greek Cypriots rejected it. Following this, the ROC became full member of the EU in the same year.

bring more people closer to the centre and also to the community of leftist and anti-authoritarian groups that were forming in the old city (Ioannou 2007). A number of bicommunal groups as well as NGOs used Kardaş then to conduct their assemblies, as it was one of few spaces, if not the only one, that was self-managed, leftist, and amicable to such initiatives, apart from the UN-controlled spaces in which most bicommunal activities took place.

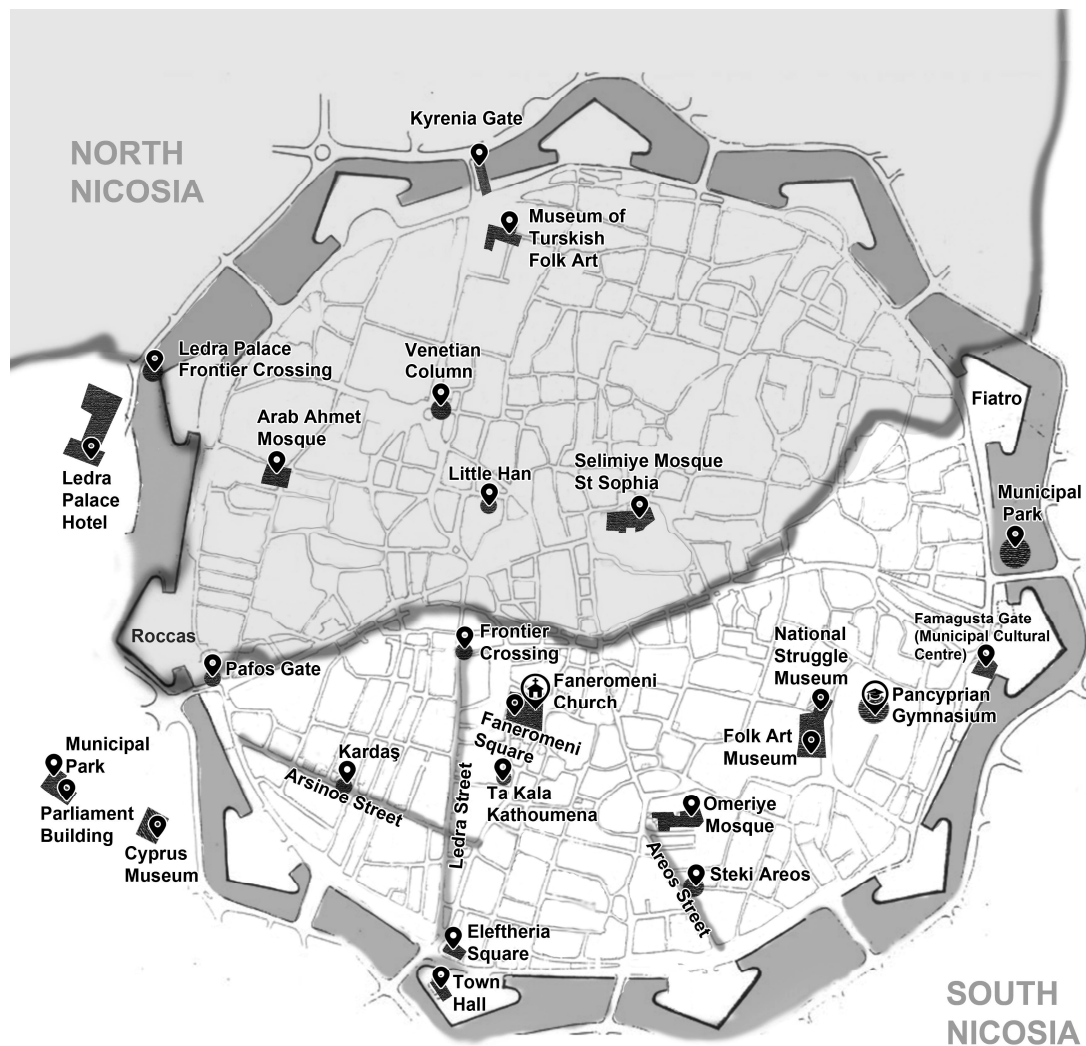


Figure 2. Map of the old town of Nicosia (Nicosia within the Walls) divided by the buffer zone into north Nicosia administered by Turkish Cypriot authorities and south Nicosia administered by Greek Cypriot authorities. Traced from a map provided by Dr. Evi Tselika. Final map designed by graphic artist Michelle Stamatiari.

The parties attracted a number of people, including underage youth, who became familiar with the anti-authoritarian space of the old town either through family members attending the events at Kardaş or because their families were resident in the old city. Another place that

brought alternative youth and older people to the old town was the kafeneio Kala Kathoumena that opened in the late 1990s and offered another space for critical political discussion and alternative sociability. It is important to note that after 1974, due to its proximity to the border, Greek Cypriot residents largely evacuated the old city, whereas the government provided displaced Greek Cypriots from the north with houses that Turkish Cypriot residents in old Nicosia had abandoned when they fled or were forced to move to the north. A resident who moved to the old city after being displaced during the 1974 war told me:

We moved to our home in the old town after being displaced from another area in Nicosia close to Agios Dometios. The government was giving houses which had been evacuated to refugees¹⁹, and no Greek-Cypriot wanted to reside in the old town at the time because they were afraid to be next to the Green Line. The government was giving houses without taking rent. The old city was wrecked at the time and only refugees deigned to come and stay there. That is how it took life again.

In this sense, the marginal space of the old city was hosting people displaced from the war and economic migrants looking for cheap places to rent as well as those considered as politically marginal subjectivities who were expressing an anti-establishment and pro-unification talk. Following the dissolution of Kardaş between 2006-2007, the centre was renamed Arsinois 5 and continued to be active for another year, although with a more anarchist orientation. In the meantime, the old city space was turning into a hub of grassroots social action where a number of initiatives took place, some organized by individuals who were involved in Kardaş before. These initiatives ranged from libraries of alternative education, such as Agrammata (Αγράμματα)²⁰ that also held discussions on international and national political issues, to webzines of counter-information, such as Falies (Φάλιες)²¹, and to occupations of deserted buildings to develop alternative forms of community and social action.

Residents of the old town, some of whom activists in the extra-parliamentary Left and anti-authoritarian groups, also organized social activities and formed collectives. Awake within the Walls (Άγρυπνοι Εντός των Τειχών) was one such collective established in 2007 to act as a pressure group advocating for residents' greater participation in community affairs, for collective self-organizing at community level and for the need for more public spaces.

¹⁹ Internally displaced people from the 1974 war are defined as 'refugees' in Cyprus.

²⁰ Αγράμματα is a compound word created by one of the founding members of this initiative. It is composed by the letter 'Α' –symbolizing Anarchy – and the word 'γράμματα' (grammata) which means 'education' in the Greek and Cypriot contexts. Together, the word suggests 'alternative', or anarchic, education- -being educated otherwise. The word Αγράμματα is also similar to the Greek word 'αγράμματος', which is used to indicate an illiterate person. Therefore, 'Αγράμματα' can also be understood to mean 'resistance to being literate in the hegemonic knowledge promoted by the capitalist Greek Cypriot establishment': in other words, choosing to be consciously illiterate.

²¹ Slang Greek Cypriot word which means 'trouble'.

Furthermore, Faneromeni square, as the main open air space within the old city, also started to be marked as a space for collective action when a number of anti-establishment groups started to have their assemblies there. One was Citizen's Movement ALERT (Κίνημα Πολιτών ΑΛΕΡΤ) formed in 2009 through an assembly that was held at Faneromeni after the acquittal of a number of police officers of brutality even after they were caught on camera savagely maltreating two Greek Cypriot students. The movement tried to raise the issue of police violence through a number of demonstrations in front of courts and in the streets. Furthermore, ACCEPT LGBTI Cyprus, the first Greek Cypriot organization to advocate LGBTI issues, a major taboo issue in Cyprus at the time, started becoming active with an assembly held at Faneromeni Square.

All these groups cooperated with each other at different times to organize street festivals and other actions, such as demonstrations on issues that were of mutual concern, such as nationalism, privatization of public space, persecution of immigrants and asylum seekers, and militarization, among others. Thus they formed an informal network of activists and groups, often referred to as the Choros (ο Χώρος), symbolizing the bundle of extra-parliamentary leftist, anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment and direct democratic groups and individuals actively inhabiting the old town space and Faneromeni Square.

3.4.3. Underage youth initiatives at Faneromeni Square

This vibrant community within the old town and around Faneromeni Square and the alternative knowledge that was available in the surrounding libraries, social centres and squats helped the emergence of various underage youth collectives and initiatives. The movement towards the old town initiated by Kardaş and the opening of the border included youth who became active in the area around 2008. The everydayness at Faneromeni Square that further nourished such initiatives will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

Informal groups of youth would at times prepare texts and distribute them at the square and at various events organized in the old town. One such text was entitled 'Parades of Discrimination' in which Faneromeni youth exposed how having parades of school-age youth and the military on days of national celebration was a remnant of the Nazi regime, a practice which had also been replicated in Greece by the dictator Ioannis Metaxas. They further argued that the parades were military practice that discriminates between pupils in terms of appearance and grade. Only pupils who are high-achieving as well as tall and sporty are chosen

by schools for participation in the parade. The text was signed by 'Manoli's children' (Τα παιδιά του Μανώλη). Manoli's Square (Πλατεία Μανώλη) is an alternative name for Faneromeni Square, given by youth who frequented the square in the 1990s.²² By challenging a militarized and nationalistic practice of an institution such as Greek education with all the nationalist and adult connotations mentioned above, Faneromeni youth were challenging their delineation as 'children of the nation'. They did so by constructing for themselves another lineage rooted, even literally as Manolis was a tree, in the remarking of Faneromeni as a space of radical youth antinationalist politics.

'Faneromeni youth' (Νεολαία Φανερωμένης) would also appear as a group on posters advertising events co-organized with other collectives and squats in the area. The group was constituted by youth frequenting the square who would become informally organized and contribute to such events. Overall, this indicated that 'Faneromeni youth' was a recognized actor with visible presence at the various activities of the political space of Faneromeni and the old city.

A more organized collective of teenage youth, which also emerged from the space of Faneromeni in 2010, was the *Planodio Steki Dromou* (Πλανόδιο Στέκι Δρόμου, Wandering Street Haunt). A section of underage youth frequenting Faneromeni felt that they wanted to create something for themselves ('για εμάς' – a phrase people from the group repeated to me during interviews). They wanted to form a group for youth only, so that they could educate themselves (αυτό-μόρφωση; I will discuss the practice of self-education in chapter 4) and collectively produce a counter-position on issues that involved them directly, which they may not be able to express in collectives in which adults also participated. Planodio was active for a year and issued a few opinion leaflets that focused on issues such as migration, the use of public space, consumerism, self-organization and education. They also maintained a blog and co-organized events with other groups of the old town, such as Falies. Planodio produced and distributed a brochure in which they discuss their aims and desires which constituted the basis

²² 'Manolis', which is a Greek male name, was the name given to a tree located in Faneromeni Square by youth who frequented the square in the 1990s. At the time there was a circular bench around the tree; therefore, the name probably was inspired by a Greek children's folk song and game with the following lyrics: 'Round and round we all go and in the middle is Manolis' (Γύρω-γύρω όλοι στη μέση ο Μανώλης). In mid-2000s, the circular bench was replaced with a linear one, however, the name Manolis was preserved by youth that frequented the square, perhaps indicating a continued ownership of the square despite institutional actors, such as the Church and educational authorities, claiming the square for themselves. Iliopoulou and Karathanasis (2014, 176) suggest that the name was kept as 'a vernacular name given to a square that was being claimed as a different public space in the area'.

for forming the group. These form a reflection of the greater desires that were being pursued by youth in the space of Faneromeni:

For political action and social solidarity

We create relationships mediated through Facebook, we play games holding a lever, we pass endless afternoons in classrooms, and at night we sink tired in the couch to watch television.

We go to school and afternoon classes for a future position in university. We go to university for a good future job that will guarantee us a good wage. We work for so many years to afford the “perfect” house and the “perfect” car, and then we work for the same amount of years to afford a second house in the country to get away from the “perfect” house we previously bought!

Let’s just think for a moment of the consequences of this modern way of life. Endless hours in traffic, our time divided into work and consuming (malls, cafés, clubs, football), the alienation and restriction of the “institution” of the neighborhood and the continuous destruction of the environment.

What does really separate us from loneliness and alienation? Only when the last tree has died and the last river had been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize we cannot eat money?

- Let’s fight the devitalization of our time with our imagination and creativity. *Let’s transport the idea of play from the video consoles to the streets and fields.* Let’s bring sports from the television channels to our neighborhoods. [my emphasis]
- Streets are not only for shopping malls and politicians’ huge advertisements. Let’s all go out in the Streets, in the Neighborhoods, in the Parks and the Squares to build our lives as we want them to be. We should introduce ideas like solidarity and open assemblies in every neighborhood with the aim of taking decisions into our own hands. Let’s stop waiting from the “responsible politicians” to decide on our behalf.
- We should be enjoying the joys of knowledge, not of “instructions” and “training”. Knowledge and learning must not be trapped into dead certificates and diplomas, but it should rather be a continuous process of creativity. We should aim for mutual teaching and learning, outside the limits of competition and exams.
- We want to feel the joy of impulsiveness and human interaction. Such an interaction will not take into account “lifestyle” models, codes of conduct and social taboos. We want to come close to nature again. We want to have daily contact with her rather than watching “virtual trees” from our computers. Let’s leave our cars for a while, and try riding our bicycles again. Let’s stand on our own feet.
- Street art is a continuous, collective, interactive process. The artist should not be hierarchically separated from the public. We are against the idolization of the artist and the spiritual sterilization of commercial art. We shall set up our own concerts, our own street theatres and street galleries. All these will be done only with our own efforts, away from sponsors and excessive profit.

Let’s set our talents free. Let’s emancipate the artist we hide inside us’.

Many members from Planodio later joined Skapoula, a self-proclaimed pupils' collective which started being active in Faneromeni in December 2010. Skapoula was constituted by lower-secondary (gymnasium) and upper-secondary (lyceum/high-school) school pupils from public and private schools of Nicosia. The founding members of Skapoula were pupils at the English School, a private secondary education school founded by the British colonial government in 1900.²³ Before creating Skapoula, they participated in Active Citizenship, which was a school club set-up by a couple of Faneromeni youth at the English School for holding discussions on a variety of issues ranging from militarism, the educational system, school elections, among others. Sotiris, who was a founding member of Active Citizenship, told me that another reason for founding the group was to fight nationalism within the school. Sotiris's father was a well-known reconciliation activist, a teacher by profession, and an active member in the extra-parliamentary Left in Cyprus, who had participated in a number of activist groups and related publications.

In 2003 when the borders opened, the English School began readmitting Turkish Cypriot pupils for the first time since they and Turkish Cypriot teachers were forced to withdraw from the school after the events of 1974 (The English School n.d.). Thus, it became one of the very few schools in Cyprus to have a mixed population of both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot pupils. This led to occasional tensions between pupils that culminated in an attack on Turkish Cypriot pupils by Greek Cypriots who were not pupils of the school as such, with help from English school pupils to launch the attack. Pupils with progressive affiliations, such as Sotiris, reacted to these events to create the Active Citizenship club that attempted to cultivate anti-nationalist tendencies in other pupils as well.

These developments at the English School, along with the political processes taking place in the old city during the 2000s, were important factors leading to the rise of radical, anti-authoritarian youth in Nicosia. Equally important, however, was the murder of 15-year-old pupil, Alexis Grigoropoulos, by a policeman while hanging out at Exarcheia in Athens, Greece. This event marked the beginning of the radicalization process of many Greek Cypriot underage youth. Exarcheia is a neighbourhood of Athens and a stronghold of the local anarchist and anti-

²³ The school always held an ambiguous status within Greek Cypriot community, given the important role attributed to Greek education for its survival. The colonial government effectively founded the school in order to train Cypriots to become clerks in the colonial administration, and they maintained it as an inter-communal school (Antoniou 2015). In 1960, the newly founded ROC took control of the school, although parents still pay tuition fees for their children, in contrast to other public schools. Readmitting Turkish Cypriot pupils in 2003 was very controversial among parents and the school board regarding, for example, what national holidays should be celebrated given the now bi-communal character of the school.

authoritarian communities. Grigoropoulos's murder was followed by mass street protests by different sectors of the population, including high-school pupils and university students. Occupations of schools, universities and other city buildings across Greece, as well as violent clashes between citizens and police in the streets, lasted for several months. Moreover, a number of political initiatives and collectives sprang out from what is now known as 'the Insurrection of December' (Εξέγερση του Δεκέμβρη).

The insurrection was greatly felt in Cyprus, too. Many school youth that soon after became active in Faneromeni and Skapoula pointed-out to me how 'Alexis' was the reason for their first occupation of the streets: his murder had compelled them to participate in marches protesting police violence and what was seen as state authorities condoning such police brutalities.

My first contact with the political space of old Nicosia and with politicization was in 2008 with the death of Alexis. It was the first time that I decided that I would not sit at home, let's say, because I was also in the same age as he was approximately at the time. I was in the second or third year of gymnasium and it was the first time that I came to a march. –Raccoon, member of Skapoula

From a group interview with Skapoula members:

Giorgos: Alexis was very important for us. In 2008 we were 14 years old and our parents wouldn't let us go to a march organized by ADA (Αυτόνομη Δράση Αντεξουσιαστών – Anti-authoritarian Autonomous Action). 2008 was very important for Greece too. Alexis's death gave impetus to the (social) movements.

Ermis: The shock was great; it was the first time that I went online to read Indymedia, to see what is going on at marches.

Billis: Many people became affected and influenced because he was 15 years old. It could have been me, my mate (ο παρέας μου).

Giorgos: We justified the violent insurrection.

The following excerpt is from a leaflet distributed at Faneromeni to pay tribute to the event:

When December comes, I lose my mind again with the thought that a cop killed a brother... Time passes but rage is sinking more and more in my subconscious. December 2008 was only the beginning! Our battle against our corrupted Political System is not over yet! The death of Alexis has managed to awake the remaining free minds and plant anger in their minds for good! It is time to understand that we don't need more innocent children to die to wake up from lethargy! Alexis is alive... are you?

Autonomous Jugglers²⁴

²⁴ Autonomous Jugglers (Αυτόνομοι Ζογκλέρ) was a street performance group of underage youth active at Faneromeni Square between 2010-2013.

3.4.4. Background on youth members of Skapoula and the community of Faneromeni square

In what follows I will briefly present some background information on members of the youth community of Faneromeni and Skapoula, and particularly on my main youth interlocutors, to whom I will make frequent reference throughout the following chapters:

Ermis, Fotis and Giorgos, founding members of Skapoula, come from middle-class families and all attended English School. Fotis was an initiator (along with Sotiris, mentioned below) of Planodio Steki Dromou and Active Citizenship, and Ermis and Giorgos joined later on. Fotis's family is right-wing liberal. Ermis and Giorgos come from families with leftist affiliations and started frequenting Faneromeni square at the age of 15.

Sotiris was among the initiators of the first street parties at Faneromeni square and participated in Skapoula from the beginning, as well as Planodio and ADA.

Chloe comes from a middle class family with liberal, right-wing affiliations. Chloe joined Skapoula a few months after its formation, along with Ilektra and Sophie, two of her close friends, who attended Skapoula's assemblies occasionally. They all attended English School and have taken part in Active Citizenship activities and started frequenting Faneromeni square between the ages of 14-15.

Vaggelis started frequenting Faneromeni in 2009 at the age of 16 and participated in informal initiatives organized by Faneromeni youth. He attended a private secondary school and comes from a lower middle class liberal, pro-reconciliation family.

Aggelos joined Skapoula in 2012, but began frequenting Faneromeni much earlier approximately at the age of 14. He comes from a middle-class family and attended a public lyceum.

Billis joined Skapoula in early 2013. He comes from a lower middle-class family with leftist affiliation and attended a public lyceum in the old-city. He joined Skapoula at the age of 15.

Raccoon joined Skapoula in 2012, but started hanging out at Faneromeni much earlier at the age of 14-15. He comes from a right-wing middle-class family and attended a public lyceum.

Iasonas started frequenting Faneromeni square at the age of 15 and subsequently joined Skapoula in 2011. His comes from a leftist middle-class family.

Maria joined Skapoula in late 2013, but also started frequenting Faneromeni earlier at the age of 14. She comes from a working-class family with a migrant background and attended a public lyceum.

Miltos joined Skapoula in 2012, but has been frequenting Faneromeni since 2009, approximately at the age of 14. He comes from a working-class, single-parent family and attended English School with a scholarship.

Petros started attending Skapoula's activities from the age of 14, and officially joined the group a year later in early 2013. He comes from a right-wing middle-class family and attended a public lyceum.

Vasiliki joined Skapoula in late 2013 at the age of 14. She comes from a right-wing lower middle-class family and attended the same school as Petros.

Thiseas joined Skapoula in early 2013 after first hanging out occasionally at Faneromeni. He comes from an upper middle-class liberal family.

Overall, the youth constituting Skapoula, and to a great extent the Faneromeni community, came mainly from schools within central Nicosia. The variety of backgrounds of my main youth interlocutors outlined above reflects the diverse people who frequented Faneromeni Square. Throughout the thesis I will make further reference to many more youth with whom I interacted during my fieldwork.

3.5. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I outlined the history of Nicosia, with a focus on the area around Faneromeni church since 1978. I elaborated on the area becoming a symbol in nationalist politics as well as being remade into a symbol of, and space for, grassroots, rapprochement and anti-authoritarian activism in recent years. I further explored the dominant discourses and institutions that inform the child and youth categories in the context of Cyprus, attempting to delineate the limits that are imposed on children's political action. These limits mainly involve an association of children with the nationalist cause, which is presented as apolitical through institutions such as the school assumed to be concerned with 'truth'.

The limits also come from the recent invasion of the Cypriot landscape by consumerist-apolitical spaces for youth sociability, such as multinational chain coffee shops and the continuous privatization of open spaces that were formally places for youth sociability. I have further briefly elaborated on certain resistant practices undertaken by the youth community of Faneromeni. In the chapters that follow, I will elaborate on the emergence of the youth community of Faneromeni and highlight important practices that were privileged in the exercise of youth anti-authoritarian politics.

These practices have been identified as significant for ethnographic observation, because Faneromeni and Skapoula youth frequently used them to subvert the authoritarian discourses and practices, discussed above, which included the discursive and material political delimitation of the categories of youth and children. Such practices involve the practice of stasis at Faneromeni square, to be explored in chapter 4, which as I will argue subverted the flows of consumerism and scheduled everydayness while effecting crisis in the national body.

They further involve the practice of the street parties as a key practice of community formation and direct participation of Faneromeni and Skapoula youth in politics. The street parties were influenced by the global anti-road movement and will be explored in chapters 4 and 5. Furthermore, self-education (αυτομόρφωση) will also be discussed as a key resistance practice to regimes of expert adult knowledge, such as nationalism and human rights, and to the options for adulthood and self-realization offered by Greek-Cypriot society. The practice of self-education will be covered throughout all chapters, with a special focus in chapters 4 and 7. Finally, in chapter 7, I will look into the practices of assemblies and prefiguration and their roles in the process of becoming an anti-authoritarian horizontal activist, which teenage youth in Skapoula and Faneromeni were undergoing. As emphasized in the Introduction, all the above will be conceptualized as forms of serious play, in other words as practices of constructing an alternative world in which children have direct say and participation in its formation.

Chapter 4

Faneromeni Square

4.1. Introduction

At the time when my thesis was at writing-up stage, I was a regular at a relatively newly established kafeneio in old Nicosia, where every Sunday evening a group of musicians would play rebetika. Sitting at the bar, I had the opportunity to interact with a variety of regulars. One such night, I got into a conversation with a man, a carpenter, who was approximately 65 years old and a resident of central Nicosia outside the walls. In attempting to describe to him my research project and that I was engaging with the community that was active around Faneromeni Square, he described to me his experience of the square as being one of a crossing point: 'I was regularly crossing Faneromeni Square many times but always to go to another destination nearby, a kafeneio or a store, but they (the regulars of the square) would just sit there. I mean they were just sitting there. I would pass by and see them there sitting around'. He was saying this not with a critical tone towards square regulars, but with a genuine inquiry into why exactly would anybody 'just sit there'; what was the meaning of 'being there', in a space that for him was clearly a crossing point to other destinations within the city. I tried to explain that what he said was exactly the experience of outsiders to the square. For those 'sitting there', the square was the destination itself and they valued a culture much like in this kafeneio where you can just come, even by yourself, and people would be open to talk to you and share company.

The limited ethnographic research on squares showed how they had formed the spaces of sociability mostly for underprivileged and/or socially marginalized groups, such as the poor, seniors of the city as well as teenagers (Low 2000). Furthermore, research on squares explored how they became main spaces of activism during the Arab Spring, Indignados/Aganaktismenoi and Occupy movements (Dhaliwal 2012; Sotiropoulos 2017; Butler 2015; Stavrides 2012). This research, however, has not conceptualized squares as *destinations*, as places of *stasis*, which is something that I propose to do in this chapter. I propose to show how youth transformed Faneromeni Square from a crossing point to different destinations into a place for stasis –into the destination itself – and the multiple potentialities that this opened up. I will show how this was done through the practice of *aragma* (a Greek term usually denoting mooring, anchoring,

relaxing) in the public space. I will argue that through stasis in the public space, underage youth as a public that is excluded from participating in politics were able to gain presence, to 'appear' to one another in the Arendtian-Butlerian sense (2015), and I will critically assess many dominant discourses through which their everyday lives are conducted. I will further show how stasis in public space allowed for a number of youth counter-cultural practices to emerge. I argue that these counter-cultural practices were important in the sustenance of direct political initiatives by youth that emerged from the space of Faneromeni. They are important as they prefigured another everydayness for youth occupying the square: an everydayness in the creation of which youth had direct participation.

Stasis in this chapter is theorized not in the traditional sense, as stagnation or as relating to conservatism, but as a concept that has multiple meanings that manifested in public space. As discussed in the theory chapter, stasis has the meaning of 'pausing', 'stopping', but also of 'taking a stand', 'rebellious against authority'. At the same time it means 'being' (ipostasis), 'having a presence'. My main argument is that, through stasis and *aragma* in the public space, youth were pausing/stopping, and simultaneously revolting against, the flows of regulated time and consumerism, subverting circulation and scheduled everyday routes. This pausing of time by anchoring in the public space carved out a temporal dimension, *an emptiness* that could then be filled in youth's own terms. Thus, stasis manifested also as presence through the possibility of youth to directly participate in the creation of their everydayness. In the chapter, I explore how the different meanings of stasis manifested at the square and how they produced the square as a critical counter-space (Lefebvre 1991b), where one could *play* around with different definitions of self and could challenge normative discourses.

In addressing these issues, I will delineate the counter-cultural practices that youths who were regulars at the square produced; I argue that the use of space by square regulars becomes co-constitutive of their practices. To conduct this analysis, I rely on the understanding of space as relational. As Lefebvre (1991b) has argued, space is socially produced through the social relations that develop there and the users' practices. Social space is essentially 'the product of relations and interconnections from the very local to the intercontinental' (Massey 2005, 125).

At the same time, interaction with the very infrastructure, such as roads, squares, and buildings, also produces meaning that becomes internalized (Avdikos 2010, 42), and I would add, embodied by the users. Arif Dirlik (2011) argued that, beyond conceiving space as relational, we must also give emphasis to the groundedness and physicality of a given place.

For Dirlik, groundedness does not imply fixity and rigid boundaries and is considered vital in conceptualizations of place and place-based consciousness. According to Dirlik (2011, 57),

Place as metaphor suggests groundedness from below [...] what is important about the metaphor is that it calls for a definition of what is to be included in the place from within the place-some control over the conduct and organization of everyday life, in other words- rather than from above, from the placeless abstractions of capital, the nation-state, and their discursive expressions in the realm of theory.

Groundedness helps infuse the symbolic meaning of place with the practices developed in the everyday use of that place. For Dirlik, it is important to maintain some notion of boundary and physicality of place, beyond the porousness and the globalized flows informing its social relations, because the marking of the physicality of a given location gives some control to the disenfranchised to set the terms of their everyday living. These disenfranchised groups might range from indigenous groups to politically-excluded city youth.

The control mentioned above further expands to the categories through which people live their everyday lives. The youth category, itself being a relational field, as explored in the theoretical chapter, can shift and take meaning through its place-based manifestations, its situated enactment. Thus, in this chapter I will show how categories such as 'youth' and 'children' took on a particular, place-based meaning at the square, which was distinctive from the hegemonic meanings of governmental policy and nationalist ideology. This place-based meaning and the grounding of practices in the square helped youth break established categories of thinking about age and possibility. As argued in the theory chapter, bringing categories such as children, which are associated with the private domain, into the public helps break open such categories and infuses them with different meaning. Beyond this place-based meaning, definitions of the square regulars varied, depending on the perspective and interests of different actors who attempted to define them. I show how these definitions were attempts at reasserting power over square regulars, often appropriating in this attempt the minor categorization.

Overall, in the current chapter I will demonstrate how the possibility of redefining place can empower the disenfranchised: in this case the teenage pupils who became frequent users of the square.²⁵ I will show the embodied and cultural practices developed at the square and how

²⁵ The pupil/children population is disenfranchised in the sense that they do not yet have any right to participate in discussions and decisions on public affairs. This is evident not only from their lack of the right to vote, but also, from dominant discourses that maintain that children, including teenage youth, are apolitical and too immature to participate in issues that affect their lives, like militarism, ethnic conflict, etc. They are further excluded from participating in decisions on how schools' should be managed and on the content of educational curricula.

they have set the base for alternative forms of sociability among Cypriot youth, partly, as I argue, retrieving forms of sociability and relatedness associated with the institution of the indigenous *kafeneia* (Philippou 2010). I will further demonstrate how Faneromeni Square was turned into a *steki*, a regular hang-out place for youth, through stasis in public space. The creation of a *steki* simultaneously led to the creation of a youth public and transformed the public space into a public sphere where opinions, practices and self-definitions, marginalised from official politics, were allowed to be expressed, discussed and negotiated. As Low, Maharawal and Dalakoglou (2014, 24) assert, ‘public space and the public sphere represent conjoined arenas of social and political contest and struggle, grounded in the planning and design of the city. Consider public space as a location for manifesting dissent, made important when the public sphere is characterized by political exclusion’. Underage youth as a politically-excluded public found this location at Faneromeni Square and turned it into a public sphere for the expression of their own practices and voices.

What were the circumstances that led to the emergence of a youth counter-public in the old city of Nicosia and to the production of Faneromeni Square into a *steki* and an alternative public sphere?

4.2. Producing Faneromeni square as a steki: the emergence of a youth counter-public and an alternative public sphere

Most of my fieldwork took place within Faneromeni Church’s forecourt and the open area around the church in the old town of Nicosia, which locals call ‘Faneromeni square’. After the opening of the border in Nicosia in 2003, bi-communal contact was greatly facilitated and young people from the extra-parliamentary Left created the first bi-communal social centre-kafeneio in the old city under the name ‘Kardaş’. A number of events, such as parties, film-screenings and political discussion, took place there and they were attended by some of the underage youth who later came to hang around at Faneromeni square. The social centre attracted towards the old city, people, who questioned nationalism and other key structures of Cypriot society. At the time, the old city centre had not yet become the focus of extensive state authorities’ interventions. This was due to its existence next to the border, which was

seen as a marginalized and a liminal space, its perceived marginality further enhanced by the placement of destitute Greek-Cypriot refugees from the 1974 war in old city buildings. Due to this marginality, rents were low, which also attracted migrant communities to the centre. These economic migrants came during the 1990s mainly from Asian countries, but also from the Pontos region near the Black Sea, due to the progressive needs of Cyprus's emerging economy.

Many buildings within the old city were empty. These were houses left behind by Turkish Cypriot residents, who were forced to move to the north, as well as by Greek Cypriots who were afraid to live close to the border. This facilitated the establishment of a small number of social and political squats in the available buildings around Faneromeni. One was the Malacasa squat created by Cyclown Circus, an international group who travel on bicycles and perform live music, clowning, juggling, acrobatics, fire-spitting and dancing, among other things (Cyclown Circus n.d.). They conduct their shows in the open air or at a social centre in cooperation with local communities.

Malacasa offered the space where this travelling circus interacted with the locals, mainly youth and others who at that time were engaging with the counter-cultural social centres within the old city of Nicosia. For many youth, it was the first time they experienced what a squat is and what it means to act politically in the streets through street performance, but also through other actions initiated by Cyclown Circus like the Critical Mass (CM) cycling events.

CM events are part of an international anti-road movement that seeks to reclaim the streets from cars, and the first such events started in San Francisco in 1992 (Furness 2007). Through a combination of party/celebration and protest, they pose radical interventions in the everyday normative mobility on city roads, mainly occupied by the automobile at the expense of affordable public space for other uses and of more ecological means of transportation. Cyclists, skateboarders and even roller skaters participated in a march through city streets as a protest against the dominant positions of cars, creating what one teenage participant from Faneromeni called 'an anarchic situation' in city streets.

According to a 15-year-old participant at the time, CM was about:

the claim of space from the cars, a clean city, ecological means of transportation, promoting the culture of cycling [...] for Cyprus it was something much more radical than Ποδηλατοκίνηση (Bikemovement) that strolled around on bikes every Wednesday. (It was more radical) because we connected the pollution in the cities with the alienation in cities and with cars, work, traffic.

The CM events appeared to have gathered many people who were frequenting what they called 'kato' ('κάτω', going down – symbolizing the city centre). For youth seeking alternative spaces to be within the city, 'kato' referred to the kafeneio Kala Kathoumena (discussed in the context chapter), the benches around the square, the counter-cultural centres of the old city, but also Zena Palace Square located just outside the old city walls.²⁶ The practices of this global movement catered to the formation of the upcoming –antiauthoritarian community within the old city of Nicosia, through promoting leaderless collective participation in defining the type of CM action to be undertaken each time (see Furness 2007). Thus, each CM action was given specific meaning depending on the participants engaged in its realization. The participants in this case were the youth, both teenagers and young adults, who started occupying the old city, and each time they decided on the themes of CM mostly through open assemblies held at Faneromeni square. This direct participation and exchange between youth in preparing and implementing a common intervention in the city fostered community formation and ownership of the city.



Figure 3. Poster of Critical Mass event illustrating a bike eating away the border, the Green Line. This particular CM promoted antimilitarism and reunification of Cyprus. Next to it a poster of a CM celebrating the beginning of summer.

²⁶ 'Kato' however was also used for Makarios Avenue, one of the most commercial streets at the time, frequented by mainstream youth, which contained the first shopping mall in Cyprus, and many chain clothing brands, as well as upscale coffee shops.

As Chloe, a Skapoula member told me, ‘Critical Mass transmitted to us the feeling of being a group, the feeling of community, and during these events a particular contention was created with people sitting at cafés and particularly at Starbucks. We would pass through the streets and yell a common slogan: ‘Those of you looking at us with such wonder give up the cafés and join the march’²⁷ (‘Εσείς που μας κοιτάτε με τόση απορία, αφήστε τα καφέ και ελάτε στην πορεία’). This reaction by Critical Mass protestors towards people sitting at cafés like Starbucks, mostly occupied by other youth and symbolizing an existence chained to the new consumerism pervading Cypriot society, can be read as a reaction against the encroaching commercialization and subsequent depoliticization of the youth category. This depoliticization took place through the creation of depoliticized spaces for urban youth sociability, which in Cyprus are luxurious chain coffee-shops, marketed as spaces for ‘coolness’ and modernity, in contrast to the indigenous *kafeneia* (καφενεία), that as discussed, formed the epicenter of an alternative public sphere accommodating the lower classes (Philippou 2010). The invitation contained in the CM participants’ slogan to abandon the chain coffee shops and join the march was an invitation to join a social space of active community formation, an alternative public sphere reminiscent of indigenous *kafeneia*, that was at the time emerging around Faneromeni square.



Figure 4. Stencil at Faneromeni Square: ‘The people of Cyprus revolt with a frappe (coffee) at hand’. Done by a member of Skapoula with the aim to mock the depoliticized spaces of the trendy coffee-shops that started opening in the old city in 2012.

²⁷ Critical Mass is translated in Greek as a ‘march with bikes’ – a ‘Bikes-march’.

Besides the social and counter-cultural centres developed in the old city at the time, a couple of other entertainment places opened in the area, specifically a bar entitled Double Six, which played alternative music for the Cyprus scene like rock, psychedelic trance, reggae and attracted a number of youth that used to hang out at Zena Palace and around the old town. This bar was quite close to Faneromeni Square and youth would sit outside in the open space and the surrounding area. This bar was relatively short-lived, and after its closure, these youth were dislocated from there as well as from other city spaces where they used to hang out in, because they had been either public spaces that turned private or private entertainment businesses that wanted to attract more 'high-profile' clientele. Hence, the open-area around Faneromeni provided an alternative space to accommodate the youths, who were looking for alternative ways to spend their time. The anti-consumerist, pro-reconciliation (between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots) and direct participation ethic created by Critical Mass events, the counter-cultural centres in the old town, and the self-organized street parties, discussed below, has been constitutive of the community of Faneromeni square which emerged around 2008.

4.2.1. Street parties: rituals of introduction to the square

The presence of youth started to become more regular at Faneromeni Square and the surrounding area because of the above alternative socio-political and entertainment attractions. However, a more massive and frequent presence was instituted at the square through the self-organized street parties that started to take place there around 2009. Groups of friends (*parees*) between 14 to 17 years of age started hanging out at Faneromeni Square and initiated the parties. *Parea* (παρέα) in Greek indicates a group of friends who hang out together on a regular basis. One of these *parees* (plural for *parea*) was Sotiris's *parea*. In one of our talks, Sotiris described to me how street parties started:

The street party was organized through sms. By the way, try to imagine Faneromeni with nothing around, nobody, I mean after 10:00 pm Kala Kathoumena was closed, Double Six had already shut down, and Loxandra (a restaurant nearby serving Greek meze) closed around 11:00 pm, there was nothing else, nothing, nothing at all. I mean it was ours (Faneromeni Square), only we were there, we weren't many, 20 people more or less, mostly pupils, our *parea* mainly [...] at some point it started happening, I mean some very big parties took place before the time of the speakers, now I'm talking to you about the time of the Hi-Fi. You plug the Hi-Fi into a socket and you put a CD inside. And even this gathered many people, especially after a Critical Mass. I remember in September 2009, I remember this very clearly, there was a Critical Mass at this time, we

always did one on the weekend before schools opened. Then a big party with proper speakers followed. This was just before the time of the parties held at the Steps (a set of steps outside a secondary school facing Faneromeni Square), the very big parties with the sound-system [...]. These parties were inclusive, it was these (parties) that brought many people (to Faneromeni) rather than Diogenis' Lantern (a squat nearby). In September 2009 this guy Giannis came, a pupil of my age, from Akropoli (local secondary school). We knew him, he did graffiti this guy, we knew him as a graffiti (person who does graffiti). He decided to hold a party with his friends, he talked to me too. He participated in the other parties we did with the Hi-Fis [...] we saw him here and there and he took the initiative and he said he'll do a graffiti event and he came there with his friends, they set up 6-7 sheets – canvasses on the walls in order to do graffiti, they brought a table and set up two speakers on it and a console. He rented this stuff and he got the money from contributions given at the time (of the party).

These self-organized and self-sponsored parties attracted more young people towards the square and turned the square into a *steki* (στέκι), which in Greek means a regular 'hang-out' place. The seeming availability of space that was relatively unregulated at the time by various authorities provided the opportunity for underage youth from different pareas to occupy it and start instituting their own practices there. By organizing parties there, the young participants also created a new, alternative relation between them and the space around them by remolding the space to fit their own needs and desires and political experimentations. Sotiris described to me how turning the square into a *steki* was largely an intentional effort as part of a process that had started by the kafeneio Kala Kathoumena even before they began hanging out there. This process reached its peak during and after the years of the major street parties organized by young regulars of the square:

The most important thing was that it was a space of mass getting together/gathering (*συνέλευσης*) because there was somehow the intention from the beginning to make it so it didn't happen completely at random. We went to Faneromeni and we started doing specific stuff so that people would come. That was clear. What happened was a conscious effort, and I believe the importance of it was that it was a mass *steki*, outside of bars and coffee places where the things you can do there are more restricted.

What Sotiris meant by 'outside of bars and coffee places' is outside the logic and rules of sociability applied by such places, as well as outside their spatial restrictions. Athina, who was also in Sotiris' parea, described to me how the square youth viewed this modern coffee shop culture and the process of 'taking up' the square, as she said, while we were sitting in Kala Kathoumena, which was her father's *kafeneio*:

We started looking for open spaces where we could socialize and we started hanging out at Zena Palace before going to Faneromeni. First, the issue was that as youth we didn't have enough money to go out for entertainment but also we didn't want to be locked up somewhere, we wanted to be at a space where we could socialize and meet different people. This is very different from going to sit at a coffee table in a café, because what you essentially do is rent that table for a certain time and pay to have

people serving you. And it's taken for granted that no stranger will come to sit with you therefore essentially it's a private space, an enclosed space, whereas in a square, in an open space you don't have such kind of contracts. Anyone can do anything they want in a way. [...] I was in this space (Faneromeni) since a very young age and at school I didn't have many friends, all of my parees were from Faneromeni. It was very beautiful what we created there, those years were very beautiful.

Talking about her teenage years around 2009 when the street parties started taking place, she added, 'There was nothing around, only my father's kafeneio and we (the youth) came and took up the place (αναλάβαμε το χώρο)', referring mainly to the open space of Faneromeni square. What the open space offered was an opportunity *to take up* that space and create the type of community and the forms of sociability and relationality that these youth preferred in their own terms, beyond mediation from adult authorities and consumerist logic associated with relatedness. Such logic assumes and reinforces the private and exclusive nature of relationships and relationality manifested in the enclosed, private space of the coffee shop table. Instead, the square as an open space does not support such kind of logic.

These parties, therefore, were an important element in the process of building a community of young people who frequented Faneromeni and saw the value in anti-consumerist entertainment. This was do-it-yourself (DIY) entertainment beyond the spaces of private entertainment businesses and coffee shops which flourished in Nicosia, especially in the 1990s. Even if not everyone participating had an anti-consumerist agenda in mind from the start, the low-cost entertainment the parties offered, as well as the 'unregulated' space of the square (relatively unregulated by the state, private business and parental authorities), catered for the needs and desires of a societal group, like teenage youth, who often have limited resources and limited available space at their disposal (Hopkins 2010). Furthermore, the inviting atmosphere of the parties opened spaces for alternative forms of sociability for young Cypriot people who, by coming to the parties, started to engage further with the open space and the opportunities to socialize outside of private spaces which define the rules of when and how this type of sociability should take place. As Sotiris mentioned above, the parties were inclusive in the sense that they facilitated the coming together of a variety of people who would not necessarily feel comfortable going to one of the social centres in the old city, but who would much more easily attend a party in an open space. This gave those interested an opportunity to approach the party, and thus the square, even when they did not know anyone there. The parties were thus a comfortable introduction to the square, or, as one young Faneromeni regular put it, 'They were rituals of introduction to the square', meaning that they introduced newcomers to particular cultural practices and ways of relating that were characteristic of the

youths in the square, and facilitated the creation of a youth public through the development of a constant presence at Faneromeni. This constant presence extended beyond the time when parties took place, as youth started hanging out at Faneromeni during the daytime, usually after school, but also at nighttime, independent of the existence of a party.

The everydayness that emerged at the square offered a refuge for these youth who were seeking alternative ways of being in the city. It was an escape from the increased commercialization of their lives and from the scheduled everydayness between school and private tuition classes that overdefine and regulate children's time and identities, structuring in this sense their possible field of action. The square offered the physical space and time for these youth to define themselves in their own terms, as Sotiris told me, 'Faneromeni was a clean slate for us'. The open-air *steki* of Faneromeni that allowed for 'συνεύρεση' (coming together) asserted new possibilities for social and civic engagement to its regular users. The square was no longer simply a space to be traversed, but it became a destination: a place of stasis.

4.2.2. The square as *steki*, as public sphere

In what follows I will provide excerpts from fieldnotes to demonstrate the uses of the square that emerged through *aragma* (ἀραγμα, 'chilling', passing time, mooring), which is connected to making the square a place for stasis, and argue that 'passing time' was an active rather than a passive experience. What seemed to outsiders as just 'sitting there', the inherited colonial view of 'wasting time', for the regulars actually involved active engagement with the space and with each-other. This led to the production of the square into a space for play, experimentation, as well as discussing politics, and exchanging information on public affairs. In this sense, stasis/*aragma* in public space facilitated the manifestation of other aspects of stasis that is stasis as revolt and as crisis.

I went down to the square with Billis. It was around 7 p.m. There we met Iasonas, Petros and Paris sitting on the back side of the square under the mausoleum. We sat with them for a while and then, feeling hungry, we went to get food and bring some beers to the guys from a nearby kiosk. Returning to the square, we moved all together to another place inside the square where Raccoon was sitting with Stathis and a couple of other people, and later Despo – a 16-year-old square regular - came too. Raccoon just came out from the army for the first time and told me he was not feeling very well. He filed a petition to get exemption from army service due to 'psychological issues' (a common practice of Cypriot youth to evade army service) and was anxiously waiting for the

result. At some point, Vaggelis, another guy around 18, who I see often at the square, joined too. We all started talking about anarchism and the antiauthoritarian space in Cyprus, and Paris (a teenage square regular) said that there are not many things happening now and groups that dealt with such issues are not very active at the moment. Then the discussion moved to the Cyprus issue and the possibilities for a solution and Paris expressed his fears that a potential solution might lead to the polarization of nationalist groups and that he was generally afraid that if there is a federation, there will be bi-communal violent clashes from the nationalists on our side towards Turkish Cypriots, and vice versa. Vaggelis responded saying that there are many progressive groups in the north like the trade unions of teachers 'who are real trade unionists, unlike OELMEK on our side',²⁸ with whom the anti-authoritarian community of Faneromeni could cooperate. Paris asked 'how can we do actions together with them?' Vaggelis replied that 'they are organizing strikes, they are demonstrating against Turkey's interventions on the Turkish Cypriot educational system, they averted the Koran from entering schools' as potential examples in which the community of Faneromeni could participate and demonstrate its support. 'However', Paris responded, 'they are still working within the system'. He posed this as a concern to reflect on since youth, like Paris, Billis and other youth in the parea, who followed an anti-authoritarian ethic, often avoided the mediation of authorities when holding various actions. Vaggelis and I reacted to this point by discussing the potential of solidarity with them and their struggles, despite the fact that their activism is limited to changing state policy, pointing out that the degree of institutionalization of such activist groups varies. In the meantime, Despo and some other youth sitting next to us started making makeshift lyrics, subverting the ones used in popular Greek pop songs at the time. Paris joined them in creating lyrics that sometimes addressed their parents and at other times the state and the police, saying something like, 'My father wanted me to be a doctor and this and that but your son is throwing molotov and striking banks'. Everybody was laughing and being playful with lyrics that generally described their lives and how they reacted to a number of prescriptions coming from different authorities. At some point the group erupted into singing *Bella Ciao* and Despo took out of her bag a book about the history of partisans in Italy and distributed it around to the parea so that everyone could have a look, saying that it was one of her favourites'. (Excerpt from fieldnotes)

Arriving at Faneromeni around midnight I saw the square was packed with youth. In one parea, I saw Ermis, Billis, Petros, Jim, Vasiliki, Erika, Kostas and Veni, together with some other people from Petros's parea. Jim and Petros were playing backgammon and a group had gathered around them to watch, while others were sitting together talking. Kostas and a blonde girl I see regularly at the square were strolling around the square. Sofronis was also making rounds of the square on his skateboard. I sat next to Vasiliki (age 14 and the youngest member of Skapoula) who asked me if I went to an event by an antifascist group on Islamophobia which was held earlier in Kala Kathoumena. As she didn't manage to attend she asked me to update her on what was discussed. In the same parea, there was a kid from Ukraine, Andy, and we started chatting. He told me that he was a classmate of Billis at Pancyprian Gymnasium, located in the old town, and he had many discussions with him and he knew about Skapoula too. He told me that he had been a regular of the square for a while now as he also lives close to the area. He liked non-commercial art and DIY music and preferred non-commercial entertainment, 'I might go to a club now and then but I don't do it often. I prefer the square, to chill

²⁸ OELMEK (Οργάνωση Ελλήνων Λειτουργών Μέσης Εκπαίδευσης Κύπρου – Organization of Greek Officers of Secondary Education of Cyprus) is the trade union of Greek Cypriot teachers of secondary education.

(αράζω, aragma) and to have discussions', he told me. In one such discussion that erupted a few minutes later, Andy was disagreeing with Billis about the class position of school pupils. Andy was supporting that they belonged to the middle-class, while Billis was insisting that they were more associated to the working-class (the latter being a common position held by Skapoula). Andy challenged Billis, 'How could they be working class if they don't actually work?', to which Billis responded, 'They are similar to the working class, because they are within a system, the school, where they tell you how you should behave, that evaluate you, that punish you if you do something against their rules, that you have to wear a uniform and where the teacher decides on everything much like the boss for the workers.' Andy, reflecting on this response, just nodded in silence, at which point I took the opportunity to remind Billis that we need to have a more elaborated discussion on this issue at some point.

In the meantime everyone was divided into parees (into different groups of people). Opposite us, Giorgos was sitting with Petros, Kiriakos, and others from that specific para, drinking beers from the kiosk (as everyone in the square did) while chilling (αράζουν, mooring) and chatting. We (Billis, Andy, Vasiliki, Erica and I) were sitting under the windmill located on one side of the church's forecourt, which was adorned with fuchsia bougainvillea coiled around its pillars. In front of the Steps at the back of the church some school age kids, who probably lived around the area, were playing football. The time was 12:00 to 02:00 in the morning, it was generally very quiet at this time – in terms of all the nearby shops and bars being closed – and there was an atmosphere of steki in Faneromeni. (Excerpt from fieldnotes)



Figure 5. Youth regulars of Faneromeni chilling after playing football at the square.

During weekends, but even on week days, especially in the summer season, the square would fill up with youth coming from many schools around central Nicosia. Through regular use of the square and a constant presence of people brought together by the street parties, the square was produced as a space for ἀραγμα (*aragma*), for 'chilling', mooring. 'Αραγμα' in Greek indicates 'passing time', 'relaxing', 'chilling out'. It also means 'anchoring' or 'finding refuge'. I argue that the practice of aragma connects with the quality of the square as a place of stasis, a space of slowing time and pausing in reaction to the constant traversing of city streets related to a scheduled everydayness. For these youth, this scheduled everydayness involved continual movement between home, school and private after school classes, as well as traversing city streets for consumerist purposes. The practice of aragma and stasis at the square paused these regulated rhythms and circulation, and created, in temporal terms, an *emptiness* which youth regulars could then fill in their own terms. As illustrated in the excerpts above, this emptiness allowed for discussion and exchange on public affairs and different forms of play, reminiscent of indigenous kafeneia, as well as relaxing bonding time which set the basis for the creation of many friendships, some of which later nourished political initiatives emanating from the space of Faneromeni.

In this way, being 'idle' and 'passing time' involved an active experience of interaction and engagement, which was blind to the eyes of outsiders of the square. For the insiders, however, the public space of Faneromeni was reclaimed and produced as a public sphere in which youth could *appear* to each other – and by extension to the wider society – in relatively unmediated ways and where alternative conversations excluded from the mainstream public sphere and schools could take place. Such conversations like Paris and Vaggelis discussion on showing solidarity with Turkish-Cypriot struggles, and Billis and Andy discussion on pupils' social class were able to find refuge (*na araxoun*) at the square. Through such conversations that challenge the status quo, the quality of stasis as revolt manifested. Such revolt involved pausing the systemic management of time and the circulation of consumerism, as well as critical conversations, and self-organizing practices, which will be described below, that transformed the highly nationalistic space of Faneromeni into an alternative public sphere of youth counter-politics. These critical conversations also enacted stasis as crisis because the subjects at the square were made to challenge their top-down positioning within a system of power relations. Therefore, stasis/pausing in public space facilitated the enactment of stasis as revolt and stasis as crisis, as well as stasis as presence through the appearance of youth in the public space that involved their claiming of a right to politics through the creation of an alternative public sphere.

Furthermore, the *emptiness* created by stasis/aragma allowed youth to experiment in engaging with one another and with different uses of the space. As the above excerpts show, the square was a place for getting together where different uses of the space needed to be invented by the actors using it. For example, the arrangement of one's own entertainment was one's own responsibility. One carried this out either by contributing to a collectively-organized street party or by daily actions like playing music from a mobile phone or bringing a guitar to the square to play music with the *parea*. Other activities included reading books as well as playing board games.

Self-management and self-organizing practices were frequent experiences at the square where there were no expectations for someone else to provide any 'services'. This everyday practice at the square was a training in autonomy and horizontal relationality, in handling one's own space and time in negotiation with peers. Thus, an alternative everydayness was created for regulars at the square which prefigured another way of living and passing time in community with others. This prefiguration is similar to prefiguration at the level of lifestyle undertaken at housing squats and DIY movements in Britain and Germany (Katsiaficas 1997; McKay 1998). Vaggelis, a square regular since 2009, described his experience to me:

Many people came. Most people were not clearly politicized, but you had certain particular elements. For example, everyone was antiracist, by extension antinationalist and antifascist. Obviously everyone fancied that kind of culture, e.g. outside clubs, outside controlled spaces of entertainment. It was an open space (the square), so a culture of self-management of the place started to be created, I mean not everyone was an anarchist. Anarchists were a minority in relation to how many people came down (to the square). The culture of self-management and direct democracy was there. That is why the square was cleaned or if something happened we would discuss immediately what needed to be done. For example, if bottles were broken, five people would get up and collect them. You would share for instance your drinks with others; you didn't care. You treated people; you treated them to cigarettes; you treated them to drinks. There was a street party and everyone would bring something, for example I brought drinks. I didn't help in setting up the party. I didn't bring loudspeakers, but I brought drinks. The situation there was something like that.

As shown by the excerpt above, practices of self-management were developed through co-habiting the space of the square; therefore, these practices emerged from interacting with the space itself, beyond the anti-authoritarian ideologies and practices supported by anarchist squats and social centres in the nearby area of Faneromeni. Furthermore, the common principles, which Vaggelis described that the regulars shared, were not a given but developed over time as regulars engaged with each other and the space around.

The youth regulars instituted various sociabilities and cultural practices at the square that further flesh out the everydayness of the square. In the excerpt above, Vaggelis mentioned the important practice of commensality, or eating and drinking together at the square, as well as the practice of sharing with others – treating others (‘τζέρασμα’, which in English is the noun ‘treat’- τζερνώ = to treat).

4.3. Sociabilities and practices at the square

4.3.1. Commensality, tzerasma and collective drinking

Commensality and collective drinking were common practices of the everydayness of the square. A practice of eating together and also preparing food to share at the square had been common since youth organized the first street parties and they would prepare and bring food to the parties to be shared. Ermis and Giorgos, two of the initial Skapoula members, described their ‘initiation’ to the square through the street parties and referred also to the practice of sharing food:

In 2009, Giorgos and I began attending some street parties and got to know some people who were also from our own school. The people who organized them (the parties) were pupils three to four years older than us, and sometimes they would also cook food and bring it to the parties. There were approximately 200 people sitting on the Steps (facing the square) and around 500 more would pass by from the party. In this way we also started being introduced to these things.

Preparing and sharing food with others at the square became a regular practice that was exercised mostly in the context of events co-organized by the regulars at the square. Soup was often shared and sometimes even cooked at the square. It was also served during street parades, another practice of the community of youth at Faneromeni, which essentially were street parties that moved around the city centre and stopped at different points along the way (see Karathanasis 2017, for an ethnographic analysis of street parades in Nicosia). Occasionally, one such stop would be at the house of a resident of the old town who would have prepared soup and would serve it to party attendants. The practice of preparing and sharing food was often called ‘collective kitchen’, a name visible on posters that Skapoula and other anti-authoritarian groups made.



Figure 6. Poster from an anti-consumerist 'Street Celebration' in 2009, in Faneromeni area, co-organized by a number of collectives, including Awake within the Walls, Falies, and the informal group Youth of Faneromeni. Activities included, among others, serving lentil soup, doing graffiti, critical mass, and rebetika music.

Eating together is a very common practice in the Cypriot context, where gatherings of extended families or groups of friends are usually done around cooking and sharing food, strengthening the bonds with one another. Therefore, eating together at the square was another form of connecting to one another and it strengthened the sense of community among the people attending through often sharing food from the same pot, and through the idea of feeling warm and full to be able to enjoy themselves and participate in events.²⁹ Collective kitchen at the square and at other spaces where the square community transferred allowed members to bond together through the medium of freely or very-low priced

²⁹ Cf. Carsten 1995, for a Malay example of participation in social relations via food.

accessible food. It was a type of treat (τζέρασμα, κέρασμα) in a way, maintaining thus the ethos of kerasma/tzerasma (treating) that was dominant in indigenous kafeneia (Papataxiarchis 1991, 17) and which in this case worked well with the anti-consumerist ethos of the square.

However, the most frequent practice taking place at the square in terms of commensality was drinking together. Beer was a common beverage drunk at the square. Chloe pointed out to me how drinking at the square was part of an 'anticlub culture' shared among the regulars who also had the motto 'Why bother going out to clubs to pay 20 euro, I will drink a beer at the square'. Beer, as one of the cheapest drinks you could buy from nearby kiosks, fit the budget of the underage youth hanging out at the square.³⁰ Beer facilitated bonding by providing relaxation, and regulars at the square or at Kala Kathoumena held many discussions over a bottle of beer. The casual, and vulgar aesthetic associated with a beer bottle, particularly the big KEO³¹ beer bottle, the square regulars often preferred, contrasted with the slender glasses incorporating more 'refined' drinks, such as cocktails, that were usually served in club venues. This vulgar aesthetic symbolized square regulars' distaste for what was seen as pretentious subject positions offered by such mainstream places for youth sociability. This aesthetic was also represented in their choice of worn-out, no-label, often dark-colored clothing.

Occasionally, other drinks would be shared at the square. At times everyone from a *parea* would contribute what money they could to buy ouzo or vodka from a local kiosk to share in the square or people would bring alcohol and treat people to it. Shared drinking and treating each-other had a socially integrative role that substantiated social relationships and facilitated the creation of friendships.

The above cultural or counter-cultural practices – in the sense that they were explicitly against consumer culture and were performed in a public space – allowed for regulars to bond even if they belonged to different *parees*. This bonding translated into a distaste for, and a standing up to (stasis) consumerist/commercialized entertainment. It involved a direct engagement with the space and people around through participation in self-organized activities that did not involve the mediation of parents, club owners or other authorities. 'Different *parees* had a common life in Faneromeni,' Sotiris noted in one of our talks.

³⁰ The drinking age in Cyprus is not a major issue and teenagers can easily buy beer from a kiosk without having to show ID. Furthermore, in the context of Greece and Cyprus, as other studies have shown, drinking together serves the purpose of creating relatedness and bonding than solely aiming at getting drunk. – see Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991.

³¹ Cypriot beer label

These sociabilities were further substantiated by the direct association between the youth and the space around them. Coming to the square and sitting on the pavement in various paires created an experience of direct interaction between space and body. Even our bodies' postures are mediated by different forms of furniture, like chairs, and the ways such furniture are displayed in specific spaces. I remember how uncomfortable I felt when I first had to sit on the pavement in the square to spend time with the regulars there. I felt conscious of my body and I did not know how to arrange my legs, while at the same time I felt a slight disgust at the thought that my hands would touch the ground where many people walk every day. I felt my posture tighten, but the feeling relaxed as time went by and I had spent more time there. After a few weeks, my body had relaxed completely and I felt quite comfortable sitting there, feeling the warmth of the pavement under my skin, while I could also lay back and just let myself relax on the stairs and floor of the square.

This feeling of direct association with the surrounding space also informed the sociabilities that were taking place there as it became co-constitutive with them. The open space and directly sitting on the ground helped eliminate social pretenses and distance between regulars, and helped facilitate communication and interaction in more direct ways than one would find in a modern cafe or school. The direct interaction of the body with the urban space, with the pavement, the cobble stones, the street and stairs, as well as the dirt that lies there, created intimacy and a home in the public. It further provided a critique (a stasis/crisis) of the values of puritan, conservative adult Cypriot society with its values of propriety, as well as a critique to the social pretenses of an upcoming and overwhelming consumerist society with the alienating effects that such lifestyles might cause. It can further be read as a direct critique of the construction of the 'Cypriot child', a disciplined, individualized, apolitical, 'clean' and domesticated child, which had become a symbol in nationalist politics and in the normative dreams of post-war Greek Cypriots for upward mobility. Thus, through stasis in public space, youth were both revolting against the above prescriptions, but also they were themselves undergoing a process of crisis in which they shed away identities and body postures constructed by the Greco-Christian nation and corporate entities. At the same time these ways of being otherwise constituted a crisis to the body of the nation, thus enacting stasis as *nosos* (disease).

Indeed, in the very negotiations of the body with the urban space, we see the embodiment of the type of resistance that square regulars were performing against domestication and institutionalization, and against leisure and interaction mediated and defined by consumerism. These were bodies that were 'refusing to be privatized – refusing to go or stay home' (Butler

2011, 11) or within the four walls of a private entertainment venue. Furthermore, performing in public activities that were otherwise domestic activities, such as cooking, relaxing, or doing homework, was politicizing these activities by the very act of performing them in public, by breaking the conventional distinction between public and private. Making the square a *steki* was an act of questioning the politics that categorize certain activities, bodily needs and subject positions, such as the child, as belonging to private and institutional domains and therefore as apolitical. It further illuminated, as Butler suggests (2015), the politics that are keeping apart the material support we need to exist as bodies in the world from the attributes of politics perceived as quintessential: speaking and acting. Thus, for Butler, ‘appearance’ – as in appearance to one another, which is an indispensable act for engaging in politics (Arendt referred to in Butler 2011) – is also a ‘morphological moment’ in which the body appears ‘not only in order to speak and act, but also to suffer and move, as well, to engage others bodies, to negotiate an environment on which one depends, to establish a social organization for the satisfaction of needs’ (Butler 2015, 87).

The direct association between space and body and the body’s adjustment to the qualities of the physical space of the square, which is unmediated by contracts found in the private and institutional domains, informed the sociabilities that emerged there and contributed to the symbolic meaning of the square. This symbolic meaning further informed the type of politics – self-organizing/direct democracy- that were active at the square and that catered to the needs of this youth public. Following Adriana Canarero, Butler suggests, ‘The exposure of our bodies in public space constitutes us fundamentally and establishes our thinking as social and embodied, vulnerable and passionate’ (Butler 2015, 96–97). I will further address the embodiment of the symbolic meaning of the square in the final section of this chapter.

4.3.2. Self-education at the square: ‘We learned in a group, we learned together, we learned in common’

One of the most common practices constituting the everydayness of Faneromeni was reading (διάβασμα, *diavasma*) and subsequently discussing books at the square. Regulars often called this process when it was undertaken as a conscious initiative ‘αυτομόρφωση’ or ‘self-learning’. Self-learning was consisted of the practice of individual reading of books or other material of

political content and then discussing them in common with others at the square as to make sense of their ideas and be educated in a collective form. Other forms of self-learning were mostly peer-to-peer education in creative and playful practices such as graffiti and stencil art as well as juggling.

Athina described to me how learning together with her own *parea* at Faneromeni affected her learning process:

We learned from each other, we learned in a group, we learned together, we learned in common. Faneromeni was giving you that opportunity. Someone would bring books or opinions, information from something she/he heard and found it interesting, and we would discuss it. And for me personally, who as a pupil didn't read much at all, because I had severe dyslexia, Faneromeni and my friends there was a vast field of knowledge.

In this sense, the square was also produced as a place of dissemination of alternative knowledge and of peer education. Vaggelis, who was in the same *parea* as Athina, described how the practice of reading at the square was also a way through which the square was 'consciously or unconsciously being claimed' by this youth as 'their space':

Many people read. A lot of philosophy was read at Faneromeni. I used to read even before coming down (before frequenting Faneromeni), but when I did, my reading intensified. I read many political ideologies, I said to myself I'll take a round and read all of them and I ended up reading *Das Capital* by Marx, philosophy, Nietzsche, history. This (the reading) was being done mostly through discussions, which means that you would read something, you talked it through with someone else. Many people would go down and read also for school (homework) at Kala Kathoumena and at the square. They would sit and read. Therefore, the space was consciously or unconsciously being claimed as ours; for those who came down the space was theirs. I believe that is why the space was cleaned, it wasn't just a random square of the municipality.

The square was thus reframed as a space for doing one's 'homework', or school work, which is particularly reserved for the area of the home. It felt like home for this youth, although not in the sense of it being a private space but because it felt intimate and familiar and could be used for one's everyday needs. Furthermore, the space was claimed as a space for alternative knowledge, and for experimentation through discussing different opinions and critical authors. Much like indigenous *kafeneia*, it was a place for learning about the outside world and discussing current affairs. It was claimed as a space for peer education, which subverted the ways in which learning was being conducted at Cypriot schools. In the square, learning was redefined as pleasure rather than instrumentalized as a way to pass exams. It was further redefined as a critical practice which filled the everyday with the purpose of overcoming the illusory contradictions and divisions of daily life, such as that of child/public actor and pupil/teacher. It was part of the resistance process of becoming otherwise than what Cypriot

adult authorities, including the family, normally prescribed. The particular importance of reading and self-learning as resistance practice for pupils in the context of Cyprus will be further elaborated in Chapter 6.

Chloe, who was 14 at the time when she started frequenting Faneromeni, recounted how books were actively shared at the square among different *parees* but also between older and younger youths, and how youth regulars used books to initiate other youths into the counter-cultural practices of the square itself:

We had the older ones like Stray, Sotiris, and Fotis who initiated us somewhat into the scene (φάση) of Faneromeni, but also in the discussions that were taking place there and me and my friends felt like we had to read to be able to participate and they would suggest books to us all the time and they made discussions about the books they had read. I mean at some point they would mention someone by the name of Kropotkin, now who was this Kropotkin? I had to know, I needed to google stuff. Ilektra and I felt like we needed to read to be cool, and Stephanos, an older regular of Faneromeni, established the first political bookshop in Nicosia, I think, and they would take books from there.

Therefore for Chloe and her group of friends, 'coolness' in the space of the square was translated into reading or into being read of books that were about various political theories challenging the status quo. *Diavasma* (reading books) was a process of entering into the community of the square and facilitated participation in discussions and radical political subjectivization. At the same time, it strengthened the bonds between regulars as it helped construct a form of relationality among community members that was quite different to the mainstream youth society. This relationality was substantiated by the common perception that we in the square enjoy reading and discussing books and current affairs together and cultivating ourselves into beings who are critical of the establishment. Being 'well-read' or 'studious' was reversed in the context of the square from being something that would often be ridiculed at school, with mocking nicknames like 'spasma' or 'floros',³² to something that was much appreciated in the context of the square.

Discussion between square regulars on key social and political issues was further important for the process of *zymosis* (the term used by square regulars). *Zymono* means to knead, to mash together different material in order to make a dough, therefore *zymosis* (the noun form of *zymono*) indicates a process of reaching common ground through mashing together different views. In the space of Faneromeni, *zymosis* nourished direct political initiatives that emerged

³² These are slang words school pupils use to indicate someone who is very studious and diligent with homework and thus often perceived to lack social skills. It is used to ridicule people as it is considered uncool to be a 'spasma' or 'floros'-focused on and/or enjoying books, but at the same time being diligent on the prescriptions coming from above (relatively similar to the English 'geek').

there. Billis, who started hanging out in Faneromeni in 2012 at the age of 15, explained to me how the practice of discussion worked as a medium for constructing bonds among regulars, thus setting the ground for more organized initiatives, like collectives, to be created:

I started going to Faneromeni as soon as I became a member of Skapoula, but in general what I saw and I think it helps (in the creation of organized groups) is that there are people there who have the drive (όρεξη) for political discussion which means that we can sit in groups of 2-3 people or in a wider circle of 6-7 people, and if we have a topic and the motivation, we would sit and discuss. So in general, through discussions there is somewhat a bonding with these people. You get to know them better and you can later on coexist together in a political collective.

Conversing at the square was thus the kneading that molded together different regulars into formal and informal collectives.³³ It was in a sense setting the ground, through the creation of intimacy and friendships, for direct forms of politics to come about (a process to be discussed further in Chapter 7). Discussions on books and current affairs facilitated the bonding process among regulars, as through such discussion they would be introduced (and appear) to each other on a deeper level and would self-identify as a community with particular sensitivities. It was also a process of reaching common understanding about different socio-political ideas and the ways life is managed in general. Through the circulation of authors such as Marx, Kropotkin and the Situationists, among others, and opinions problematizing the status quo, the everydayness at the square took up a critical dimension (Lefebvre 1991a) and became the basis for challenging normative discourses and binary distinctions that govern everyday life for these youths, such as child/public actor, child/adult, "us" Greeks/"them" Turks. Through horizontal exchange and making sense in common, learning was claimed as a collective and critical practice as well as a practice of appropriation: of reclaiming oneself from the alienating 'expert' opinions of hegemonic knowledge, and owning the process of knowledge. Thus, self-learning contributed to a critical everydayness at the square, enacting stasis as crisis: a crisis to the binary distinctions and mainstream discourses forming Cypriot youth. As Sotiris noted Faneromeni square was 'a school of the street' (σχολείο δρόμου).

³³ A number of collectives sprang from relationships created at Faneromeni Square, such as ADA, Xorko-collective of artists, Steki Areos, Radio Manolis, Autonomous Jugglers, among others.

4.3.3. Assemblies of the square

The community of the square occasionally held open assemblies on issues related to the space and the regulars of the square, like attacks or harassment from police officers or fascists or to organize a demonstration on a specific issue, for example in support of migrant communities living in the vicinity of Faneromeni. Also, regulars of the square would call assemblies when they deemed certain current affairs were relevant to the square in order to coordinate action among those interested in participating.

The practice of assembling had already been taking place at the various social centres and squats surrounding Faneromeni before the square became a *steki*. Assemblies were first and foremost considered forums for discussion and a direct-democratic way of decision-making, where in principle anyone could state an opinion and then a decision would be reached after taking all opinions under consideration. According to one regular, especially in the years between 2009-2013, anyone could call a general assembly through websites of counter-information that were set up by people of the square and the larger anti-authoritarian community, as well as through a Facebook group dedicated to events and actions taking place at the square.

According to Vaggelis, not everyone attending was necessarily directly politicized (in the sense of adopting a clear political identity as older anarchists or radical left people did), however, they shared some common values. For example, 'they were all anti-racists and therefore anti-nationalists and antifascists', and they valued self-managed, noncommercial entertainment. Not all regulars would participate in all assemblies. In fact, these open assemblies consisted of an amalgam of people frequenting the square and the surrounding social centres, with most participants being those who often participated in organized political groups and initiatives, as well as regulars who were interested in organizing things at the square or were mobilized by current affairs but did not want to engage with a specific political group as such. As one Skapoula member said:

There were the open assemblies of Faneromeni that were held for special occasions, for example, when the coffee shops opened, which threatened the square, there was an open assembly. It was not the case that all people of the square were attending; those attending were people who had more particular sensitivities, let's say, who had looked into things a bit deeper and wanted to become active. As I said, everybody shared those subconscious principles (being anti-racist, anti-fascist, anti-consumerist and anti-nationalist). Some embraced them on a deeper level and some went even further to the point of creating groups, like Skapoula, for example. There was also a middle condition

which involved people that were active in these things in open assemblies of Faneromeni, and who wanted to do things for the square, however they didn't reach the point of wanting to be involved in specific groups.

It seems that politicization at the square occurred in a range of ways: from people embracing an anti-consumerist ethic, drinking beers, relaxing with friends and joining the parties, to people who embraced this ethic but who also participated in assemblies of the square, to people supporting more direct political action such as participating in collectives and political initiatives within and around Faneromeni and the old town.

Therefore, the youths who joined the Faneromeni community through the parties had an opportunity to further engage in direct democratic practices, ranging from assemblies of the square to the smaller informal assemblies taking place between groups of friends (*parees*) that wanted to organize a street party or some informal, self-learning group. Through the *common* organization of what would seem to be mundane activities of everyday life, like learning and entertainment, these youths were actually training in direct democratic modes of decision-making, along with substantive engagement with issues affecting the square, such as police brutality, fascism and gentrification.

Furthermore, the sharing of common basic principles – by the people frequenting the square as well as by the larger anti-authoritarian community being active around Faneromeni and within the old city – produced the space into a 'commons'. Important in this was a mutual understanding that the area was a place of self-organized entertainment, learning and experimentation with ideas. People there identified with a strong anti-nationalist, anti-consumerist and anti-fascist ethic and they showed this by marking the area with anti-nationalist and anti-fascist graffiti and stencils, and through the occasional expulsion from the square of people who had clear pro-fascist ideas. Furthermore, their open assemblies were another way to co-manage the square as a common resource for anti-authoritarian organizing.

The critical everydayness produced at the square through practices such as self-organized commensality and entertainment, open assemblies and self-learning subverted normative conceptions of 'youth', 'children' and 'maturity'. In the next section I will elaborate on this subversion, as well as on how these normative conceptions were used at the macro and micro levels to counter and discipline the square's resistance.



Figure 7. Marking Faneromeni area as anti-fascist space.

4.4. Youth at the square

Through the everydayness at the square and the various sociabilities that gave it substance, the categories of ‘youth’ and ‘child’ and the content associated with them by authoritative actors and governmental mechanisms were transformed. The counter-cultural practices, as well as the open space of the square itself, created another everydayness for underage youth with different possibilities than what mainstream society gave them. ‘Youth’ and ‘children’ at the square were lived as communal rather than individual categories. The meaning of youth and child shifted from being individualized and privatized – in terms of commercialized,

domesticated and institutionalized – to being communal, active and public. Thus, youth and children at the square were not confined categories but were open to experimentation with different identifications provided by the variety of books and ideas circulating at the square. In this way, youth at the square reframed and reproduced not only the space around them, but also themselves as youth in Cyprus. In this sense, a situated meaning of ‘youth’ was produced and indirectly claimed by youth regulars.

This meaning was largely associated with a DIY ethic that allowed for the undertaking of various responsibilities to further counter-cultural and directly political actions. This indicates how the category of youth can *shift* depending on the context with which it is associated, and how it can be infused with new content which, in this case, is claimed and produced through an alternative everydayness at the square. As I argued in the theory chapter, being in the public space enables the challenging of institutional definitions. Institutional meanings of youth and children broke open in the streets and thus became amenable to be infused with new meaning. Furthermore, the meaning of ‘maturity’, as a concept relating to age categories, also shifted at the square and thus influenced and alternated the meanings of ‘adult’ and ‘child’.

4.4.1. Maturity at the square and beyond: Youth as metaphor – Minoritizing civil society movements

The square, a boat driven by her children with their uncompromising stasis (attitude, stand). There, where for years they lived in the name of social interaction, complementing each other's ideas so that they become the threshold of transition from the theatres of illusion – mocked by ignorance – to the substance of human existence, to a renaissance of meaning and revolutionary eroticism. In the square where no one ever grows up and where dreams remain pure and without monetary price. (Excerpt from a text written by a teenage Faneromeni regular)

Youth at the square co-existed with people who were older than them. Some of the older people were self-declared anarchists who participated occasionally in the various initiatives, social centers and squats around Faneromeni. Their presence was also strong during open assemblies at Faneromeni Square, with some often dominating the discussion, according to youth regulars. These assemblies were considered a space where, in principle, anyone could raise an opinion. However, a number of times, older people would dominate, as they were

perceived to have read more books and therefore their opinions would be more informed compared to younger square regulars. As the practices of *diavasma* and self-learning showed, knowledge was important for one to be respected and valued at the square. Despite this, youth were empowered at assemblies, where, perhaps for the first time in their lives, they were participating with adults on relatively equal terms, discussing issues of how to manage a common space and how to co-organize a demonstration pertaining to current political affairs. Youth were present even if not so directly assertive at the time and the need for further assertiveness, as well as more direct engagement with the specific issues affecting youth were the main reasons for the creation of youth-only groups, such as Skapoula.

At the square, people measured maturity by the number of political books one had read, and thus the knowledge one was assumed to have developed, as well as by other qualities that defined whether one was 'serious' (σοβαρός) or not. During fieldwork, I frequently heard the word 'seriousness' (σοβαρότητα) associated with specific people and not with others, and I realized that it was largely connected with the concept of maturity. Beyond reading, maturity at the square seemed to be determined by the 'seriousness' with which individuals took up responsibility for promoting political projects. An older anarchist who used to frequent Faneromeni mentioned this notion of seriousness: 'I knew many kids from Skapoula, and considering their age, the events they organized and their activism, one can only say "Respect!" Earlier members who used to be in Skapoula, though, were more serious; something that I don't see so much in the newest members.' When asked to explain what he meant by 'serious', he said that he could not explain it very well, and he said, 'You need seriousness in order to have a political organization; it's not a joke. That is why many organizations set-up by adults within the anti-authoritarian space did not go forward. There was no seriousness, no consistency in the responsibilities that needed to be taken-up, no discipline.' By 'discipline', he did not mean 'being like a soldier' but having a sense of responsibility in what you do.

At another occasion I was talking with Giorgos about those who helped Skapoula in the early stages. He mentioned two members as being 'very serious people', meaning that they made a substantial contribution to the events and actions Skapoula had organized. Overall, he characterized his *parea* that formed Skapoula as 'serious', meaning capable of committing to potential political projects and bringing them to fruition.

Seriousness was thus connected with maturity, which was connected to the level of commitment to political engagement and responsibility shown by particular groups and

people. Being mature at the square did not entail having reached a particular chronological age. Minors could be perceived as more mature than adults depending on the level of reading and responsibility they were undertaking for political action. This perception of maturity radically overturns notions of maturity within Cypriot society, especially within the dominant political field, where maturity is measured by chronological age and is particularly associated with older males, who are perceived to be preserving the Greekness of the nation and who often have substantial material power. These males are assumed, and often claim, *to know better*. Youth, and particularly children, have no say in politics. Moreover, those who are seen to be countering the state and traditional/religious authorities, such as civil society organizations with adult members, are often treated as children, that is, as insignificant to politics and in need of discipline. In contrast, at the square, youth, and particularly Skapoula as an organized pupils' collective, were acknowledged for their actions and given presence. This was obvious as often, adult regulars also participated in youth-initiated actions and discussions, acknowledging such initiatives as worthy of attention and in need of common consideration.

On an everyday level, older people frequenting the square shared some of the youths' practices, namely sharing drinks, discussing current affairs and helping to a certain extent to prepare street parties, therefore on many instances in the everydayness of the square age differences were thinning, while the youth cooperated with the older people on different initiatives organized in common assemblies. This thinning of age differences at the square was reflected in the treatment of the community of the square by outsiders, government officials, journalists of mainstream newspapers, the church, who were seeing in the regulars of the square 'maladjusted', 'rioting' and 'rebellious' youth, despite the fact that a number of age groups were occupying the square simultaneously. Not only was there a diversity of age groups occupying the square, but, as covered in the context chapter, the square was also marked as a social movement space for a variety of groups, both adult and youth groups. However, the local media overwhelmingly depicted the square and the old town as a place of 'rioting youth', which delegitimized these groups through a minoritization process that presented them as occupying a space of 'juvenile rebelliousness', not worthy of being taken seriously by adult political authorities. More specifically, the 'youth' of Faneromeni were defined by the head of the Legal Affairs Committee of the Parliament as a 'problem' that caused 'rioting' and 'commotion' (οχλαγωγία – mob gathering) by using the space of Faneromeni as a *steki* and as a place for entertainment (Haili 2010). Durham (2004) suggests that designating a group of people as youth is a political process, which in this case I argue

takes advantage of international associations of youth with criminality, deviance and risk (Bucholtz 2002) in order to justify evicting the square community in the future. Without apparent reason, the square received attention in local media around 2010, which portrayed it as a 'security problem' to be handled, a portrayal that facilitated the subsequent gentrification of the old town.

The construction of the square as security problem was undertaken through a minoritization process as well as through a process of political 'Othering' by naming the square a potential Exarcheia (a square in Athens widely associated with anarchist and anti-authoritarian politics). More specifically, the head of the parliamentary committee spoke about 'the uncontrolled behaviour of certain people with philosophies *foreign* to our country that point to Exarcheia' (my emphasis), and wondered 'whether we are on our way to creating in Cyprus a square similar to Exarcheia' (Haili 2010). The symbolic association of Exarcheia with anarchism and anti-authoritarian, self-managing initiatives is depicted in this statement as something ξένο (*xeno*, foreign) to Greek-Cypriot culture and society, which needed to be abjected so that the social body can become healthy again – meaning homogenous – and (racial) 'order/ 'control' is restored. The reason why the right-wing head of the Committee declared such philosophies as 'xeno' (foreign) to 'our culture' is partly because they take place on the street and are associated with street cultures. As I argued in the theory chapter, occupying the streets in the context of Cyprus, was associated with the Left (Panayiotou 2006) and thus with tendencies that threaten the homogeneity of the Greek/Hellenic nation. Thus, as the street is associated with anti-Greek activities, the 'philosophies' that inform the practices at Faneromeni were perceived as something *xeno* (foreign). In Cyprus, the street is further associated with dirt, whereas cleanliness is associated with prokopi/progress. Being active on the street means that one is dirty and thus uncivilized or backward, which is again similar in meaning to being anti-Greek, as Greekness/Hellenism is associated with civilization in this context (Bryant 2006).

Furthermore, the Archbishop, who in Cyprus is an authoritative social and political figure, also engaged in the minoritization of the social movement action of the old town. One particular case is indicative. In 2010 the Church of Cyprus applied to the municipal authorities of Nicosia for a permit to build a new cathedral in the old town. The Scientific and Technical Chamber of Cyprus (ETEK) reviewed the plans and stated that the huge dimensions for the cathedral would be unsuitable for the architectural environment and structure of the old city. A number of organized groups from the old city, such as Awake within the Walls, Alert, Falies, as well as ETEK and academics of the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Cyprus, protested the erection of the cathedral vehemently. In statements to the press, the

Archbishop characterized the people resisting as *'bizaniarika'* (βυζανιάρικα), a word meaning babies who are still breastfeeding, and as *'Edonopoula me kapelakia'* (Εδονοπουλα με καπελάκια), meaning members of the youth sector (EDON) of the leftist party AKEL wearing berets (Voniati 2010). Both terms are obviously used with the aim to belittle the resistant actors, further indicating that they are, necessarily members of the Left.

The Archbishop went on to complement his arguments for erecting the cathedral by juxtaposing the 'seriousness' of the Church in contradiction to these initiatives: 'Some people need to understand that the Church is a *serious* organization that cares for the progress of this people and by extension of the city' (Voniati 2010, my emphasis). The seriousness evoked here refers to the qualities one should own in this context in order to have decision-making power and to participate in the dominant public sphere: being in accordance with, and promoting, Greek-Christian national ideals, as well as being male and having substantial material power. Therefore those that contradict the Church must necessarily be leftist, anti-Christian, and therefore immature and childish. As 'children', they were reprimanded by the Archbishop as being out of place in seeking to have a say in affairs of the city and the public domain and in what constitutes 'progress' (προκοπή-πρόοδος) for the people. Instead, it was insinuated that if they want to progress (να προκόψουν) they should stay 'clean', in the sense of avoiding the street, staying indoors, not wandering about, and focusing, rather, on the matters of their own household. Προκοπή-progress, as described in the context chapter, has particular meaning for children and women in Cyprus, and is associated with cleanliness and a focus on the domestic realm.

4.4.2. Faleromeni, vandaloι, anarchidia: depoliticizing identifications and their re-appropriation

As mentioned above, the type of occupation of Faneromeni square by youth regulars has formed a direct critique to many normative, hegemonic adult discourses of the Cypriot establishment. In return, the establishment tried to reassert power over the occupants of the square through overarching, as well as micro-scale, acts of power. For instance, many youth Faneromeni regulars explained how they faced reactions and name-calling by classmates due to their involvement with the community of Faneromeni. Calling them *'anarchidia'* (explained below) or *'aloutoi'* (not washed/dirty) –the latter being a common term directed towards anarchists in Cyprus and conveys the perception that occupying the streets means that they do

not wash. This was an attempt to demean what was seen as foreign to common practices among Cypriot youth. Faleromeni was also a play on the name Faneromeni, by including within the name the word 'leromenos', which means dirty. As mentioned above, labeling someone as 'dirty' and 'unwashed' in Cyprus, where cleanliness is a metaphor for civilization and worth, translates into marking them as 'uncivilized' or backward and therefore as having nothing 'of value' to say.

'Anarchidia', which injects in the word 'anarchy' the word 'αρχίδα', meaning testicles, which is Greek and Greek Cypriot slang for 'bullshit', empties anarchy, and its potential followers, of their political ideology and from any valid content and instead indicates that what they stands for is just 'bullshit' = αρχίδα (archidia). Youth regulars of the square suggested that these identifications, this Othering, further enhanced their feeling of community, as well as the ownership they felt for Faneromeni Square, because they had to defend their presence and their reasons for being there against an overwhelming opposition of many parents and fellow classmates. In this sense, Othering enhanced their place-based consciousness and the symbolic meaning that it entailed. This Othering can also be read as the mainstream community's attempt to control these regulars through definitions that depoliticize their actions.

Another such definition was naming square youth as 'vandals' (βάνδαλοι, vandaloi). Local authorities labeled practices such as graffiti, tags, stencils and slogans of political content that were often drawn by square youth on old city walls as acts of vandalism. Therefore, 'vandals' was a characterization used to justify attempts to 'clean' the square and the old city of such 'barbaric elements', partly through gentrifying practices. Beyond physically evicting these youths from the square, gentrification included commercializing the practices that were seen as vandalism when undertaken by Faneromeni youth. The authorities licensed newly hip cafes and festivals that continued the practice of graffiti and stencils for commercial purposes, emptying them of any political content. In response to such processes of political exclusion and commercial appropriation of resistant practices, Faneromeni youth appropriated the label 'vandals', marking their own practices as such, in an attempt to draw attention to the resistant, in contrast to the commercial, character of such practices. Reappropriating such labels enabled the youth to redraw them back to the political and simultaneously strengthen community bonds.

4.4.3. Embodying the square: 'Your first whole day at the square' (Η πρώτη σου ολόκληρη μέρα πλατεία)

As shown earlier, the interaction between space and body at the square informed the sociabilities, forms of relationality and practices which emerged there and which highly challenged perceptions of cleanliness, domesticity and discipline informing the Cypriot child. Such sociabilities and practices contributed to the symbolic meaning of the square. In this section I show how youth regulars embodied the square as a bundle of sociabilities and practices which they reproduced in other locations. I do this briefly by describing a day 'at the square'.

A few months into fieldwork, Billis and other former and current members of Skapoula, as well as other youth from Faneromeni, organized an assembly in Sotiris's place to discuss an idea that some of the youth had to occupy deserted buildings for one or two days to hold workshops and discussions on issues such as militarism, sexism and gentrification. It was the first time that I would go to an assembly held in a private house, and during the assembly people commented that for the next ones we should gather in a public space. We spent more than two hours at Sotiris's house discussing the different actions and how the event would be presented to outsiders and whether emphasis would be placed on the political intervention that was taking place in the space itself. Ali, a Turkish-Cypriot friend of Sotiris, said that the very fact that a deserted building would be occupied and reutilized is a clear political intervention in itself. Others argued that, since squats are rare in Cyprus, this would not be obvious to everyone and therefore they had to clearly state that it was an act of resistance to the ways spaces are managed by authorities and to the idea of consumerism. Also, people preferred not to name the event as an 'occupation of space', as the word 'occupation' or 'squat' (κατάληψη) might invoke negative connotations and scare people off, therefore it was better to name it as a 'reclaiming of space'.

After the assembly, we went all together to the old town to have a look at different unutilized buildings. During our stroll, Ermis sprayed over any far-right slogan we encountered along the way. After stopping now and then to consider a couple of buildings that Sotiris and Ermis had in mind for the event, we ended up at Faneromeni square. Billis came along and informed us that regulars from the square were organizing a street parade a few days later, and that various fundraising actions were going to take place to cover the expenses of the event. He

said that currently a number of people from the square were doing fire-shows on Ledra Street to raise money for this cause and asked me if I wanted to join.

We headed towards Ledra Street, which at that time in the evening was packed with passers-by who would sit in different coffee-shops or buy ice-cream and frozen yoghurt from one of the many gelaterias that had recently sprung up around the area. We saw a group of youth spitting fire out of their mouth while others performed with poi fire balls. We sat on the pavement along with other youth from Faneromeni. Now and then passers-by would contribute some money to the contributions' box that was placed in front of the jugglers. Billis and I got a beer from a kiosk and sat with others on the street to watch the show. At some point he turned to me and said: 'Your first whole day at the square'. Surprised by that line, I asked him what he meant, telling him that before going down to the square we had been at Sotiris's house, and then walking around the old town, so I had not been at the square the whole time. He agreed and explained that what he meant was that I spent the whole day with them; therefore, it was like being at the square the whole day.

The square moved with the people who were its regulars and who continued the practices instituted in that space. In this sense, *plateia* (the square) had another sense beyond the physical space in that its meaning was substantiated with the practices and types of relationality initially developed at the physical space of Faneromeni. Wherever we were, the square was embodied in our forms of socializing with each other: drinking beer on the pavement and chatting the night away. The square was further embodied in the practice of assembly and the actions discussed based on shared values developed and practiced in Faneromeni. It was further embodied in the juggling practices as a form of street show set up by Faneromeni youth to gather funds for a DIY street parade-party. In a way, regulars of Faneromeni could suspend and resume their practices anywhere the regulars might occasionally hang out, like in parks or bars.

The square, as an ensemble of counter-cultural practices, became embodied and was performed by square regulars in different places. Their bodies themselves were places where the square was represented and performed: in their postures of feeling relaxed and accommodated in city streets, and in their comfortable and worn-out dark-colored clothing. Vasiliki further made this evident in one of her descriptions of Faneromeni's everydayness, during which she transposed from that space without noticing:

Faneromeni was the space, besides the fact that you were going to have a good time, you would have your drink; perhaps you would do some sort of drug if you were ok, if

you had money. Besides this, it was a space, not culture, counter-cultural (αντικουλτούρικο). It had its own culture; I mean there were people reading books, they would discuss them and there are still people who do that. The older regulars when I go to sit at New (an alternative bar), I would see them outside having discussions on books, outside New, they are people who would read stuff, who would become pre-occupied with the non-normative.

Faneromeni was not only the physical space but also the practices and sociabilities that emerged there and that the regulars performed in other places as well. For a while, *plateia* in Vasiliki's description was transposed to the vicinity of a bar, where the practices of *diavasma* and political discussion were taking place.

4.5. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I illustrated Faneromeni Square's transformation, from a highly symbolic place of nationalist politics into a *steki* and an alternative public sphere for a youth counter-public. More specifically, I argued that youth's stasis-aragma in the public space paused the scheduled everydayness of routinized crossings as well as circulation for consumerism purposes. This pausing and slowing time and circulation allowed for an emptiness to be created that youth could then fill on their own terms. It further allowed for a different type of presence, sociabilities and ways of being to emerge and take shape. These ways of being, of being otherwise, formed a crisis in the body of the nation-state – enacting stasis as *nosos*/crisis. They simultaneously formed a crisis to the authoritative circulations of capital, and institutional and individualized ways of being, and scheduled time, which further enacted stasis as revolt. By anchoring themselves in the public space, youth revolted against the transformation of life-time into consumer and labor time, which are prerequisites for the formation of the labor and consumer force to be exploited (Lemke 2002). They instead claimed this time as time for experimentation and non-commodified pleasure.

As the square was produced as a time-space of stasis, it also became a space of crisis in another sense: that of critically rethinking the normative discourses that shape square regulars' subjectivities and daily lives. This further relates to the notion of critique put forward by Lefebvre, with its aim of challenging the fragmentary binaries and illusions that guide our daily life. Other ways of being, contradictory to the nationalistic, individualized, consumerist and privatized normativity, were produced, but also found refuge (*araxan*) at the square. Stasis and aragma can thus be seen as resistant practices that through the grounding in place, allow,

as Dirlik (2011, 57) has argued, for ‘some control over the conduct and organization of everyday life’ that comes from below rather than ‘from those placeless abstractions such as capital, the nation-state and their discursive expressions in the realm of theory’. Through stasis, youth implemented practices and forms of relationality unmediated by the ‘contracts’ for behaving imposed in private and institutional settings, like schools and coffee shops, which are quintessential spaces for youth sociability. I have argued that these sociabilities and practices developed at the square recall sociabilities that were active in Cyprus and Greece before, especially in the institution of the *kafeneio*. In a way, they retrieve the *kafeneio* and the forms of sociability associated with it from franchise coffee shops that had become key spaces of a depoliticized and privatized sociability for Cypriot youth.

Overall, the stasis of youth created a critical everydayness at the square, filled with practices that challenged the status quo, such as self-learning through peer-to-peer exchanges on social issues and self-organized entertainment and leisure. Through practices of self-managing a public space, youth started to question their own subjectivization as youth in Cyprus and the roles they are expected to perform by dominant national and international discourses around age and possibility. In this way, youth reclaimed the everyday as a critical space for transformation and subversive politics in accordance with the critical everyday as conceptualized by Lefebvre. In doing this, youth were supported as bodies by the material qualities of the public space of the square which became embodied by the users and opened up possibilities for more direct relationality with one another. Moreover, through turning the square into a *steki* and bringing otherwise domestic activities out into the public, youth and other regulars queried the politics that are keeping apart such activities, bodily needs, as well as subject positions, such as the child, from being considered as political. In this sense they challenged one of the most important binaries on which modernity is based: the child/public actor binary.

In other words, by appearing in the public space and making it a *steki*, a public sphere, a space for experimentation, teenage youth challenged the position of children as apolitical in Cyprus and beyond, as well as local notions of maturity and social worth. They further challenged conceptions of politics in Cyprus through the deeply political cultural practices they performed at the square. This challenge prefigured another everydayness for Cypriot youth, illustrating that there are alternatives for how to live one’s life. In this way, youth were *being* political at the square rather than simply being occupied with political issues on an occasional basis. To counter such politicization and Faneromeni turning into a space of experimentation and social movement activities, the establishment attempted to reassert its power over the regulars

through minoritization processes, that is by embedding Faneromeni into the conceptual space of 'youth rebelliousness'. Furthermore, I have argued that the establishment reasserted its power by employing a discourse of 'othering' and 'foreignness': by proclaiming Faneromeni's self-organizing practices as foreign and dangerous –in terms of being done on the streets- to national cohesion. Foucault (2003) has argued that racism intervenes when modern states, centered on biopower, want to exercise the power of death. The Cypriot state declared Faneromeni practices as 'foreign' to justify the future eviction and violent dispersion of Faneromeni community, leading to the 'death' of the vibrant community of the square through gentrification processes. In other words, the establishment employed minoritization and racialization processes to cure the crisis-*nosos* in the national body that had been brought on by stasis and to remove the materialization of difference that erects boundaries to the nationalist and neoliberal order.

In the next chapter, I will further explore how Faneromeni and Skapoula youth were *being political* by engaging in detail with one of their most common practices: the practice of the street parties.

Chapter 5

Defend the Parties



Figure 8. 'Defend the Parties'.

5.1. Introduction

The above photo, which was published in *Phileleftheros* newspaper in June 2013, is of a slogan written on a wall in the old city centre of Nicosia. It says 'Defend the Parties' and it paraphrases and simultaneously parodies the ancient Greek motto 'Defend the Country' (Αμύνεσθαι περί Πάτρης). This phrase is taken from Homer's *Iliad*, a key text taught in Ancient Greek lessons in Cypriot secondary schools. Modern Greeks perceive it to be a major symbolic text of their heritage passed down from their 'glorious ancestors'.

As explored in chapter 3, Greek education was perceived as crucial for Greek Cypriots' survival as it cultivated the Greekness/humanity already considered innate in their children. I argued that by being instructed in Greek education, one becomes fully Greek and fully adult. History textbooks in Greece and Cyprus present a direct lineage connecting ancient Greeks to modern Greeks and, by extension, to Greek Cypriots. Hector utters the phrase, 'Εἰς οἰωνός ἀριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περί πάτρης,' ('The best omen is to defend your country.') during the Trojan war. In

modern Greece and Cyprus, the phrase, and especially the part ‘Αμύνεσθαι περί πάτρης’, has become a common slogan indicating ‘φιλοπατρία’ (love for one’s country). It is commonly used in military settings and in conversations promoting national interests. This motto is also the title of a well-known Cypriot television program on the actions of the National Guard, new defense systems and the education of young soldiers.

The author of the slogan on the old city wall, most likely a member of the Faneromeni youth community, slyly subverted the slogan into ‘Defend the parties’. This subversion mocks the pomposity of the continuity discourse in much nationalist and extreme-right wing rhetoric and action in Cyprus. It talks back cheekily to the militarist regime which uses slogans like this one to boost the morale of young soldiers (Efthymiou, 2016) and make them embrace an attitude of superiority and enmity towards those who are perceived as hostile, and at the same time inferior, Others.

‘Parties’ replaces ‘country’ in the slogan, indicating the ideology of the youth and the wider community of Faneromeni. The street parties, briefly explored in the previous chapter, have been spaces of challenge and breaking down of boundaries of the categorical position of underage youth within Cypriot society. This was done through self-organized entertainment in community with others without outside sponsors or other type of help, giving parties an anti-consumerist and DIY (Do-it-Yourself) character. The practice talked back to authoritarian attempts at enclosing youth within private, apolitical spaces of entertainment consumption and to the educational system for restricting children to particular types of participation connected exclusively with the nationalist cause. The country, an idealized space outside Cypriot youths’ everyday life, to which they have no access or participation in its formation, was replaced by the party, over which they had ownership through the direct democratic form of preparing it, its DIY character and the possibilities of engagement that such parties provided, which will be further explored in this chapter.

Such possibilities involved the communication of Faneromeni and Skapoula youth’s political ideas to other youth by disseminating material Skapoula members had prepared and through one-to-one conversations between youth in the relaxed and playful context of the party. In this chapter, I theorize the party as a ‘fuzzy’ space which blurs the distinction between entertainment and political action. I show how the party operated as an open, inviting space for other youth to approach the community of Faneromeni and how, through the informal and pleasurable connotations that are associated with it, anti-establishment political ideas could be more easily and light-heartedly communicated to others outside of Faneromeni

community. In other words, I see the party as another form of ‘serious play’ by Skapoula youth, where fun, dance and lightness of spirit are combined with tackling what are perceived as ‘serious’ issues, which society regards as exclusively reserved for the adult domain, such as militarism and nationalism, among others.

5.2. The unserious seriousness of the everyday on city streets: Blanchot, Lefebvre and the Situationists

‘The everyday escapes. This is its definition’. It is ‘that which escapes form...being always before what affirms it and yet incessantly reconstituting itself beyond all that negates it. An *unserious seriousness* from which nothing can divert us, even when it is lived in the mode of diversion’ (Blanchot 1993, 241–42, my emphasis).

Maurice Blanchot, much like Lefebvre, defined the everyday – and particularly the everyday on city streets – as precisely that which escapes rigid forms or structures, such as bureaucracy, schools and political parties. The everyday on city streets escapes that which is instituted as the universal, the all-encompassing knowledge, or, in other words, the authorities that claim to know better. This everyday can continuously redefine and reconstitute itself through the continuous flow and anonymity of the street. Both Lefebvre and Blanchot indicate the city street as the privileged location of the everyday that has transformatory potential, where you can be anyone, and where one does not necessarily perform a particular socially-determined role. That is why the people who occupy the streets are seen as ‘always on the verge of becoming political’ (Blanchot 1987, 241); they have the potential to experiment with a number of encounters, in contrast to the people who mainly remain in the private and institutional sphere. The Surrealists, whose thinking greatly influenced Lefebvre, Blanchot and the Situationists, claimed city streets contained ‘breathtaking possibilities and marvels, signs of another reality, glimpses of the strange and disconcerting’ (Plant 1992, 50). Situationists invented tactics like city strolling – known as the *dérive* or drift – to challenge the ordered normalcy, rationality and scheduled character of everyday living. Building on this thinking on the subversive quality of the everyday on city streets, I argue that, when on the streets, ‘seriousness’ is also put into a playful, experimental mode, an *unserious seriousness* where one can try on different definitions of oneself, without solidifying oneself completely into absolute identifications.

As discussed in the theory chapter, Lefebvre claimed that the everyday, which lies outside structured or specialized activity, like the everyday on city streets has transformative potential.

This is in the sense that 'its scrutiny involves the detection of unrealized possibilities' (Sheringham 2006, 145) precisely because of its ungraspable quality, in that the everyday evades form and solid definition. This scrutiny is understood to contribute to 'a gradual process of appropriation' (Sheringham 2006, 140–141) of ourselves by acknowledging the rigid binaries that modernity has constructed and that form our current reality. This is what Lefebvre termed 'the critique of the everyday', or the critical everyday: a process of understanding the fictitious constructions that separate various aspects of our being. It is a reclaiming of oneself from the alienating 'expert' opinions of hegemonic knowledge that structure the possible field of our actions by engaging with what Foucault (1980b) called 'minor or subjugated knowledges', which will be explored in this chapter. For Foucault, such minor knowledges constitute a local type of criticism that involves 'an autonomous, non-centralized character of theoretical production' (1980b, 81) that has been obscured by global, aspiring-to-be-total theories (Marxism, psychoanalysis), as well as disqualified as inadequate: 'located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition and scientificity' (1980b, 82).

One example of such fictitious constructions involves the separation of the mundane, sordid aspects of life from those that are seen as festive and playful. Both Lefebvre and the Situationists (the Sitos), who were widely read at the square and by Skapoula members in particular, criticized hegemonic knowledge and commodity culture for conceptualizing leisure activities and festivities as a 'break' from the everyday. Rather than accept playfulness and festivity as the non-ordinary, the non-routinized, and the 'non-everyday', they advocated reclaiming these as essential traits that should be integrated in daily human experience. This thinking is exemplified in Faneromeni youths' practice of the street parties, which blurred distinctions between pleasure/leisure, education and politics.

I argue that the practice of the street party, emerging through the critical everydayness at the square, constituted a fuzzy zone between seriousness and play, as the everyday on city streets allowed for unserious seriousness: an experimental and playful mode of life. In accordance with the Sitos, who 'considered a little chaos to be a valuable means of exposing the experiences made possible by capitalist production' (Plant 1992, 60), the street parties are theorized here as intentionally creating a somewhat chaotic, fuzzy, liminal space, in which one can challenge the serious experiences of being subjected to nationalism, institutional childhood and capitalism in a pleasurable, playful, and unthreatening manner. In the context of the parties, festive and artistic elements blended with other issues of the everydayness of these youth, thus erasing false separations, such as between learning and leisure. The anti-

consumerist DIY party, which had become a common practice of Faneromeni youth, as well as of Skapoula, is seen as an inventive resistance practice to the spectacle of capitalism and nationalism, as well as a vehicle through which anti-establishment and counter-normative political ideas could be more playfully promoted. In this chapter, therefore, I will focus particularly on the quality of unserious seriousness of the everyday on city streets and the possibilities it offers underage youth engaging in anti-establishment politics.

The practice of the street parties did not emerge in a vacuum. As was outlined in the previous chapter, the parties were one of several practices of/at the square, some of which were also connected to the alter-globalization movement, which gained pace in the 1990s and 2000s. More specifically, the Critical Mass events, introduced by Cyclown Circus, are part of this international justice movement against corporate globalization. Critical Mass events have also been described as ‘street parties’, and are organized through assemblies with no specific leaders, where the event was produced by those who participated in it (Furness 2007; Shepard 2011). The practices of Critical Mass, and its sister movement Reclaim the Streets (RTS) which emerged in Britain during the 1990s, spread across the world. Both posed fundamental challenges to automobile culture and its immense occupation and misuse of public spaces. Protesting the loss of public space, they formed temporary spaces of community formation (or ‘temporary autonomous zones’, Bey 1991), and constituted important actions in building a global political community of anti-corporate activists. The DIY aspect of these ‘protestivals’, defined as half protest, half carnival, cannot be underestimated, especially regarding RTS, which emerged in conjunction with a DIY scene of rave parties in the UK (John 2004). The roads reclaimed were simultaneously spaces of an underground rave culture whose ‘dance music would become integral to rehumanizing city space’ (John 2004, 425). Dancing and partying therefore became direct political actions, where one’s dance steps in the public space opened pathways to an alternative, anti-consumerist way of living in the present and, at same time, prefiguring the future.

Below, I describe one of the parties Skapoula organized in which I participated from its conception to its realization. My aim is to illustrate the whole process of this common practice and how the square community helped Skapoula throughout. In this sense, the square, as a community, as well as the physical public space, became a key resource enabling the group to sustain its political actions. In order to illuminate this particular event, I complement the analysis with information gathered from other parties and festivals, which were two or three-day events, held by the group. Furthermore, I show how the party forged an opportunity to introduce the group to new members. By helping out in mundane, but fun and light activities,

such as being responsible for icing the beers or helping to set up the sound system, new members began to gain ownership of the group. Moreover, bonds between members were reaffirmed, created or strengthened. Similar to the protestival, the DIY party's unserious seriousness ensured the lightness of interaction and blurred the boundaries between partying and political action.

5.3. 'If it weren't for those parties, most of us wouldn't be here...'

It was Skapoula member Petros's idea to arrange a party to mark the end of the summer and the beginning of another school year. The idea was to gather and enjoy themselves one more time before a scheduled everydayness began again: for some this meant going back to school and private afternoon classes, while for others this meant going abroad to begin or continue their studies at university.

In an assembly Skapoula held the previous day, it was decided that we would meet around six in the afternoon to discuss the details regarding the party and to work out what would be everyone's contribution. We met at 'Skalia' (Steps), which is what the youth frequenting Faneromeni call the steps in front of the 'Maiden School' of Faneromeni, now known as Faneromeni Gymnasium. The architecture of the school building is neoclassical, and the facade, where Skalia are located, is decorated with Ionic columns, financed by the church, thus marking the area with connections to ancient Greece. In this way, the constructed genealogy between ancient Greece and modern Greeks/Greek Cypriots, which schoolbooks elaborate on, also assumes spatial form. Currently, the majority of pupils attending the primary and secondary school of Faneromeni come from migrant communities that live in the nearby area. Skalia overlook Faneromeni Church and its courtyard, and they are a popular meeting place among the young anti-consumerist/anti-authoritarian community of Faneromeni. Especially in the past, before the gentrification of the old city, many of the self-managed street parties organized by youth frequenting Faneromeni would take place in front of Skalia.



Figure 9. Skalia located in front of Faneromeni Gymnasium facing Faneromeni church. A common gathering place of the anti-authoritarian community of Nicosia.



Figure 10. Youth street party in front of Skalia. At the background is Faneromeni Gymnasium. Photo taken from <http://islandanarchy.forumotion.net/> Accessed [November 9, 2015].

In this sense, Petros's idea of a party comes from a long tradition of youth self-organized anti-consumerist partying at Skalia and in the area around Faneromeni Church. According to Sotiris, one of the main teenage organizers of the first parties in 2008 and 2009, these parties gathered up to 1000 youth. These pupils came from many schools around Nicosia, since youth frequenting Faneromeni invited other friends to the parties and this circle was constantly growing.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the parties were rituals of introduction to the wider community of the square and to its practices. The parties were actually used to invite people to join a different lifestyle based on sharing the open space and having inexpensive anti-consumerist, self-organized fun. Sotiris noted, 'If it weren't for those parties, most of us wouldn't be here', with 'here' indicating a particular conscious socio-political position, critical of systemic authority but also signifying a continuous belonging to a community of anti-authoritarian youth. Both street parties and other activities were acts of claiming space within the city and were inextricably linked with the youths' politics of declaring presence. The parties were thus *a common practice* of the larger community of Faneromeni youth, which continued to be undertaken by more organized collectives within these youth, such as Skapoula.

It was around seven when most people arrived at Skalia and the assembly began. Petros talked about arranging a party since the new school year was going to begin soon. Skapoula regularly arranged a party or festival in early September, just before school started. September, in a pupil's calendar, symbolized the end of a period when one's time is mostly self-managed, that is, when the everydayness at the square was at its best. It also signaled the beginning of another systemically scheduled everydayness, in which pupils had little say. The previous September, a three-day Skapoula Festival had been organized that included a presentation-discussion on army truancy and conscientious objection. The festival had included a party and collective kitchen, a football tournament and a self-defense seminar given by a member of Choros (the anti-authoritarian community). In this sense, Skapoula's parties ranged from the more common celebratory gatherings, usually held at Faneromeni and other public spaces around the old town, to bigger DIY concerts and festivals, which sometimes included invited Greek or local DIY bands.

Back in the assembly, everybody seemed to be in favor of Petros's idea; however Billis suggested combining the party with something like a discussion related to the educational system since schools would begin within next week. It was commonplace for Skapoula to combine its parties with discussions on various topics related to pupils' life in Cyprus,

particularly regarding schools. In this sense, Skapoula's parties went beyond being actions of anti-consumerist entertainment and constituted forums where key political issues affecting youth and the wider Cypriot society would be put forward for discussion and opened up for questioning, echoing similarities with the practice of the protestival. Both Billis and Petros argued that the discussion should focus on nationalism within the school system, as the educational goals of the coming academic year were overtly nationalist in nature. Petros said that they would probably need someone to introduce the topic before the discussion started. Eventually Petros and Vasiliki volunteered to make the introduction and decided to meet up by themselves to discuss it further. Maria said that they could perhaps also show a movie or documentary relating to the issue, and despite some reluctance to overloading the day with another activity, it was agreed that they would search to see if there were relevant movies that could be shown, and Maria took charge of looking into this.

Subsequently, the discussion moved to potential spaces where the event could take place. As a group of underage youth, they had no income of their own. Their commitment to the DIY ethic and self-organization meant that public spaces, such as squares, parks, and streets, as well as potential facilities like public toilets and electricity outlets to be found within them, formed indispensable resources for the organization of the group's activities, and thus for the sustenance of the group. Hence, their parties and other events were frequently held in such locations which would, in most cases, be free of charge. The group's financial sustenance depended largely on those parties which, along with members' contributions, were its major revenue source. The organizers of the parties avoided negotiating with authorities for permission to use the spaces due to the direct action ethic they embraced, but also due to the practical fact that they would have to pay rent to the municipality to use some of the parks, and that cost would be a strain on the group. In this sense, in conducting their anti-authoritarian politics, underage youth were supported as activists and as bodies by the available public spaces and the facilities found within them. Bodily needs such as having space to sit and relax when having a discussion were accommodated by public space. Having accessibility to toilets and open space for music equipment and to use as a dancing stage to perform the pleasurable embodied experience of dancing, on which the party as a political intervention depended, were also accommodated by public space and its potential facilities.

When a bigger venue was needed however, like big central parks and Nicosia's moats found across the old city walls, the youth would negotiate with authorities for access to space, using tactics, which in most cases boiled down to definitional politics of subversion, where 'an event against fascism' would be redefined as 'an event against racism' in an effort to adhere to the

Cypriot state's political proprieties and assumed 'political correctness' for which 'antifascism' was too radical and too political of an aim to be pursued by anyone, let alone an underage pupils' group. Another tactic, in the sphere of what I call subversive definitional politics (explored thoroughly in chapter 6), was changing the name of the group in letters sent to municipal officials requesting access to public spaces. In these letters, 'Skapoula' would be redefined as 'Pupils' Reflection Club' (Μαθητικός Όμιλος Σκέψης) to appear as the normative disciplined and prudent subject position that pupils were expected to occupy in Cyprus. In an talk I had with Ermis and Giorgos they described the usual process they needed to go through to gain access:

Ermis: With the municipality of Nicosia, we didn't have a particular issue, we just needed to preoccupy ourselves with him every time (referring to the employee who was responsible for issuing permits and was delaying to reply). Due to the fact that we didn't have a particular μέσο (a contact with authority to push things for them) we needed to do the process.

Giorgos: In a diplomatic way.

Georgina: What do you mean by 'diplomatic'?

Giorgos: Meaning that we are a 'club of this and that pupils', we want to do this 'antiracist' thing, while if we didn't have such concerns we would put out a banner 'Shit to the Fascists event on Saturday', instead of obtaining permits and such kind of bullshit.

The youth, however, needed to negotiate for space at other times and with a variety of actors and agencies, as different processes of bordering were taking place simultaneously within the city space. Since around 2012, the area around the square, where most Skapoula parties used to take place, has been increasingly commercialized. At the same time, there was a much stronger police presence within the old city to secure the ongoing gentrification processes. The police had intervened twice in the previous year to stop Skapoula parties at 10 pm with the justification that the music was too loud. Therefore, the youth needed to find alternative spaces where they could hold their parties. Since the party was only five days away in this instance, Billis said that they would not have time to apply to the municipality for a permit, therefore the safest place where they could have their party and not be harassed by the police was in a park very close to the border within the old city, but relatively far from populated areas and where there was free access to electricity. Maria told me later that electrical outlets, where you could plug in loud speakers and consoles needed for the party, used to be available in many public parks, but recently the municipality had locked them up. Everyone agreed with the proposed location as it was also in walking distance from Faneromeni, which would allow many regulars of the square to easily reach it on foot. Faneromeni and Skapoula youth had

started to use this park relatively often. The park's location helped youth prevent state authorities or other adults, such as nearby residents, from intruding, since the border and the Buffer Zone crossing through it paradoxically allowed for emptiness and impeded the overwhelming expansion of construction and traffic that was going on elsewhere in the city.

Even within the park, however, youth had to negotiate with micro-level actors for access to the space. These actors, embodying adult privilege, such as businesses and other users of the park, could deny them access by threatening to expose them to the police. This was the case with the owner of a small restaurant at this particular park who was selling kebab and other grilled dishes. Billis, who was the person in charge of most negotiations that needed to be done with people outside the group at the time, had often negotiated with the restaurant owner to prevent him from complaining to the police regarding youth's use of the park. In exchange, Billis had to urge youth at the party to order food from his restaurant. This arrangement seemed to have worked on several occasions when Skapoula wanted to hold an event there. Youth in this sense had to negotiate with authoritarian behaviour from other users of the park, such as the kebab owner in this case, who was engaged in commercial operations in a public park with the permission of the municipality.

Getting adult authorities to ease boundaries and grant access was a constant negotiation process for these youths; they had to deal with adult authorities at various levels through learning to speak the language that the state understands and approves, as well as learning to manage power on the micro-level, through everyday engagements with it. On another occasion, when Skapoula wanted to hold an 'anti-mundial' futsal tournament in a public school yard on a weekend, Skapoula pupils had to negotiate for access with an elderly male neighbour who threatened to notify the police without an apparent reason. Later on, Billis told me that the man was known for his nationalist positions and that he often caused trouble if Skapoula used the school for gatherings. The threat to notify police could result in fines, in having the events closed down, or even in having the parents notified, all of which could substantially impact the group's sustainability through potential loss of human and material resources. In this sense, children activists are vulnerable in particular ways that differ from adult activists who implement non-institutional politics and direct action. For these youth, direct action was almost never completely direct, but needed to be negotiated with a range of actors embodying adult authority beyond the state. Therefore, when analyzing direct action undertaken by children activists, one needs to take into account the capillary forms that power often takes which can trouble the forms direct action takes.

5.4. The Square as a resource

As soon as a common decision was reached on the type of event to be held, everybody started communicating with other people, mostly other youth regulars of the square, to make the necessary arrangements for the party. Billis went into the square to ask Stathis, a 19 year-old square regular, to bring the barrels in which they placed the ice for the drinks to the party, which Stathis kept at his house. Stathis also had a couple of loudspeakers that he usually lent for Skapoula's parties as well as for other activities of the Choros. Billis then returned with Stathis, who also joined the assembly to discuss arrangements for the party. At one point Despo, who frequented the square passed by on her way to the square. Billis found the opportunity to ask her whether Paris, her boyfriend and another square regular, had the generator that the whole Choros used for different events. Despo also joined the assembly and said that Paris had left the generator with her so they could get it from her house.

After the assembly, was over we all moved into the square where we found Ermis enjoying his beer with other youths. Petros informed him about the party and asked him to help design a poster for it, which Skapoula youth would later post on city walls to publicize their event. Ermis agreed to do so as he designed most posters for Skapoula as well as the graphics that were included in Skapoula's magazine. It seemed that everyone from Skapoula had a particular regular responsibility that they would take up when an event was organized. Ermis further also suggested that they ask a young Cypriot hip-hop singer, well known among the youth of Faneromeni, to jam at the party and have an open mic where various youth could participate and experiment with singing in hip-hop style. The other members seemed to like the idea and then Petros went in search of Billis to see if he also would agree with this. Billis, in the meantime, was going around the square to find Rivo, who usually played music and sang at different events of the Choros. Within an hour it seemed that all the arrangements for the party had been made, since all the youth who could assist in the organization of the party had been contacted.

As demonstrated above, the square was the base from where information on an event being organized would be distributed, as well as the space to find the necessary people to help with the various chores for co-organizing the event. Skapoula members who could not make it to the assembly were usually informed afterwards at the square or through the online group that the collective maintained. This reflects the relatively loose structure Skapoula was following in relation to participation in assemblies and organization of various actions. Despite usually having a core of people who would attend assemblies quite frequently and initiate various

actions, Skapoula members could be more or less active at different times, depending on their schedules, which often included exam periods or other school-related obligations, or just plain tiredness from committing to Skapoula for a long period of time. This loose structure was able to survive due to youth on the periphery of Skapoula (η περιφέρεια) such as Stathis, Despo, and Paris, among many others, who were part of the wider community of the square. The loose structure of Skapoula's assembly reflected the lack of rigidity offered by the everyday on the street. As the everyday on city streets escapes strict definitions through constant reconstitution, so was the assembly of Skapoula constantly being redefined and reconstituted through the variety of people participating each time. In this sense, youth frequenting the square could suddenly find themselves engaged in organizing a DIY party and experiment with a role they had not experienced before. In contrast to adult groups that were active within squats or rented places turned into social centers, having the square as one's social centre allowed for this movement of people in and out of Skapoula's assembly and for the maintenance of an underage group through the resources, both human and material, provided by the square community.

Aggelos and Chloe described this process of relatively open assemblies of Skapoula at the square and the help from those on the periphery:

Chloe: Our assemblies usually took place at Faneromeni. There were people that would pass by and give an idea – Nicolas, for example, who was not a full member of Skapoula. I mean there were passers-by that came in (the assembly) depending on the theme discussed.

Aggelos: In general, no matter how closed the assembly might have been (to outsiders), it was always very open to the people who were around (at Faneromeni). I mean it was never the case that an assembly would take place and someone would come and you would tell him 'Go away!' We might have made an open assembly and still we would be the same people.

Chloe: It's that we were the people of Faneromeni. We weren't just people from Skapoula that might have consisted of 10 people.

Georgina: Yes, but within Faneromeni there were adults too.

Chloe: Yes, the adults were not...there were times that Louis attended, I mean there were people that we wanted to have there so they could help us with certain things because another important thing is that very few of us had a car, so there were different things...or we needed to borrow the generator from someone older, but it was also the fact that we were so close with the rest of the people that it was quite easy to make a call to someone older to bring us certain stuff.

These were some of the possibilities that holding an assembly at the square offered to Skapoula youth who wanted to self-organize their own events and actions. They were a

community of youth, and to a lesser extent young adults, who would be accessible and able to contribute material and human resources in order to make these actions and events happen. However, by 2013, holding assemblies at the square was becoming a rare phenomenon due to the increased commercialization of the old town that prevented the possibility of having a private and noise-free discussion. Moreover, the close bonds developed through coexisting at the square and sharing it as a *steki*, described by Chloe above, were thinning along with their abilities to maintain the square as a *steki* through the process of gentrification.

In the above two sections I demonstrated the challenges faced by underage anti-authoritarian actors in their attempt to undertake radical politics that are beyond the margins defined by hegemonic knowledges, such as instituted childhood and nationalism. I argued that self-organizing youth need to negotiate with a variety of actors for claiming space, both physical and conceptual, negotiations that often trouble theoretical assumptions about the directness of action. I further showed how in undertaking a key practice for the sustenance of the group, such as the practice of the DIY street party, youth are supported as bodies and as activists by the material qualities of the public space and the potential of the everyday on city streets.

5.5. DIY or DIE

Before embarking on the description of the actual party it is important to engage with the crucial role that DIY action played in Skapoula's activism.

DIY OR DIE was a slogan commonly used by Skapoula to indicate their observance of and commitment to a DIY (do-it-yourself) ethos. Self-organization (αυτοοργάνωση) or DIY was one of Skapoula's major principles. By participating in the parties and through constant engagement with Skapoula, members started to develop skills and practical know-how about how to self-organize events as well as produce and print their own published material. This know-how and observance of the DIY ethos involved scouting where drinks for a party could be bought cheaper to fit Skapoula's budget and which printing houses offered the best prices for different quantities and qualities of posters, small opinion leaflets and Skapoula's Magazine. At times printing leaflets for dissemination would be done by individual Skapoula members on their home printers. Ariadni, for instance, would print material at her father's own cultural center. Through printing and photocopying, Skapoula members were able to circulate their own political ideas and counter-normative discourses at parties and beyond,

participating thus in what has been termed by global anti-road protesters as 'xerocracy' or 'rule through photocopying' (Furness 2007, 301).

For the purpose of organizing a DIY party, beer would be usually bought from a liquor store owned by a migrant in old Nicosia, where beer was sold in quantities at excellent prices. On other occasions, Miltos, told me that in order to observe the principle of DIY and stay within the budget of the group, they would drive to Nicosia's suburbs to buy ice and beer at wholesale prices from factories. One time they even needed to break down a large block of ice into smaller pieces. In the context of following DIY, another tactic defined by Skapoula youth as 'expropriation' ('απαλλοτριώση'), was the practice of shoplifting drinks from big supermarket stores. Small 'shopping teams' would be created for this purpose, the members of which were decided in the context of an assembly.

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, members would usually undertake specific responsibilities depending on their skills and on what each one enjoyed doing. For example, Raccoon would usually be asked to help with the sound equipment:

Raccoon: A standard role that I had was in relation to matters of sound and electricity and this type of stuff because at the time I was gathering equipment along with a friend for this kind of purposes, so that we could do certain things by ourselves, for self-organizing. One slogan that we had was 'We shouldn't have to pay for our feelings' (Να μην πληρώνουμε για τα συναισθήματά μας), and so this was my role, 'where will we find loudspeakers? Let's ask Raccoon.'

As parties were simultaneously a process of claiming public space and declaring presence, they did not usually ask authorities for permission, especially for the occasional parties at Faneromeni. However, for larger concerts, Chloe was often responsible for contacting authorities to submit requests for permits to use a particular public space but also to assert pressure by calling repeatedly until permission was granted. She jokingly said that she was sort of the secretary of Skapoula. The concerts, of course, required more money and more organization on Skapoula's part, as DIY bands from Greece would usually be invited to perform along with invited guests from the Cypriot DIY music scene and it was the concerts that attracted a higher numbers of youth to the group. Iasonas describes this process:

We did things that never happened in the DIY space in Cyprus before, big concerts. We brought bands from abroad without having much clue, we were pupils, 2nd or 1st grade of lyceum and we brought bands from Greece to play in Cyprus. So many people attended, and we did all this without entrance fee, with voluntary contribution (provided by those attending the party). We arranged to bring drinks to make a proper concert, like you would go to see Deep Purple for example and pay 50 euro, and we did it in a completely different way and being pupils and all. In the beginning when a band

would be brought we would ask them to pay their tickets and then give them the money afterwards from the contributions made during the party or the drinks sold. The first time that we brought Methismena Xotika (name of a band that performed at Skapoula's first festival) we had 900 euro in profit [...] We also had a say in schools, we as pupils, and this is something very important. We had a say through our texts, through the criticism that we were making about whatever was happening within schools.

In the process of setting up a DIY concert and party, the organizers developed know-how as well as a sense of empowerment. Ermis, Giorgos and Billis described to me why Skapoula was attracted to DIY in the first place. Beyond reclaiming music creation from the world of commodities, DIY was understood to be a way to be creative and expressive without needing to be an expert or established artist to be heard. Through its DIY, self-organized character, the party undermined the notion of art (music) as a separate, commodified and specialized practice, contributing in this way to counter-spectacular forms of youth participation. As discussed in the theory chapter, the Situs supported that modern capitalist societies work by organizing spheres of life and activities into spectacles (Plant 1992, 1). In these spectacles, people essentially become spectators of life, with no active participation in the creation of the lived world. Skapoula youth saw DIY as a form of resistance to the spectacle. DIY practice was another way of being heard and participate directly in the affairs of life, which cured the alienation generated through 'the spectacular forms of pseudofestivals in which the only available roles are those of audience, consumer, star' (Plant 1992, 28). Like former DIY movements, Skapoula's parties blurred fictitious distinctions and allowed for direct participation through experimentation and play:

Ermis: DIY tells you that you can also do this thing and indeed this happened, many people from Skapoula played music in Skapoula's concerts and parties that we set up. We posted the posters (for the events); we would be the ones to also get up on the stage and play, even if you don't play music you can somewhat participate in this thing. You can still play music even if you're not that good. The bands that we held in high esteem because they maintained this mentality, we managed to bring them to play in Cyprus, to see them play live, to get to know them, to interview them, they slept at our homes, we took them out to drink and eat. And it's very different from going to a concert to see a big name and then leave to go home, and you understand that it's the relationship you build basically; it's not as if the other person is...

Giorgos: ...some sort of god, or intellectual: the academic of music let's say.

Ermis: They are people too and they will also say something stupid, they will make a joke that is bad and not really a joke, they will get drunk and fool around.

The importance of immediacy here cannot be underestimated. DIY is seen not only as a process of learning to set up one's own party but also as a process of directly relating to each other, of bringing the other into your everydayness, into your home, into your *parea* (group of

friends), and of demystifying the other and art. DIY, in other words, can be seen as a form and a process of *rehumanizing* relationships and challenging the alienation that is created by spectacular, in the sense of commodified and non-participatory entertainment. Thus, spectacle is replaced with co-participatory forms of action and relationality. With self-organization, members were able to connect and build relationships by cooperating with each other and with guests in preparing an event, and through peer to peer transmission of skills to one another. The know-how in setting up a party and preparing printed material constituted a minor knowledge (Foucault 1980b) that was transmitted to new Skapoula members through cooperation with older members in setting up the party and by following the process of decision-making for the party while participating in the group's assemblies. This type of knowledge forms a critique to the hegemonic knowledges, in Cyprus and beyond, that define what children are and their possibilities for action.

Furthermore, youth experienced DIY as an empowering process. Through the parties, they were able to directly participate in politics in ways that ranged from claiming public space to asserting a voice about nationalism in education and beyond. Much like for direct actionists of RTS in the US and UK (Shepard 2011, 112), DIY provided the means through which youth could participate directly in, and experiment with, matters affecting their lives. This empowerment and immediacy through DIY and self-organization has been translated into and experienced as a process of maturity:

Chloe: Yes, it was very interesting for us as well: Ermis having to sit and write a formal letter to the Municipality of Nicosia, or me having to tell my history teacher that 'I'm sorry I need to go out of the class because the municipality is calling me'. I mean, I think Skapoula matured me very much; I undertook roles that usually...I mean I went to these Youth Voice conferences, Model United Nations that the school organized, and I was like, 'Ok the teachers organized you (the pupils) to bring the food here'. I mean we did this thing by ourselves for so many years. There are certain things that we learned to do by ourselves and it was somewhat unthinkable to tell someone else to do it for us and I think this is something that matured Skapoula's people to a great extent, the sense of responsibility in general.

This minor knowledge transmitted through DIY and through an alternative form of peer-to-peer learning actively questioned the top-down method of participation that is fostered in schools. I argue that this top-down participation, such as the Model United Nations that Chloe described, constitutes a spectacular form of youth participation, mediated by adults, as participation within these models becomes a simulated experience without actual effect in politics. In such participation pupils rehearse adult roles instead of raising a voice about matters affecting their lives. In contrast, the parties are direct ways of participating in politics

challenging the alienation created by simulated participation and solidified knowledge, such as that which informs nationalist narratives. For Skapoula and Faneromeni youth, the parties replace the country, countering the institutional participation envisioned for Greek-Cypriot children and its enclosure within the nationalist cause. Furthermore, this direct participation and peer-to-peer learning questioned conventional perceptions of maturity and its association to age and politics, as explored in chapter 4, by overturning what the notion of responsibility could potentially entail.

It was this peer to peer transmission of know-how whose gradual loss was lamented by Maria as we sat one night at the square enjoying a falafel sandwich bought from a nearby Arabic kiosk. Maria, who had another year of high-school before moving abroad for university studies, expressed to me her worries for Skapoula's survival. She worried that gentrification of the square had caused the community that was the primary support for Skapoula to disperse, and that as older members of Skapoula gradually left Cyprus for their studies they took with them the know-how for organizing a party or an event. She felt that the new Skapoula members would have difficulty sustaining the collective as they depended a lot on Billis and other older members of Skapoula for taking up the responsibilities to contact different people within the Choros as well as different shopkeepers and printing houses that Skapoula frequently used when they wanted to organize an event. These older members had either been part of Skapoula since its early days and learned how to self-organize parties together with other people who had been frequenting the square or they joined Skapoula later but just before a few of the initial members moved abroad for studies. As newer members in Skapoula had the chance to learn about organizing events from the older members, they were also introduced to the broader community of regulars of Faneromeni that could assist them with the different chores described above, and with whom they would co-manage events organized by the wider Choros of Faneromeni.

Maria became a member after the majority of older members had left, and she felt insecure about the continuation of the collective given the gradual loss of easy accessibility to this community of Faneromeni regulars and that the newest members of the group lacked experience in self-organizing. However, even after going abroad, older members continued to be active with the group by designing posters, submitting content for Skapoula's magazine, and advising on organizing events. Despite this ongoing support, Maria's concerns proved to be valid as the self-organized character of an anti-authoritarian underage youth group, like Skapoula, depended on direct relationality and direct peer support and transmission of this

minor knowledge. I explore these issues thoroughly in Chapter 7 in the discussion on friendship as an active political practice.

5.6. Appropriating the city streets

To return to the organization of the early September party, soon after the assembly at Skalia, the poster for the event was designed and already printed out. Ermis posted in Skapoula's online group that 75 posters were printed at the printing house they normally used, and they cost approximately 7.50 euros. Ermis posted several versions of the poster in the group so all the members could comment and participate in the design process. It was finally decided that the event would be entitled 'Against school normativity: presentation and discussion on nationalism in education followed by live hip-hop and open mics'. When everything was finalized Ermis proposed that everybody should meet at the square around 21:00 to help post the poster on city walls.



Figure 11. Poster of the party 'Against school normativity'.

I arrived at the square around 21:00 and saw Despo, Paris, and Thanasis, who is an older regular of the square, around 45 years old, sitting on the pavement, talking, and enjoying their beers. I joined them, and while we were chatting, Skapoula members started gathering around us. Billis and Petros went to prepare the glue that was needed for posting. When everybody arrived the posting started.

I was an active participant this time, handing posters to Billis, who glued them on the walls after Ermis brushed the wall with glue, while Petros was carrying the bucket with the glue. Fotis and Maria were looking out for cops or fascists passing by the area. At one point Fotis notified us about the presence of cops and we all hid in a narrow side street to wait for them to pass by before returning to our task. I felt part of the group and excited by what we were doing, I felt that this action gave unity and strength to the group, bonding group members as they passed through the cafes and restaurants that have sprouted along the old city streets, through the world of consumerism and apathy that was spread out so intensely before us, choosing to spend their night – their teenage lives – differently. The contrast of these two worldviews was striking, and it was precisely this contrast and the youths' cooperation to hold an action 'against normativity' that bonded them and supported their collective identity, which formed the basis of the group.



Figure 12. Posting in city streets.

Other youths, who were regulars of the square but not Skapoula members, also joined us in the posting process. They were hanging out at the square that evening, and they were keen to accompany us and to watch for police while the process was taking place. Within 40 minutes all the posters were glued, which Ermis said was a 'new record'. After putting up the posters, we all relaxed with a beer at Skalia.

5.7. Setting up the party, setting up community

Early on the day of the party, Skapoula members gathered at the park to set up for the event. I also arrived early and parked close to the park so that we could easily carry the loudspeakers and the music consoles, which we had taken from Stathis's house the previous day. This park had a relatively circular shape, surrounded by trees and passing by one could only get a glimpse of what was happening in it, which was an advantage for a party organized without the municipality's permission. In the middle of the park there was a big paved space, like a small amphitheatre. Skapoula members, along with other pupils mainly from Faneromeni as well as some people from the surrounding neighbourhood, slowly gathered there. Eventually, approximately 25 people had turned up, and Petros introduced the topic of nationalism in education.

In order to introduce a problematization on the topic of nationalism and how it is normalized within the Cypriot educational system Petros outlined the educational goals that the Ministry of Education had set out for schools for the coming 2014-2015 academic year: this included the aim to draw 'perennial moral lessons from the struggles Cypriots endured for freedom.' The plan was that schools would take actions to cultivate in pupils 'the determination and militancy for liberating and re-uniting our country' (Ministry of Education and Culture 2014, 11). Petros mentioned that the focus would be on the EOKA struggle, since its 60th anniversary was in 2015. He then pointed out how history textbooks misrepresent the EOKA struggle by glorifying Greek Cypriot EOKA fighters' actions against colonialism while obscuring the crimes they committed against Greek Cypriot communists and Turkish Cypriots. Educational authorities further play down the fact that EOKA's true objective was to unite Cyprus with Greece, following the belief that Cyprus belongs to the wider Greek nation, rather than pursue an independent state.

At that point, a lively discussion erupted among the pupils who reflected on the different ways Greek Christian identity is promoted by schools as normative. They commented on the

obligatory Christian prayer recited in classrooms each morning, the Greek flags erected at the school entrances, the portraits of EOKA fighters, Orthodox priests, and saints on classroom walls, and how pupils get extra credit if they participate in school parades or celebrations commemorating perceived national triumphs. Petros and several other pupils also shared their experience of being punished by schools' administration for unjustified absence when participating in demonstrations against the memorandum, organized by the Pancyprian Coordinating Pupils' Committee (PSEM), and in memorial celebrations of the Polytechnic struggle against the Greek junta in 1973, while other pupils were not punished for absence when they left to demonstrate against the anniversary of the Turkish Cypriots' illegal, de facto declaration of an independent state. A couple of pupils then suggested that the normalization of nationalism within Greek Cypriot schools makes the actions of neo-fascist groups like National Popular Front (ELAM)³⁴ seem normal since they are basically implementing the moral prescriptions promoted by the Ministry on Education and the Church. These moral prescriptions concern the construction of a 'fighting spirit' among the young against those perceived as enemies of the nation. In this way many pupils support the actions of ELAM as they see them as aligned with what they are taught in schools.

At that point Petros, who was moderating the discussion, asked how could pupils resist such nationalism if they believe it is problematic and dangerous. Some pupils shared their experiences. Billis said that one way is to 'not to shut up during history class' and to expose the obscured historical facts while talking with fellow pupils to try to make them aware of the controversial aspects of EOKA, for example. A couple of pupils reacted to this saying that other pupils get bored listening to people in classroom continuously opposing the teacher and just want the class to finish and get out. Ermis then questioned the potential of a tactic of working within the 'narrow limits' of the education system that can punish pupils who contradict teachers. Instead of trying to convince right-wing or apolitical pupils through one-to-one interaction that will effect limited change, in his opinion, a counter-tactic would be to actively support those pupils who wish for a more egalitarian world. This would be done through promoting a counter-talk (αντίλογος) within schools, much like Skapoula has done, and give these pupils 'the arguments, positions and resistant practices to support their opinion.'

³⁴ ELAM (Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο) was founded in 2008 in Cyprus and was registered as a political party. It defines itself as a 'nationalist party' and has close cooperation with far-right party Golden Dawn in Greece. In fact, initially ELAM wanted to register as 'Golden Dawn – Cyprus's branch', a request that was denied. It gradually gained popularity, particularly among the youth population and during the financial crisis. In 2016, it elected two members of Parliament.

In other words, Ermis was arguing that instead of working within the limits of the system, pupils like them should create their own limits and expand the possibilities provided by a system that offers limited subject positions for pupils to occupy. Fotis made a summary of the arguments and said that from his experience there is need to do both: have one-to-one discussions with other pupils at school, but also recognize that nationalism is 'institutionally established', therefore pupils' direct participation in counter-politics would involve the 'production of a counter-talk', which would be distributed at schools and to youth outside schools through brochures and organized gatherings, like this party, that brought together many youth and promoted alternative conversations and relations to the mainstream. On this note, and as the time of the hip-hop part of the party was fast approaching, Petros urged participants to take a beer and continue discussions during the party.

Through such interactions and common reflection on how the state constructs certain political ideas and subject positions as normative, in this case nationalism, pupils were able to critically explore the binaries and contradictions that inform their daily lives and which alienate them from other people, such as the Turkish Cypriots. The critical everyday enacted on city streets and through street parties challenges the dominant order of everyday living and makes the fictitious contradictions of daily life visible. Conversations, like the one described above on nationalism in schools, are forbidden from taking place within institutional settings but are facilitated in the context of the public space where encounters – this time between Skapoula members and other pupils not necessarily politicized – lead such apolitical subjects 'on the verge of becoming political' (Blanchot 1987, 241).

When the discussion ended, everybody started working to finish setting up for the party. In an open space in the middle of the park, Billis, with the help of Petros and Fanos, another Skapoula member (16 years old), were setting up the speakers and the sound consoles and tried playing some music to see if they worked. The loudspeakers needed to be put on tripods so that the music could be heard evenly in various areas of the park, so many pupils and other Faneromeni youth got busy doing that. Then a sound check followed. At the same time, others brought in tables and chairs for placing equipment on and to be used for the bar. These items had come from Paris, a member of Steki Areos, the social centre that had shut down the previous June. He had held on to the furniture from the Steki at his house to be used by members of the Choros in events that they organized. Previously, another collective of the Choros had used this furniture at the place they were renting, while some of the furniture dated back to the Occupy the Buffer Zone movement, which took place in 2011-2012, and even from other initiatives that happened in 2009. Thus, there seemed to be a common hold

of some property by the Choros which was mobile and was used depending on the need of the collective or the initiative at hand. This common property included chairs, tables, a generator, cables to connect the generator to various equipment, a projector, and even some kitchen utensils, like large casseroles for the common practice of collective kitchen. This property was shared to all of the groups to support the DIY and the anti-consumerist ethos of the Choros.

Across from where the loudspeakers were installed, Maria, Vasiliki and Lakis, an older member of the anti-authoritarian community who usually helped during parties of the Choros, brought the barrels to hold the ice and beer. The youth sold beer and other expropriated drinks at the party at very cheap prices and with a very small profit margin. Whatever profit was made was put in Skapoula's common repository to support the group's future events and actions, as well as to pay the expenses of the party in line with the principle of anti-consumerist DIY entertainment.

Next to the bar, Maria set up a table, 'the bench' as they called it, to display editions of Skapoula's magazine, some other Skapoula opinion leaflets, as well as brochures and stickers from anti-authoritarian collectives in Cyprus and Greece, brought by Skapoula members from visits to Athens or sent to Skapoula upon request. Many of these brochures focused on the undemocratic structure of the educational system, while the stickers included slogans against sexism, fascism and racism. Stickers were an easy way to convey a political message and a means that felt familiar to youth who often collect stickers during their teenage years. These brochures, stickers and magazines were offered for free or for a voluntary contribution.



Figure 13. The bench.



Figure 14. Stickers.

There were also some books, such as *Fascism without a Swastika* from an anti-fascist collective in Greece, among others, which were given away with a small fee. The setting up of this bench was a common practice at Skapoula parties, as this was the chance for Skapoula to disseminate its material and thus its opinion on a variety of socio-political issues to other youth and older people attending its events. The parties were thus a combination of anti-consumerist fun and an awareness-raising action; they offered an opportunity for new interested youth to get involved and to get to know Skapoula's members and the group's actions. Maria herself got to know Skapoula, as she told me, from coming along to one such party and being very impressed that youth her age could self-organize such events, which led to her decision to join afterwards as a full member. Vasiliki also got introduced to Skapoula through one of the street parades during which Skapoula material was disseminated. Sometimes, Skapoula members also set this bench up at Faneromeni Square to hand out publications to passers-by.

Skapoula, and by extension the Choros, had made the park a home for the moment, with help from those at the '*perifereia*' (periphery). It was an open, hospitable home, where their shared furniture and equipment was set up. The community of the Choros was reconstituted at the

park where through the setting up of the equipment, bonds between the members were reaffirmed and new bonds were on the verge of being created with new people coming to enjoy and maybe help at the party. Setting up the party, therefore, was in many ways setting up community. Furthermore, bonding was enhanced through a groundedness of the experience: the relationship with place was taking flesh through mundane activities such as connecting equipment to a socket in the park or tying up a banner between two trees. By putting this banner up between the trees a relationship with the place starts to be developed, through the appropriation of and consequent creation of intimacy with the space around. This intimate and homely feeling in the public place nourished the bonds between Skapoula members, as well as between Skapoula members and youth from the wider circle of Faneromeni who helped set up the event. Furthermore, the DIY character of the party empowered the group members, who were constantly overcoming the boundaries of what society told them they could and could not achieve, by taking care of their own fun, learning and politicization without top-down intermediaries.

The ownership of the space, and subsequent intimacy, created through the setting up process, as well as the unserious seriousness of the practice of the party, which combined fun with dissemination of Skapoula's counter-talk, facilitated feelings of ownership of the group by new members, as they started to take on responsibilities to help organize the parties. Maria's first responsibility was to help put the beer on ice at one of the parties, Petros's participation started at a concert-party, and Raccoon started becoming familiar with the group and its members when he helped at their festivals before becoming a full member and attending assemblies:

Raccoon: I discovered Skapoula from the festival with Methismena Xotika and I started slowly to approach the group [...] At first I went as a helper; I helped at events without self-identifying as a member and slowly, slowly when I started to mature within quotation marks, I started going to the assemblies as well.

This very much reflected my own experience of approaching and getting involved with the group. My uncomfortable feelings of 'intrusion' into the peer groups of Skapoula and Faneromeni youth when I started going to the square would ease at the parties because parties were inviting spaces for new people to join in and perfect opportunities to engage with one another in a light, fun atmosphere. Anyone could join the party, and since Skapoula had organized the action, I felt I had a legitimate presence there, especially when I was given a specific responsibility. My experience reflects what newer members of Skapoula went through to gain ownership of the group as they undertook responsibility during the organization of an

event. Moreover, I noticed that the relaxed atmosphere of the party made many youth who would not usually approach me at the square become very talkative and relaxed in my company. These were youth, like Loukas, who would be very helpful at the setting up of parties and events but were too bored in participating in assemblies and discussing actions that the group needed to take. When Loukas did attend, however, he would usually joke around, distracting but also lightening up the assembly.

The unserious seriousness of the party and my own position as part of the group within the party – at that particular party I was sitting on the bench with the political material taking contributions in support of the group – made youth like Loukas feel comfortable to approach me. At first, we chatted about Skapoula and about my research with the group. He then described how he got introduced to the group when his friends, who had an anti-fascist music band, were asked to play at a concert-party Skapoula organized. We further chatted about his politicization through grindcore music and support of veganism at which point he showed me a slogan he wrote on a city wall: ‘Eat fascists, not animals!’ Then we joked about how no one was paying attention to us and our role of taking contributions for the group. At that point Loukas started humorously ‘harassing’ people who just joined the party to make a contribution in support of the actions of the group. Most people, not sure if they should feel uncomfortable or not at this reaction, given that it was taking place in the context of a party and coming from a peer, started laughing and joked back, contributing whatever they could for the cause, thus becoming more conscientious of the political action in which they were participating. The party, as a fuzzy zone between seriousness and play, blurred the boundaries between fun and political action facilitating the promotion of Skapoula and its political ideas through Loukas’s playful, yet serious, joke.

5.8. Partying normativity away

As the setting up was close to completion more youth started arriving at the park and, after getting beer from the bar, they sat on benches or on the ground under the trees, enjoying their drinks and waiting for the music to start. Others ordered food from the nearby restaurant following Billis’s request that they should buy food from there. Everyone I often saw at Faneromeni Square was at the party, including youth that practiced hip-hop at parties, many pupils from the larger community of friends of Skapoula members, as well as other youth that I did not know.

At about one and a half hours after the discussion on nationalism had finished, the party was in full swing, with Rivo playing music and singing in hip-hop style. It was a beautiful summer evening; the atmosphere felt light and cheerful. I was standing with Maria, Lakis, and Miltos next to the bar and bench with the written material. People coming to the bar would also have a look at the bench and Maria would inform them about each publication and which collective published it. People who did not know Skapoula came by and asked about the actions of the group, while next to us Billis was having a discussion with a young girl about anti-fascism, the educational system and the actions of the group, advising her how she could help if she was interested, as the girl was a newcomer and not yet aware of the type of politics undertaken by Skapoula. The bench was usually set-up away from the music so that such discussions could take place easily. It was a space at the party for introducing the group and its politics to the attendees, often placed strategically next to the bar so that everyone would pass by at some point.

On the bench was information on major issues regarding the power dynamics within societies, ranging from the educational system and its suppressive mechanisms, to the fascism expressed in the form of delegitimizing sections of the working class, such as migrant workers. Skapoula and Faneromeni youth promoted such issues through a process of translating them into a youth vernacular, making them approachable by infusing them with a 'coolness' of being young, partying and yet caring about these larger issues at hand. This was made apparent to me at another party where I was again sitting behind the bench with Vasiliki and Iris, who was in her second year of lyceum. On the bench, there was a brochure, written by Faneromeni youth, including former Skapoula members, on the plight of migrants and EU security policies. Youth were approaching to have a look at the material and we were informing them that they could take copies for free or with a voluntary contribution. At some point, a young girl approached the bench to browse through the brochure. Iris, attempting to convince her to take the brochure, said, 'Πιάστο γιατί εν πολλά καλό, εθκιάβασα το τζιαι ήμουν κάπως ντάξει!' ('Take it because it's very good. I read it and I was like OK!'). The girl smiled, took the brochure and left a contribution in the box.

The phrase 'ήμουν κάπως ντάξει' ('I was like OK!') has a similar meaning to the expression 'respect!', which many youth use with one another to show that they admire or are impressed with something someone did or said. Therefore, Iris's phrase could be translated into 'I read the brochure and I was very impressed with the analysis; it is worth reading'. Iris's promotion of the material exhibited the directness in communication evident between youth, who have their own vernacular and use it in this case to transmit complex ideas about power. This

youth's vernacular is at times global containing words or phrases such as 'yolo' (you only live once), 'respect', 'spam', 'sketchy' (used for people that look suspicious, like potential fascists or plain-clothed police officers). At other times it is local, containing phrases like 'ρε πελλέ' ('re pelle', has similar meaning to 'dude' or 'mate', but literally translates into 'hey loco'), which Billis and other youth frequently use as a form of address that creates intimacy through its ingrained informality. Within the Cypriot context, adults rarely use the phrase especially if they do not know each other that well.

This informality of the parties, as well as the potential for transmitting counter-information in a cool way and in a language that other youth can understand and relate to, indicates the potential that this practice has for alternative youth communities in Cyprus and beyond (cf. Wright, 2000). Strong counter-establishment and counter-normative positions were made accessible and less threatening through the informality, lightness of spirit, experimentation, and playfulness of the fuzzy, liminal space of the parties. Furthermore, the fact that Iris was a member of the wider youth community of Faneromeni and still promoted Skapoula's material to others shows the sense of community in the 'perifereia' around Skapoula. One did not have to be in Skapoula to take up a role or help out in some way.

This community spirit and the experience of taking up roles at parties formed these youth in fundamental ways, giving them a sense of being acknowledged for doing something worthwhile with their own means. Their presence and voice mattered as they contributed to a more egalitarian world. By taking up roles at the party, youth were countering the normative roles assigned to them by the country and by the dominant discourses on childhood at the international level.

Normativity within the parties was resisted on other grounds as well. When the open mic part of the party kicked off, various youth lined up to share some self-written lyrics with the rest and to participate in the one-to-one lyrical exchange that was taking place. As I moved to another corner of the park, Sofronis, another youth in his early 20s who I often saw skating at Faneromeni square, sat next to me and we started chatting about hip hop in general. He noted that a group of boys who sing hip hop had just arrived in the park, and in the past they used to cause trouble whenever they came to Skapoula's parties. This group came from an area of Nicosia that was known to be very right-wing, while the few Skapoula members who lived there formed a minority of pupils with leftist, anti-authoritarian views at the public school of the area. This hip-hop group produced songs with strong sexist rhetoric, as well as aggressive

lyrics towards other hip-hop groups and youth groups like Skapoula. Billis came over at this moment to say that he hoped there would be no trouble.

At around 23:30, the owner of the restaurant in the park asked Billis to lower the volume of the music as supposedly a resident came to complain about the noise. Rivo then tried to end the open-mic phase of the party, but the hip-hop group, mentioned above, reacted negatively. In response, Skapoula members started yelling to them, 'I'm gay; I'm gay,' while others joined them and shouted, 'People kiss on the lips.' This was in response to a homophobic song the hip-hop group had produced some time ago, in which they mocked homosexuals with lyrics such as 'Men give handshakes, not kisses on the lips.'

In challenging the homophobic and heavily sexist rhetoric of the group's songs by shouting 'I'm gay, I'm gay,' Skapoula and Faneromeni youth were also attacking the dominant normative masculinity that this hip-hop group was trying to impose through their songs and authoritarian attitudes at Skapoula's parties. This authoritarian masculinity was also evident in lyrics mocking Faneromeni youth as 'fake anarchists who are supported by their parents cash,' which aimed at depoliticizing Skapoula's activism and minoritizing the actors by proclaiming their dependency on their parents.

Rivo intervened in hip-hop style telling the group that the party was over and thankfully this time no clash took place. Billis then lowered the sound and told me, 'I will now play punk so that we dance' and he went on to play some punk music at which point many Faneromeni boys started to dance wildly, bumping hard into each other and kicking their legs in the air. Similar scenes like this one were repeated in other Skapoula parties as well as in the concerts they organized, with girls also participating in the irregular dancing, jumping up and down with every limb attuned to the beats and lyrics coming out from the mikes, the sound consoles, the megaphones. I felt like every musical note was coming out from every tip of their bodies, while this irregular dancing seemed to fit with the political irregularity that they were introducing into the scheduled rhythms of their everydayness and of the general everydayness in Cyprus. After all, it was punk and this was a party against normativity, and I remember thinking with a smile on my face that even their dancing is anarchic.

5.9. Concluding remarks

As shown in this chapter, the practice of the parties served many purposes. It was a ritual of introduction to the square community and its practices, to Skapoula and the counter-establishment politics the group undertook. The undefined potential of versions of self in being on the street or in a public space, where most Skapoula's parties took place, in combination with the inherent playfulness in the practice of the party, provided participants with the chance to experiment without having to seriously commit to any rigid political identity or opinion. Experimentation came first; a playful experiment in community formation and minor knowledges (Foucault 1980b). Such engagement with minor knowledges, such as know-how in setting up a DIY party, or knowledge about marginalized histories, such as the treatment of Turkish Cypriots during –otherwise celebrated– national struggles, was made possible through the critical everyday on city streets. It contributed to the process of appropriating oneself from the alienating, rigid binaries instituted by nationalism, capitalism and institutional childhood. The street parties, in other words, contributed to a process of reclaiming one's self from hegemonic 'expert' knowledge and the spectacles of consumerism and nationalism.

In this sense, the unserious seriousness of the parties allowed for playful modes of transmitting crucial questions about power, made legible and accessible to other youth by further embedding them in a youth vernacular. Such questions probed the militarization of life in Cyprus, the nationalist and authoritarian nature of education, the break-down of autonomous collectives and communities, and the fascism embedded within systemic discourses and policies. In this way, the parties formed passageways, 'situations' as per the Situs, rituals, thresholds (Stavrides 2015) and fuzzy spaces in which youth were introduced into counter-normative politics.

Moreover, through the parties, the traversing of various normative boundaries took place that allowed youth to challenge conventional perceptions of what being a pupil and a child entails. These boundaries were erected by larger power discourses, such as nationalism, patriarchy, and adult authoritarianism in school settings and public spaces that largely solidify these youths' existence. In this sense, the critique of the everyday, made possible by exposure in a public space and making the public space a home, broke down practices of bordering and a variety of binaries that are produced through such practices. The fuzzy, playful, yet serious, space of the party blurred otherwise rigid, normative boundaries, and allowed for other type

of potentialities to be expressed, such as non-dominant masculinities and alternative pedagogy through peer-to-peer learning.

Beyond normative boundaries, underage activists needed to negotiate with state *and* micro-level actors embodying adult privilege in order to gain access to public space. Because of these negotiations with such micro-level actors, I have argued that a direct action, implemented by underage activists is almost never straightforwardly direct, in the sense that has been theorized by Graeber (2009, 203) and others as ‘acting as if one is already free’ and by sidestepping the state in implementing the action. Instead, underage actors needed to negotiate with the capillary forms that state and other forms of power often take, and which are embodied in these micro-level adult actors; such negotiations, therefore, trouble theoretical assumptions about the directness of action.

Moreover, gentrification processes and policies increasingly lead to the minimization and greater surveillance of public space in response to an emerging global fear of crowds (Aradau 2015), particularly youthful crowds, which are more often defined in dominant discourses as deviant and risky. This increasing minimization and surveillance of public space severely threatens the right to assembly of children non-institutional activists, and at a broader level it severely threatens the possibility of children to become political through appearing in public space. Street parties are key spaces for exercising this right and constitute a compound of key practices of mobilization and sustenance of self-organized, independent pupils’ activism.

Parties in the streets and in public spaces along with the square community itself, constituted key resources that sustained an underage, non-institutional pupils’ group, like Skapoula, which wanted to act with a DIY ethic, without sponsors, and outside spaces of corporate globalization. The DIY street party constituted a medium of community formation and of strengthening community bonds. This was achieved by being a medium of recruiting more pupils to Skapoula as well as a space for re-affirming bonds within the anti-authoritarian youth community through cooperation in setting up the party. Furthermore, the party constituted a light, pleasurable practice through which new members could gain a sense of ownership of the group by sharing various responsibilities.

DIY was thus a medium of rehumanizing relationships alienated by the mediations of expert knowledge, schooling and consumerism. Moreover, the DIY party, as a practice in which youth had direct, unmediated participation in politics, acted as a counter-spectacular form of youth participation. This practice contrasts with spectacular forms of youth participation exercised within schools through simulated activities which are based on adult models of participation

(Model UN, children's parliament) and which do not have an actual effect in politics, but instead turn participation into a spectacle.

In Cyprus more specifically, spectacular forms of youth participation also take shape through nationalist ideology, in which youth are invited to participate as icons: as saviors and future sacrificial heroes for the country, an idealized space in which youth have no access to its formation. Instead, through the DIY self-organized street party, Skapoula pupils shifted resistance from sacrifice to pleasure, and exercised politics on their own terms, by being the ones who set the rules of the game. As Ermis noted in the discussion on nationalism in education:

We want with our own way to help in bringing into existence a counter-talk (αντίλογος) and to expand the anti-fascist (sentiment/movement within schools) and to make available arguments, positions, practices. I think that this is where we should *play*' (my emphasis).

In the following chapter I aim to explore Skapoula's counter-talk as it was expressed mainly through their written material which was disseminated in schools and streets. I will explore this counter-talk as another form of serious play complementing the practice of partying and playful community formation in city streets.

Chapter 6

Talking back: Sabotaging categories of adult political definition

‘Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life, and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of ‘talking back’ that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of moving from object to subject, that is the liberated voice.’

– bell hooks (1986)

‘To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. [...] Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression.’

- Paulo Freire (1972)

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I explore what I term as Skapoula’s ‘definitional politics’ as expressed through their written and distributed counter-talk. With the term ‘definitional politics’ I want to suggest that their counter-talk (αντίλογος) mainly revolved around challenging the normative, individualized, apolitical meaning given to categories of identification, such as the categories of ‘child’ (παιδί) and ‘pupil’ (μαθητής/μαθήτρια). Through such contestation, Skapoula wanted to make pupils aware of how these categories could be lived otherwise. I understand such categories as spaces of lived experience, which, like physical spaces, can become enclosed spaces when one group, in this case adult authorities, has dominant power over defining their signification and meaning.

Within such spaces, youth have the possibility to act as ‘saboteurs’. As Durham (2000, 113) notes, their ‘potential for political sabotage comes from their incomplete subjugation to contexts and co-opters, and to their own power for action, response and subversion in contexts of political definition’. In other words, the potential for political sabotage comes from youth’s escape from, and subversion of, the definitional politics exercised by adult discourses - that is, overarching narratives/regimes of knowledge and ‘truth’ such as nationalist ideologies and human rights- on what youth and children are about and what type of political action they can undertake. In this sense, I argue that the boundaries for political action for children are not only constructed through chronological criteria –over or under 18 for example- but mainly

through regimes of knowledge that define what is *proper* political behaviour and *issues of concern* for children.

The concept of ‘sabotage’ as it is regularly used in the anti-authoritarian activist vocabulary implies a practice of direct action, an action without middle-men: acting without taking permission by any institution or official authority. I propose that it can also be used in another way -and this idea became evident to me during fieldwork- to refer to the sabotaging of dominant definitions by providing alternative meaning, as well as practices, through which such definitions can be experienced. In this case, sabotage is actualized by a direct reclaiming of these categories through infusing them with different meaning. I explore this talking back to power through a review of Skapoula’s counter-talk as expressed in Skapoula’s Magazine (5 Issues), in various brochures it distributed within schools and city streets and in discussions I had with various members.

Furthermore, I examine Skapoula’s tactic of centering their activism on a category of identification that is relevant to all school-age youth in Cyprus –the category of ‘pupil’- and the use of that category to mobilize other pupils to think critically and have a say about topics such as education, militarism, and youth political participation. In this way, I argue, Skapoula members attempted to mark out a space for pupils themselves to participate in larger socio-political agendas, challenging the imposed political illiteracy and intellectual inequality (Ranciere 1991) of children as a technique of minoritization/infantilization that excludes them from participation in public affairs in the now.

Finally, I explore ‘skapoula’ (truancy, or skipping school) as a common practice among secondary school pupils in Cyprus, and its re-appropriation by the pupils of the Skapoula collective. The latter conceptualized ‘skapoula’ as a direct reclaiming of pupils’ time from adult authorities in order to appropriate it in pupils’ own terms. This pupils’ practice of direct reclaiming of Time exposes, I argue, the occupation of one’s time as a deeply political practice. Demanding control over their own time, and the opportunity for communal time-time for play, is one of Skapoula’s most significant claims.

6.2. *‘Η Σκαπούλα ήταν το παιχνίδι μας’ (Skapoula was our play)*

One afternoon I arranged to meet with Chloe at Kala Kathoumena coffee-shop, as I wanted to have a follow-up discussion with her about Skapoula and the different ways through which they exercised their politics. She started by telling me how the reason they made Skapoula in the first place was because they felt they needed a group of their own that could cater to the worries of their own generation, but also because they felt somewhat alienated by the assemblies of adult people at the square, and in squats nearby, where they kept having theoretical discussions about different issues but not really taking action on them. Skapoula therefore was created partly to accommodate the desire of youth to speak about what they knew best and experienced on an everyday basis but also because they felt somewhat sidelined within adult conversations and circles. Skapoula was much more about ‘doing things’ rather than simply talking about them, as Chloe said, and within the assembly they were constantly looking for things to do and organize.

‘Skapoula was our play’ she told me. I was intrigued by this phrase. Although at first glance it might seem to devalue Skapoula as a political group by insinuating a frivolous type of politics, contextualizing it within the everydayness of the square, as a political and cultural space for experimentation and sabotage of institutional meanings, it can be argued that Skapoula did exactly that: play. In this case however play is serious in terms of relating to a politics of experimentation with various potential definitions of the self while, at the same time, redefining overarching categories presented as fixed by the political establishment.

Skapoula in this sense was a game for the pupils participating in it. It was communal time spent outside institutional, structured activity. It was time dedicated to play, to imagination and to having fun in the process of taking up larger issues involving politics. ‘Skapoula’, as a practice of Cypriot pupils, was literally time taken out of school in order to be managed in one’s own terms. Effectively it was something pupils felt they had ownership of. Skapoula as play can be seen as a metaphor of being flexible and amenable since it can be molded in the way people participating in it see fit. Although play might have certain rules at any given time, there is space and time for experimentation and imagination, of taking up different roles or changing the game at any given time. Play is usually a time when children are less supervised and are given the space to have a type of agency forbidden during other times. They are given the space and time for delving into their imagination. Skapoula members understood that this was understood as something that needed to be reclaimed from adult authorities. They considered imagination and play as essential parts of everyday life and not a particular period

assigned to the chronological time of childhood. For them play, in the sense of experimentation, should therefore infuse all aspects of everyday life.

In this sense, during time dedicated to Skapoula's activities, concepts like education were effectively reclaimed as forms of play, as experimentation with different types of knowledge. During the time freed by pupils for undertaking Skapoula's activities, member-pupils were able to conceive themselves otherwise through living a different everydayness than the one prescribed by systemic adult authorities. One of Skapoula's main claims thus was Time, a reclaiming of time for pupils-children to manage in their own terms. In this sense I see the occupation of time and the envisioned ways in which time should be occupied as a deeply political issue and practice.

Skapoula in this sense can be read as a capsule in the time-space of these pupils' lives that was claimed for play. By naming the Magazine and the group 'Skapoula', they illustrated how the very group itself was constituted as this reclaiming. This was a reclaiming of time both from the neoliberal system of education that constantly puts more expectations on youth to 'succeed' in very specific individualized forms, but also from the particular familial and educational expectations of Greek-Cypriot adult authorities. In this sense schools, education and the pupil category itself are reclaimed as times and spaces for experimentation and contestation and are understood as collective goods that can only be reclaimed and redefined in collective terms.

By participating in Skapoula's activities youth were playing with different roles and definitions of the self challenging simultaneously their enclosure within the categories of child and pupil as elaborated by adult discourses, both global and local. As such, Skapoula's definitional politics are seen as another form of *serious play*, a subversion of the game of institutional adult politics, through opening the space for alternative ways of being a child and being a pupil. Serious play here, conducted by those defined by the establishment as 'children' is seen as another form of resistance through subverting grand narratives sustaining the Greek-Cypriot political establishment.

As elaborated in chapter 2, play also alludes to the concept of childhood as the quintessential period of play in the West, constructed as to allow for one to explore her imagination and experiment with different roles. This experimentation is allowed however as long as it takes place within private establishments and/or under adult supervision and does not fundamentally challenge overarching categories and mechanisms through which adult authorities maintain their power. Children's play is not envisioned for such actions. Children's

play is safe as long as it maintains its frivolous character. Although this period is granted to Western children and teenagers, at the same time different, more punitive types of policies are implemented towards those who engage in serious play, that is, who challenge to an effective degree the establishment. As I will argue later on through the example of Skapoula's participation in the Occupy the Buffer Zone movement, underage youth's non-institutional activism, or serious play in this case, may be interpreted by the authorities as an abandonment of childhood, in which case harsher policies, unfitting for those defined as children, become implemented.

6.3. Enclosures

Categories of identification can themselves work as enclosures. This can happen when rigid boundaries are put around their meaning thus affecting the potential for action of the actors who live these categories in their everydayness. In this section, I briefly refer to the enclosures that restrict and confine the category of children, including teenage youth, thus setting boundaries around their potential for political action. A more elaborate discussion of such enclosures is included in chapter 3.

There are different dominant processes and discourses that interact to construct the mainstream category of teenage youth, and children in general, in Cyprus and draw boundaries around their potential political activity. Being educated in a Greek educational system is deemed as essential as it is also a process through which, beyond general knowledge, one receives indoctrination into what are perceived as Greek values and ideals. Achieving *prokopi*, that is progress, involves becoming educated, but even more, on a symbolic level, becoming a proper (Greek) patriot (*πατριώτης*). One of the main purposes of education within the Greek-Cypriot context is to produce the future defenders of the nation; therefore, adult authorities deem the 'politics' of children as legitimate only when they involve such a task. Patriotism renders nationalism within the schooling system as apolitical, therefore children – who are also considered as apolitical – are seen in a proper position to undertake this task.

Beyond this enclosure associated with nationalist ideals, enclosures to children's identity are currently constructed via consumerism. Current spaces for youth socialization, like coffee chain shops and recent trendy cafes, are constructed as apolitical spaces and leisure in these spaces is not associated to any type of political action nor envisioned for community formation. These spaces are clean of any political paraphernalia, much to the contrast of

indigenous kafeneia, while frequenting such places is sold as an experience of modernity (cf. Cowan 1990). Therefore here the category of youth becomes further defined through its association to a specific type of leisure marketed by an encroaching consumerism after the mid- 1980s.

In association to the above, discourses on the rights of the child, which started to gain visibility in Cyprus after mid-2000s, seem to contribute to the depoliticization of this category, rather than challenge it. More specifically, they are called to serve and adapt to the overall depoliticization of the child in the Greek-Cypriot context and its enclosure within the nationalist narrative. Everyone seems to agree with the inclusion of human rights discussions within schools as long as they do not threaten the overarching national narrative. For example, the opinion of teenage boys on issues pertaining to their obligatory military service is not considered at all, and would be an issue highly avoided while discussing participation as a right in the context of children's rights discussions. Although, overall, such discussions very rarely take place. Instead, the participation of pupils in the managing of schools and in the overall construction of educational policy in Cyprus remains highly tokenistic, as pupils' representatives have only a 'consultative' role in certain school decisions that is not binding for the establishment. This apolitical line seems consistent with the individualistic and privatized outlook towards 'the child' that runs through the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). The child in the latter is overall regarded as an individual entity while her potential connections to various communities are to a large extent underplayed (Boyden 1990; Burr 2002).

Children's rights discourses further depoliticize children within the Cypriot context by drawing lines around what must be considered the *concern* of children. This concern is constructed around the areas seen as proper for children to occupy themselves with, such as education and schooling enhancing thus propriety sensitivities and the concept of *prokopi* in Cyprus which enclose the child in the private and institutional sphere. For example, during the period of the first implementation of austerity measures in Cyprus in 2013³⁵, the Parliament decided to impose fares on previously free-of-charge buses taking pupils to school. Mass demonstrations took place by pupils who were also invited to participate in wider

³⁵ In 2012, affected by the world economic recession, with severe losses to its banking sector, Cyprus applied for financial support to the Eurogroup. In March 2013 a 10-billion-euro financial assistance package for Cyprus was agreed by the Eurogroup, which further endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding on Cyprus' Macroeconomic Program and the Loan Agreement, as agreed between the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund (Troika) and Cyprus.

demonstrations by a number of social groupings relating to the financial crisis and austerity measures undertaken by the Troika. The Cypriot Commissioner for children's rights at the time discouraged pupils from participating in such wider demonstrations by arguing that such issues –the financial crisis and austerity-are not the concern of pupils³⁶. Instead, she urged them to occupy themselves only with issues relating to their schooling and education. For the Commissioner and the logic of children having a voice only on issues that concern them – a logic prominent in the CRC- wider social issues such as the financial crisis and the effect on the families of these children and the overall social fabric was not considered as children's concern³⁷. Such logics draw a line on the potential of children for political action effectively excluding them from participation in wider social agendas and minoritizing them by defining a priori what should constitute their concern.

6.4. Skapoules: conducting escapes

6.4.1. Skapoula as an overall practice of the Cypriot secondary school population for evading schooling

Skapoula (σκαπούλα) is a Greek Cypriot slang word, used by school-age youth, meaning escaping school, that is skipping school without permission and without providing any justification to either the school or parental authorities. It is a common practice conducted mostly by secondary school pupils in Cyprus, done with the aim of spending the day as one sees fit. The frequency of the practice among school pupils in Cyprus however indicates, in my opinion, pupils' frustration at the overwhelming management of pupils' time by adult authorities, as they are called to spend approximately six hours every day within classrooms

³⁶ Information from an interview with an officer of the Commissioner, 09.05.2014.

³⁷ The General Comment on article 12 in the Guiding Principles of the CRC particularly emphasizes the nuclear family as the context in which the child might be given voice on decisions affecting the child. Decisions taken by adults on behalf of children immediately shift to decisions taken by parents within the context of the Comment and such decisions and issues are thought to involve 'family or legal or administrative decisions'; legal and administrative decisions as clarified by paragraph 2 of article 12 involve mainly judicial proceedings in which more often than not the child is presented as an individual, either a perpetrator of a misconduct or a victim. Such underlying assumptions put limits to the issues in which the child has a right to be heard by emphasizing children as actors mainly within the judicial and familial context. These approaches have been to a certain extent redressed by the recent General Comment 20 (2016).

following curricula decided on adult terms. It is further indicative of intense feelings of boredom in relation to a highly didactic delivery of education, particularly within Cypriot public schools, which leaves little room for participatory, critical and interactive methods of learning. It can thus be read as a diagnostic of power (Abu-Lughod 1990) and in this case of the highly authoritarian educational practice implemented by the Ministry of Education within schools.

Furthermore, the way that education is presented to pupils leaves little room for imagination. Even classes that would seem fit for more creative explorations such as Modern Greek literature and History are commonly presented without a critical perspective at hand, but instead as encompassing well-accepted perennial historical truths aimed to enhance feelings of national affiliation while minimal connections are made to children's own realities. I describe this approach as 'museumized education', in the sense that it is disassociated from pupils' lived realities and presented as something fixed, offering only tokenistic pupil participation. Greek-Cypriot pupils seek forms of escape from such museumized education, one of which is provided by conducting skapoula from school.

As James Scott (1985) argued in his seminal work on peasants' resistance in Malaysia, the subaltern and the underprivileged react to the conditions of their disadvantage not only through organized collective action but more often through everyday forms of resistance. When this type of resistance is done at a large scale it can constitute a direct challenge to authoritarian policies towards the 'weak'. The phenomenon of skapoules within Greek Cypriot schools, I argue, constitutes such a type of everyday resistance even if the pupils themselves might not consciously name it as such. The treatment of skapoules by the establishment varied until recently, depending on the frequency of each pupil's absenteeism. A small number of skapoules did not elicit any punishment. However, if a pupil was caught while conducting a skapoula their parents would be notified and they might even get one to two days expulsion from classes. Conducting a large number of skapoules per year would secure a greater punishment such as being forced to repeat the same grade. Until recently, the phenomenon was dealt by authorities through individual measures taken against pupils, as it was seen as a 'personal problem' of the pupils themselves, rather than a problem of the establishment regarding the forms of instruction and the content of curricula. Thus, a pathologization of pupils was taking place as justification of the phenomenon.

A new set of measures announced recently by the Ministry of Education however demonstrate a much stricter state attitude towards this resistant practice and a tendency towards delegitimizing pupils' right of assembly. According to the new regulations that the Ministry has

been trying to implement since April 2016, every unjustified absence from school will be considered a disciplinary offence and as such it will elicit a punishment. Furthermore the number of justified absences from school has been severely reduced (Kiriakidou 2016). These new regulations leave no room for skapoules, while further pathologizing and criminalizing the practice. In the same vein, in January 2017, in an unprecedented act, the Ministry itself warned the pupils not to participate in demonstrations organized by PSEM, the organized representative body of pupils in Cyprus, declaring such participation as unauthorized. The demonstrations were against increasing the number of examination periods during the school year. This warning was against the Pancyprian school regulations (OELMEK 2011) where pupils participating in PSEM's events, including protests, were allowed to leave school without being charged with unauthorized absence (Cyprus Times 2017). The new school regulations implemented in February 2017 criminalized and nationalized pupils' protests by limiting justified participation in PSEM's events only in the case that these involve educational conferences, commemorative events and demonstrations against the Turkish occupation of Cyprus.

6.4.2. 'Escape from school, escape from the army, we won't serve any master' ('Σκαπούλα απ' το σχολείο, σκαπούλα απ' το στρατό, δεν υπηρετούμε κανένα αφεντικό')

– *Common slogan of Skapoula pupil collective*

Georgina: 'Why name the group Skapoula?'

Ermis: 'Because it was a *pupil thing*' ('Γιατί ήταν κάτι *μαθητικό*', my emphasis)

Billis: 'Because you would give the Magazine to someone and they would understand that it was something different, *because Skapoula constitutes a form of claiming our free time*, so that we go and sit in parks. It was also something against the educational system, in general; all this time that we *waste* in school *doing nothing*, to be able to manage it ourselves the way we want to' (my emphasis).

-Group interview with members of Skapoula

'Second issue of Skapoula (Magazine)...and we owe you some explanation. The name, that also reflects our reaction to the educational system, constitutes the action that many pupils, including ourselves, appropriate so that they can save themselves from another six-hour long rape in school classrooms. Skapoules, always connected with long

walks and free time, constitute the escape from regulations, (school) bells, tests and surveillance. They constitute breaths of freedom from the suppression within schools. We are not however satisfied with such breaths, but we struggle until the air of freedom fills up our lungs.'

-Skapoula Magazine, Issue 2

For the group Skapoula itself, the practice of skapoula was a form of direct reclaiming of time from the authorities to be used in one's own terms. For Skapoula, the way pupils' time is filled up and who has a say in that is not unproblematic; instead they make it *a type of political concern* highlighting it as a specific way of governing pupils' lives. This direct reclaiming of Time exposes, I argue, the occupation of one's time as a deeply political practice, and 'as a medium of hierarchic power and governance' (Munn 1992, 109). Furthermore, Skapoula pupils recognize 'skapoula' as a practice of resistance to the educational system that, as Billis says, 'wastes' pupils' time by being in class and 'doing nothing'. Skapoula pupils chose this name for the group and their Magazine as it was a practice that the pupils' themselves owned, a practice from below, from the pupils' themselves. The Magazine -- as the first action by Skapoula in reaching out to the Cypriot youth-pupil public -- was further defined as 'a self-organized pupil's magazine'. The 'pupil' categorization, much like the name 'skapoula', was thus mobilized as a term to which all teenage youth could relate, as school-age youth were the primary target audience that Skapoula was addressing.

Furthermore, Skapoula members used the category of pupil as a starting point of exploration of their social positioning within society. As Ermis said when I pointed out that Skapoula was very pre-occupied with the category of the pupil: 'You act from where you are, politics in the first person, not that we wanted to avoid it but necessarily you act from where you are'. In this way the pupil category and form of identification, an identification imposed from the outside, was seen as a productive space in starting to examine the various discourses that form the pupil identity, through an exploration of the very own experience of the pupils of Skapoula themselves, within and beyond schools. The pupil category thus worked as the common ground connecting different members. It also worked as a safe space for the pupils of Faneromeni, as by holding their own assemblies they could express their opinions more comfortably without thinking that they might be judged by adult regulars of the square, whom they considered more well-read.

Ermis: I believe that age plays an important role in autonomous politics because if you want to make a group and do things with your own powers and with your own mind it automatically means...it's these personal politics, namely, we are all pupils, even if we

don't have the same opinions and ok we did fight a lot during some assemblies, we have this thing (in common)

Giorgos: that we are little (μικροί, μικροί, young) so...

Ermis: Eh little...pupils...like for example you see that groups that are active have something important in common. Or the political opinions of people who participate are matching so that even if they fight they still have a (common) basis, it won't be the case that someone says something and then another one something completely different. This happens in certain initiatives, in larger assemblies (talking about the assemblies of the whole Faneromeni community). Or they will be groups that have this identity politics.

In similarity with other social movements, Skapoula was performing a form of identity politics, a 'politics in the first person' (see Katsiaficas 1997). It was performing, in other words, a type of politics that politicized pupils and children's everyday life, especially their everyday experience within schools. In this sense, in similarity with feminist movements (Highmore 2002), it sought to produce this everyday life as problematic in order to expose the authoritarian government of children's lives. Unlike liberal 'new' social movements however, Skapoula performed autonomous politics that did not address the state for reforms and recognition, but addressed the consciousness of other fellow pupils through mobilizing a counter-talk (αντίλογο) within schools and streets and through undertaking direct action. In this sense they performed, I argue, an unapologetic form of politics, seeking not acceptance but visibility, stating, rather than asking for, their equality through a direct participation in public affairs in the present.

Furthermore, beyond being a tool for mobilization and a starting point of struggle, the pupil category was reclaimed by Skapoula in another sense. Skapoula reappropriated and resignified the pupil by privileging the aspect of *the learner* within the pupil category, and particularly a form of learning that was relational and held in common, and not in isolation. This was a type of learning that involved experimentation and reflection, qualities of the pupil as learner that Skapoula wanted to maintain and privilege, in contrast to the infantilized and neutralized pupil positionality dominant within schools.

The privileging of the aspect of the 'learner' within the pupil category was made clear in a conversation I had with Giorgos, Ermis and Billis.

Giorgos: With the wider concept of anarchism, yes, in general we are anarchists, at least the people in (Skapoula)

Georgina: what do we mean 'with the wider concept'?

Billis: the antiauthoritarian

Giorgos: against authorities, against hierarchy. We avoided it a bit at the beginning so that it doesn't appear...so that they (other youth) have a look at the Magazine before they throw it away let's say, but in general we did well because we gave space (δώσαμε περιθώριο)

Ermis: Yes for sure

Giorgos: so that we don't attach ourselves anywhere and this led us to different things, I mean afterwards we were influenced by different things because we did not put a very harsh label from the beginning, *because we are pupils, we should read a little before we like a certain thing* (my emphasis)

Billis: yes and when you're (only) eighteen, how many books will you have managed to read so that you draw more informed conclusions?

Despite generally associating themselves with the larger antiauthoritarian political space, Skapoula members saw themselves primarily as pupils -- understood as involved in a process of learning. Therefore, Skapoula members refrained from using 'anarchist' or 'anti-authoritarian' as adjectives for the Magazine in order to accommodate the experimentation that Skapoula members themselves were engaging in, but also as a strategy so that the Magazine would be read by as many pupils as possible. This strategy was necessary due to the strong negative connotations associated with anarchism in Cyprus.

Thus, a vernacular term of resistance, skapoula, was mobilized along with a global category of social positioning, the pupil, in order to talk back to the establishment and raise the consciousness of other pupils towards issues that, according to Skapoula, should not remain unproblematic: everyday life within schools and the management of time. This further allowed Skapoula members to relate their voices and their struggle to as many pupils as possible, as well as to other autonomous collectives of pupils, such as *Ανυπόταχτοι Μαθητές* (Undisciplined Pupils) in Patra, *Lise Anarşist Faaliyet* in Turkey and *Autonomous Assembly of Pupils (ASMA)* in Athens that shared similar concerns. Finally, Skapoula's privileging of the aspect of the learner within the pupil category was also taken up in their attempts to resignify the concept of education, to which I will turn now.

6.5. Μόρφωση, όχι Εκπαίδευση - Education, not Instruction

The high importance of *diavasma* (reading), education and learning for this group of young antiauthoritarians --also explored in chapter 4- was stressed to me in one of my earliest encounters with Skapoula at the very beginning of my fieldwork.

As we were waiting for people to arrive in order to start off one of the Skapoula's assemblies, in effect the second assembly that I attended, Billis, obviously irritated by some members' delayed arrival, and as I assume feeling a bit embarrassed for this due to my own presence there, started asking me about what material I have read, whether I have read Kropotkin or Bakunin or work from Autonomist Antifascists. Surprised by this questioning, embarrassment for not having read any of these authors came to be added to my already uncomfortable feelings of intrusion into what looked like a teenage hang-out place that kept becoming more cramped as more teenagers joined in. I mumbled something about authors that I had read however not much related to those Billis had in mind. Billis then responded that I should read some of these authors he suggested, at which point Maria showed me a book by a Greek Autonomist group, so that I could understand better Skapoula and their actions and politics. (Excerpt from fieldnotes)

Back then I did not immediately realize the significance of Billis's questioning within the Cypriot context. *Diavasma* (reading/studying), and by extension education, plays an important part in constituting Greek-Cypriot identity. It was through *diavasma* and particularly through studying Greek history and literature as instructed within schools, in general through being educated within a Greek system of education, that one became fully Greek (and by extension an adult in the eyes of Greek-Cypriot society). Without a Greek education one risked being influenced by alternative knowledges that could contaminate the national body. Being a people that have at different times experienced the dominance of colonial and imperialist power, Greek-Cypriots, and particularly the political-religious elite, held strongly to its supposedly pure Greek roots, and thus to owning and self-managing the educational institutions of its people. Education in this sense was not something one should experiment with as the whole survival of Greek-Cypriot people was perceived to depend on it. In this context, pupils reading alternative material that helped challenge the status quo and practicing street-related knowledge, was a radical act that could endanger the process-of-becoming-fully-a-Greek person.

As I elaborate below, through its Magazine Skapoula argued for an alternative form of education, at the same time as claiming a new meaning for the pupil category. Skapoula strongly argued for *morfosi*, not *ekpaideusi*. These are two separate words in Greek to effectively describe learning.

'*Ekpaideusi*' (εκπαίδευση) in Greek has similar meaning to 'instruction' and its root is found in the Greek verb 'παιδεύω' which means 'to torment' and also 'to train'. So *ekpaideusi* is connected with getting trained by someone, a form of receiving instruction. It is also used when one is talking about 'training' animals, as Iasonas very accurately pointed out to me in one of our conversations, explaining to me why Skapoula did not like the word '*ekpaideusi*'. 'We are not dogs (to be trained)' he told me. *Morfosi*, on the other hand, has its origin in the

verb 'morfono' which means 'giving shape', related to molding. Morfosi is thus related to acquiring knowledge and forming oneself in relation to that. Morfosi for Skapoula represented *a relational process*, rather than an already-fixed knowledge instructed to the pupils as such. It connotes interaction in the process of learning. Therefore, effectively Skapoula argued that they are not opposed to knowledge as such, but they are opposed to the concepts of 'training' and 'instruction' through which education is conducted in Greek Cypriot schools. As was stated in one of their brochures:

'We are not against morfosi and knowledge. To the contrary, we want to liberate these two concepts and make them weapons of our own. We are against the coercion exercised in schools and its enforcement on pupils, we are against the heteronomy of the nuclear family. We talk, think and act for our educational freedom, for the need of self-learning (the conquering of knowledge and its processing from below) for and from ourselves, according to our own capabilities, needs and desires' (Brochure Assixtir 2).³⁸

In this sense, education is seen as a concept in need of liberation from institutional authorities, in need to be owned and redefined from below, by the pupils themselves. For Skapoula morfosi (education) and knowledge needed to be redefined as areas of experimentation, play and critical thinking; as something alive and vivid that could 'mold' their personalities in various and relational ways. This claiming of morfosi as a space primarily of experimentation is made evident through Skapoula's understanding of education and instruction as quite the opposite. The metaphor of sterility is repeatedly used within the various issues of the Magazine to describe the type of instruction taking place within Cypriot schools:

'The school is a machine that produces servile and compliant people ready to be made slaves of bosses, after they have been supplied with the necessary perceptions. It supplies youth with sterile knowledge and forms their character in a way that would suppress any reaction they have from a young age and later on as graduates (and workers) not to react and resist those that exploit them'.³⁹

As Skapoula argues, this type of sterile knowledge conveyed through schooling is used on the one hand to form particular subjectivities, but on the other hand to render immobile, to numb resistance. Sterile schools and museumized knowledge do not produce or nourish anything new, and can be viewed in contrast with the square, which was seen as a place of birthing new ideas and of lively engagement with knowledge and with one another through peer to peer

³⁸ For purposes of avoiding confusion I will use the word 'education' in English to refer to the concept of *morfosis* in Greek and the word 'instruction' to refer to the concept of *ekpaideusi* with the connotations associated to it in the Greek-Cypriot context and language.

³⁹ Excerpt from a Brochure entitled 'The educational system as an instruction of power', prepared by Skapoula and distributed to attendees in Skapoula's first Festival that was dedicated to the theme of Education within Cypriot schools in September 2011.

exchanges. Diavasma and dialogue at the square were active processes of exchange, learning and relatedness.

That is why, as Billis stated in the excerpt above, Skapoula pupils saw the hours spent in school as 'doing nothing'. This 'doing nothing' means that there is no critical thinking, no dialogue and exchange of ideas, no pleasure in learning as bell hooks (1994) would have it. Instead, there is a one-way instruction, where the pupil is perceived as passive receiver of knowledge provided by the 'expert'--'teacher', what Freire would describe as a banking system of education (1972). In a long discussion I had with Billis on the educational system in Cyprus he expressed some of these feelings and views from his own experiences:

Georgina: You told me you wanted to write an Assixtir⁴⁰ about the educational system. What would that include?

Billis: My opposition to the educational system that judges through assigning grades, that is putting a grade on someone's labour and time [...] for me grades are unnecessary, I don't want you to grade my labour and time, my reward would be to discuss what I have prepared, to have criticism, to have friction (τριβή) on that topic with the occasion of my assignment. For me the point is, you don't need to do something and wait for a reward, that is why we also follow DIY, we don't want a reward, (we don't want) money for what we set up [...] And with researching a topic there is also this, that it's the personal joy that I sat and researched on a topic, it's the personal engagement (τριβή) with that, I read the critiques that were made, I also reached my own conclusions about it and this is food for discussion with the other (person), and through discussion you will come closer to the other so that you could also do things together, with your classmates [...] Another thing that I wanted to write about was about a school that does not have bars or whose walls are not grey, for example we have pupils in the school that do art, you could give them the right to show you their work on a wall and to beautify the walls. So one wakes up at 7 to go to school and goes to school and says 'oh mate we are going to have 7 hours of class, I will have the teachers on my head, then afternoon classes, and he just woke up with difficulty to go to school and what does he see? Grey walls and bars, well I think this thing does not help at all their psychology [...]

Georgina: from what I understand you generally disagree with the existence of school, with the kind of structure as it is now

Billis: as it is now yes, yes with the fact that there exists this term that school 'instructs' (ekpaideuei se) you, it is instruction (ekpaideusi). It doesn't 'instruct' (ekpaideuei) you, it educates you (morfonei se), 'educate' is different from 'instruct'. 'Educate' is a bit more free, namely you can educate yourself, but you cannot instruct yourself. It's this thing that I get educated (morfonomai) in general, it's not just the relationship between teacher and pupil. In education (morfosi) there is the relationship that I give to you and you give to me, there is discussion, exchange of information, criticism to what I'm hearing, what the other person tells me, to be able to disagree. In school, for example, as the current educational system now stands, you cannot disagree with what the

⁴⁰ Assixtir was a small 'street' brochure, published occasionally by Skapoula, which could be produced cheaply and distributed easily. 'Assixtir' is a Turkish word used by both Greek and Turkish-Cypriots and means 'Fuck off'

teacher will tell you about history because if you write it down otherwise, or from your own point of view or a bit more sophisticated they would put you a lower grade in the test for example. Of course I'm in favor of the existence of a place where individuals would be educated, education (morfosi) is a very significant weapon and it's very important for everyone and necessary for the progress of a society. But yes the existence of schooling as it is now is quite repressive I think.

For Billis, and Skapoula in general, morfosi is seen as much more than receiving knowledge. It is most of all a *joyous relational process of learning* that constructs the space of getting to know one another on a deeper level and helps form relationships. In other words, for Billis, it initiates the process of zymosis, termed here as tribi (τριβή, engagement), which took place at the square. This is seen as a collective process where knowledge provides the substance that would breed new relationships on which to potentially base collective undertakings. Through this conceptualization of knowledge/education what is privileged in the category of the pupil is the aspect of learning. The pupil as learner, or co-learner (learning in common with others) is much valued by Skapoula. What is rejected however is the pupil perceived as individualized, passive, compliant and minoritized subjectivity and as an isolated learner.

Consequently, the concept of knowledge and the category of pupil as co-learner, elaborated by Skapoula, challenge the museumized education instructed within schools and the nationalistic and disciplined subjectivities it aims to produce. It further challenges the idea of school as an enclosure with bars and grey walls that enhance the feeling of sterility and neutrality. In the following subsection, I examine how Skapoula further re-claimed the pupil category from adult authorities by collectivizing the category and by pushing the boundaries of what could constitute a child's concern.

6.6. Breaking the apolitical and individualized pupil category: collectivizing the pupil

What I aim to explore in this subsection is how Skapoula politicized and collectivized the pupil identity and thus reclaimed a different meaning for it, simultaneously breaking it out of its enclosure within various discourses constructed by the adult, gerontocratic authorities of Cyprus. More specifically, Skapoula attempted to sabotage the perception of pupils and schools as apolitical and 'neutral', and to integrate them instead into a political field by arguing for pupils to be engaged with larger socio-political matters that the authorities considered as *not* the concern of children.

One of the main issues preoccupying Skapoula was to understand how the social positioning of the pupil was formed by various dominant discourses, some particular to the Cypriot context, others more international. Within various issues of the Magazine and other smaller brochures, Skapoula tried to analyze the pupil positioning and the educational system itself as highly interconnected to the organization of labour and to the construction of the worker, as wage-earner, in modernity. They tried, in other words, to view the pupil as a constructed subjectivity using mainly a class perspective - but also, as will be shown later on, considering other dimensions of that subjectivity such as nationality and age. This was done by arguing that the educational system has an organic relationship with the workplace, and it is a place that prepares the future workers of the nation. By undertaking such a stance they attempted to provide connections between the pupil positionality and other positionalities and problematize for the readers their position in a system of power. The perspective distributed to other pupils through the Magazine was of the school as a machine producing one specific type of pupil:

‘School produces one specific model of pupil: obedient, law-abiding, docile, scared. The aim of the school machine is uniformity. What they want to create essentially are the ‘ideal’ workers with the aforementioned ‘virtues’. Pupils must become like robots. Of course they themselves must get used to this idea without knowing exactly what’s going on. Therefore, school uniform, discipline, and enforcement of order under strict control. ‘Organization’ through the use of military methods constitutes a common phenomenon in schools. Pupils are aligned for prayer, for parades in a militaristic way’⁴¹.

‘Pupils are something-like-workers. Why? Pupils work. They work to produce a crucial product: the working power of tomorrow. Pupils are trained (knowledge-wise and ideologically) in order to be ready to work in the future, and they work on themselves, gathering indispensable knowledge, experiences and of course the necessary ideology (discipline, obedience, individualism) so that they become useful for the labour market. Of course we are not workers – we are pupils! We are saying that the pupils, even though they are not workers (yet) have a direct relationship (through the educational system) with the organization of labour and so (if they choose it) they can fight for the interests of the working class not as her ‘friends’, but from the exact position that they are: as pupils’. (Assixtir 1)

The idea of the educational system as a machine, as a social factory and as an integral part of the organization of labour has been argued and analyzed by the Autonomist movement in Greece, which emerged out of the Greek Anarchist/Antiauthoritarian political space⁴², although the latter movement engaged critically with higher education instead of school education. The Greek Anarchist/Antiauthoritarian space itself was highly influenced by the

⁴¹ These practices of organization of pupils are particularly prominent in Cypriot schools.

⁴² For an elaborate analysis in Greek see (Outsider n.d.) ‘Ο εργάτης-φοιτητής. Η άμισθη φοιτητική εργασία και ο τρόπος που αυτή αποκρύπτεται.’ http://www.autonomia.gr/autonomia/outsider/outsider_04_foiwor.html (Accessed 17.04.2017)

Italian autonomist movement, the uprising of May 1968 in France and related Situationists' ideas that became widespread in Greece's counter-cultural scene during the 1970s (Souzas 2014, 48). Ideas emanating from the latter two, gave space for youth, and especially university students, to emerge as a new political subjectivity in the 1960s, attempting to change customary ways of doing politics by proposing a revolution of the everyday (Vaneigem 1963-65); such ideas proposed acting in the here and now and politicizing aspects of everyday life. This was a direct reaction to traditional left politics and the hierarchy and bureaucracy that they involved. Many members of Skapoula were influenced by such ideas as they themselves wanted to do things in the now and felt that the Cypriot Left political party's youth section could not accommodate such desires.

The rejection of the idea of being just a 'friend' of the working class and not in a position of power to talk about these issues directly, mentioned in the excerpt above, is a direct criticism to the Left in Cyprus, especially the parliamentary Left. Skapoula members' experience with the latter is one of a top-down direction on pupils' engagement. A number of Skapoula pupils entered the United Democratic Youth Organization (EDON)⁴³, the youth wing of the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), before forming or joining Skapoula but they soon became disillusioned with the hierarchy within the political party and the position in which youth were placed within that:

Giorgos: something more personal about the two of us (him and Ermis)... at the time when we started attending the street parties (at Faneromeni around 2008) we joined EDON for a little while

Georgina: why didn't you continue?

Ermis: it didn't express us fully in terms of politics ('δεν μας κάλυπτε')

Giorgos: I preferred to come down (to Faneromeni) rather than go to EDON because this thing that anarchism did, it gave you an illusion, which is true to a certain degree, that it does things now. For example, a street party can be organized directly (immediately) through an assembly that will be convened. I had a need to do something about this world that I was experiencing and it was shit. It wasn't enough to go to EDON, where there would be a hierarchy touf touf touf (with hand gestures he is indicating different levels of a hierarchical system while the sound indicated the heaviness and rigidity of that structure). I wanted to do things.

⁴³ EDON (Ενιαία Δημοκρατική Οργάνωση Νεολαίας) is the youth wing of AKEL (Ανορθωτικό Κόμμα Εργαζόμενου Λαού), the largest Left-wing political party in Cyprus. Its predecessor, the Cyprus' Communist Party, was founded in 1926 with aim to organize workers and farmers into unions. Between the 1930s and 1960s leftist activism was violently repressed by the British colonial government, the Greek-Cypriot bourgeoisie and Greek-Cypriot nationalist militia. After independence AKEL strongly supported rapprochement between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots and the bi-communal character of the ROC.

Billis: Many people that joined Skapoula were in EDON first

Skapoula and Faneromeni's parties themselves emerged out of need from a section of Cypriot youth to act in the present, to have ownership over their experiences and their political expression, as well as to attempt to find through experimentation what that political expression is. The political party system in Cyprus heavily displaces youth voices (Trimithiotis 2009), especially underage youth voices, from participation. The anarchic, anti-authoritarian and DIY ethic that was widespread in the old town made youth feel that their word, their talk and actions counted. As shown in chapter 4, they could be taken *seriously* by others, and age and childhood status were not seen as factors for exclusion from the realm of politics.

The struggle to identify bonds with other socio-political positions, such as that of the worker, is evident in the various narratives found in the different written material of Skapoula. I interpret this as a struggle to open up space and create place for pupils to be able to talk, and effectively talk back to authorities that manage their lives. More than anything else I read this as an attempt to save 'the pupil' from the voiceless subjectivity allocated to them, and to question the position of neutrality and disciplinary techniques that have enhanced the silencing of voice: neutrality and discipline manifested through imposition of extended uniformity and order within Cypriot schools. An understanding of the educational system's role within the production of docile workers is in fact one of the main opening spaces through which Skapoula argues that pupils can raise their voices and connect with wider struggles.

This struggle to find a place from which to speak has been a constant pre-occupation of Skapoula, a fact that in my opinion reflects the wider depoliticization of the categories of children/pupils and the obscuring of children-activists and their struggles within academia and beyond. Part of the lack of having grounds to speak from might be the consequence of the prominence and visibility afforded to a university student/youth positionality by the radical movements of 1968, of the 1970s and the Greek anarchist/antiauthoritarian and autonomist-antifascist space (as many of their members were/are university students). Participating secondary school pupils or children were obscured in this process or swallowed up in this overarching category. This obscuring of pupils under the 'catch-all category' of 'youth' has also been noted for the anti-apartheid Soweto uprising in South Africa in 1976 which was primarily a pupils' uprising (Glaser 1998, 301).

The struggle to understand their socio-political position as pupils and to find or create a place for pupils to be able, or feel entitled, to talk back to power is evident in Assixtir 2. In the latter publication which came out during the period of the memorandum in Cyprus in 2013 and had as a subtitle 'A pupil's manual to the crisis', Skapoula pupils saw as more urgent than ever to identify the place from which to talk to power and to re-consider the resistances already existing within the pupil population:

'Questions about what exactly pupils are and what the hell they are doing have been troubling us for a long time. Dominant discourses say that pupils are some sort of a neutral thing, that once in a while, depending on the circumstances, take a position in social conflicts- school youth's lifestyle gloriously confirms it. And the leftists say a similar thing, that pupils are the remote friends of the working class that help it somehow if (and whenever) they remember to do that -- and then they return to their studies. We say that we need to understand the subject that is defined as pupil by looking at the major institutions that suffocate it: the educational system and the family [...] The state invests in the 'education' of youth so that it can secure the disciplining of tomorrow's working force. The educational system is an integral part of the organization of labour: and it is as such that it must be confronted. We will return to the educational system later on. For the family, however, their offspring is the ideal space where to project all their unfulfilled dreams of social advancement or the expectations born through the fulfilled dreams of social advancement. The family has demands and commits to educate as best as possible her children, something that translates into the devouring of time outside school (afternoon classes) in a harsh battle for individual validation.' (Assixtir 2)

The individualistic rendering of the subjectivity of the pupil is seen as emerging from two locations of power: an educational system that imposes supervision and validates through exams, tests, grades and counting attendance, and the Cypriot family, whose reputation rises or falls depending on the level of the children's' educational success. Prokopi (progress) of the family, and by extension the society, is to a large extent measured by educational success in school and in higher educational institutions. Therefore, investing in such education would mean a further severing of the child from potential communal time through an extension of schooling time in the afternoon for private tuition. Individual validation, prokopi and capitalist education that aims to produce docile, individualized workers is seen by Skapoula as coming at the price of children's separation from the collective.

Skapoula's response to such overarching discourses that direct pupils' and children's identities and lives in Cyprus is precisely to communalize and collectivize the pupil category through both producing a collective counter-talk that emerges in the context of the group's assemblies and through living an alternative everydayness at the square and practicing forms of direct democracy and collective organizing.

Collectivizing categories of lived experience was part of Skapoula's resistance practice. Reading through different issues of Skapoula Magazine it is evident that the group attempted to give visibility to pupils' movements and radical politics undertaken by pupils in different countries and in different historical times. In Skapoula Issue 1 for example, Skapoula presents the massive phenomenon of occupations of schools by pupils in Greece during 1990-1991 to oppose an anachronistic draft law on education, which, among other issues, intervened in the functioning of pupils' unionism (Sklavenitis 2014). Occupations in this context are introduced to a Cypriot pupil public as acts of 'uncompromising questioning of the repressive school mechanism'. They are further presented not simply as temporary reactions to particular events but as 'small breaks' from the everyday coercion in schools and as a way to directly claim time from adult authorities. The time claimed is not viewed as 'doing nothing' but as offering the space for 'zymosis', by opening space for communal time and discussion amongst the pupils and by the questioning of authoritarian discourses and practices. Occupations of schools are thus presented as alternative fora of education, of *morfosis* and as 'a dynamic way for pupils to participate in social struggles' (Skapoula Issue 1, 19).

A similar example of giving visibility to social movements and resistance initiated by peers is found in Skapoula Issue 4, which presents pupils' collectives from Greece such as the collective 'Ανυπάκουοι Μαθητές' (Undisciplined Pupils) and the group Pirates of Edelweiss. The latter was a loosely organized group of underage youth who resisted the regime imposed in Nazi Germany and evaded the Nazi Youth activities. A high point of the Pirates activities was taking long hikes in the countryside – that can be paralleled with *skapoules* – sidestepping Nazi rules (Holocaust Teacher Resource Center n.d.). Presenting the Pirates, Skapoula writes:

'The struggle against power is also a struggle against the forgetting that it attempts to impose, that is why this small article is dedicated to all those struggling comrades who resisted Nazism. We say these few words in order to rescue the memory of pupils' social movements and for retrospection into the rich past of independent (ακηδεμόνευτη- without a guardian) pupil action, especially during a period where every resistance seemed condemned (to fail)'.

Skapoula further attempted to collectivize the category of the pupil in Assixtir 2 by arguing that now more than ever – alluding to the financial crisis and growing youth unemployment -- there is need for realization that pupils face 'collective problems therefore the solutions must be collective as well'. Practices conducted by the majority of pupils within schools, such as *skapoules*, copying during exams and tests (αντιγραφή), 'decorating' school desks and school walls, are reframed by Skapoula as *common* resistant practices of the pupil population and as part of something much bigger: 'the claiming of time and space within schools for our own

use'. Skapoula is therefore arguing for an escape from the individual character that such resistant practices often take and a realization that they are common pupil practices that could be more consciously exercised at a collective scale.

Furthermore, Skapoula Issue 3 presents the participation of pupils in mobilizations in Cyprus and around the world, under the section 'Current Affairs' (which was part of every issue of the Magazine). The mobilizations given space in this case involve the participation of pupils in wider social struggles that do not concern education alone. The presentation of struggles and issues beyond education, such as the financial crisis and austerity measures, immigration, workers' rights, and antimilitarism, among others, is a common undertaking in the Magazine and it relates to the attempt of Skapoula of claiming a space for pupils' participation in wider societal affairs. In this way, Skapoula pushes the boundaries of what it means to be a child and a pupil by asserting a place for pupils to participate in politics, which are otherwise seen *as not the concern of children*. This is directly stated by the group in the editorial that starts off Issue 4:

'We also attempt to cause cracks in the logic of the roles assigned to us by the system that wants pupils to be cut off from the rest of society. That is why we occupy ourselves with many issues that do not exclusively concern school normativity. We understand our position, as current pupils and future workers (albeit with the way things look currently we will probably be jobless ... with the way things are heading in the future only Chuck Norris will be able to find a job), as part of an educational process that attempts to constantly reproduce the power relations of suppressor-suppressed and master-slave'.

Pushing the boundaries of what is considered a pupil's and a child's issue was attempted through engagement with larger socio-political issues and by understanding the pupil in relation to other collective movements, as well as by saving pupils' struggles from obscurity, allowing thus for the presence of other potentialities for children and pupils to come forward. Pushing these boundaries also meant challenging the enclosure of the pupil/child within the nationalist narrative, a topic I explore in the next subsection.

6.7. Exposing the dominant discourse of nationalism as patriotism: politicizing the apolitical child

As elaborated in chapter 3, Greek-Cypriot nationalism is based on the position that Cyprus and Greek Cypriots belong to the Greek nation (Mavratsas 1998), as well as on political positions associated to that, such as acknowledging Greek Cypriots as the only victims of the ethnic conflict and their interests as incompatible with those of Turkish Cypriots. Such political positions are presented as matter-of-fact 'patriotic' issues to the pupils. This promotes, I argue, the idea that such issues are not included in the field of politics, but that they are part of the substance of what it means to be Greek, which is propagated as the natural subject-position for Greek-Cypriots to occupy. For this reason, children, and by extension pupils, as apolitical or depoliticized subjects, are seen as ideal promoters of, and in need of instruction into, Greek nationalist values and ideals.

Breaking the myth that the above dominant positions are apolitical, Skapoula attempted to expose to other pupils the flaws in this otherwise coherent (hi)story. More importantly, they tried to show how this is not a-matter-of-fact history, but that it is constructed as such to suit the particular interests of those in power. Two important articles in Skapoula Magazine, Issue 2, expose the ways Skapoula viewed the construction of the identity of youth within schools in association with the dominant nationalist narrative.

'For the promotion of nationalism in schools (excerpt is included)

Patriotism/nationalism is included among the values that the educational system deems useful to transmit to pupils, while the church plays an important role in this process. From a young age, as pupils, we have been inundated with national feasts, celebrations and parades. In regular intervals, on the occasion of some event or day of national pride or memory, we will listen again to the messages of the Minister that call for national unity, hysterical teachers and school heads expatiating about national issues, bloodthirsty poems, the abrupt whistle of the gymnast teacher preparing those that will parade. We will be given the opportunity to parade, to showcase our discipline and uniformity through military posture and rapid pace following the sound of military music (εμβατήριο). The pupils will come out in the streets like sheep, and the 'leaders of the nation', presidents, military officials etc will stand on a pedestal and look down at the herd with a triumphant look.

The church plays a leading role in the cultivation of nationalism. With its kind sponsorship, the 'greco-christian' ideal becomes complete, which is the identity that they try to inflict on youth. Through the archbishop's racist deliriums and speeches the position of the church is clear. It complements the educational system that steals our lives, by inflicting upon us nationalist/patriotic perceptions. It always was and will always be an enemy of the people [...]. The current apathy of society is owed to a large extent on the adhesion to the national ideology, and the deification of the 'glorious' struggles of the past, parroting fake values that the system has taught us. At the same time there

are some that think and question, and when they go out on the streets they are not moving with rapid pace and in alignment, but united in solidarity, they don't hold disgraceful national symbols in their hands but they tighten their hands in fists...Some who at least are experimenting and attempt to resist...

OUR ONLY HOMELAND, OUR CHILDHOOD DREAMS'

In the above article the gerontocratic authorities of Cyprus, that include politicians, military personnel and the church are exposed as attempting to define in a top-down way the identity of youth to particularly reflect the 'greco-christian' ideal. In other words, putting boundaries around what the category of youth should consist of both through the transmission of discourses about the 'glorious' nation, but also through embodied practices such as militaristic ways of posture, parades, and morning prayer. The 'greco-christian' ideal thus is directly connected and paralleled with adult authority. Challenging such perceptions Skapoula uses the terms nationalism and patriotism together, representing them as one word within the text separated by a hyphen, which transmits the idea that they are one and the same thing. In this way, it exposes the apolitical language inflicted through the use of the word 'patriotism'.

Furthermore, Skapoula challenges such perceptions by providing an alternative to the rigidity with which youth are expected to walk and express themselves in schools and streets. The streets, where youth are allowed to present themselves in an aligned manner following a preplanned rhythmic military pace in order to satisfy the adult, masculine, domineering gaze, are reclaimed by youth who are 'experimenting' in becoming something else, who occupy the streets in what might seem as an anarchic manner, breaking body obedience to an obligatory rhythm; youth who are attempting to resist the top-down definitions of their lives, finding place instead in each other's solidarity, in collective resistance. The trope of childhood is then mobilized as a place where one finds belonging, where one roots oneself. I return to the use of this trope later as it is mobilized often in Skapoula's written counter talk.

At the same time, national pride, the emotional response that those in power attempt to nurture through the variety of means described in the first excerpt, is deconstructed through challenging the meaning of national pride and of being a 'patriot'. An excerpt from the article entitled 'What do you mean you are not a patriot? Are you not proud of your country??' is provided to illustrate this point:

'What does it mean to be proud of my country?

To be proud of the heroes? But how can I be proud for something I did not do or contribute to myself? What I can do is to show respect to those I consider deserving of my respect (you can name them heroes if you want). These people however are not

limited to those that happen to be born in the same geographical space as myself, therefore why should I 'honor' only 'our' heroes?

Be proud of the history? Again, it is impossible to feel pride for something that happened either a thousand or a few years in the past, if you did not participate in it. Besides, the history of each country is filled with blood, and every country chooses which history to teach its citizens, hiding its own crimes. The Greek learns that the evil Turks are to be blamed for everything and he wonders why the Turks do not admit this, failing to understand that the Turk learns the same as the Greek obviously. In this way History is used by the governments to divide people that would otherwise have little to divide, if they did not experience brainwashing in every moment of their lives.

Be proud of my fellow citizens? But what do I have in common with Shakolas and Fanieros (the first a prominent business-man opening the first shopping malls in Cyprus and the second associated with criminal activities) and why should I be happy for the fact that we were born in the same place or speak the same language?'

National pride is thus deconstructed as something fictive in the same manner that the relatedness between different members of the same nation or state is exposed as fictive. By using examples from the everydayness of Cypriot youth within schools, but also from well-known Cypriots who often occupy large sections of the news stories in newspapers and TV programs, Skapoula youth attempt to make the familiar strange by breaking the assumed forms of relatedness developed by the state and replacing them with forms of relatedness and practices that, according to Skapoula, are much closer to pupils everydayness and societal position (like the experiences from school occupations, the solidarity in copying in a test, skapoules). Most importantly, these forms of relatedness and practices are participatory as pupils have a direct role within them.

At other moments within the Magazine the fictitious ties of the nation and the origin myth of Greek-Cypriot identity are challenged in playful and humorous ways. On page 14 there is a presentation of words that are exactly the same in both Greek and Turkish Cypriot languages. The page has the title 'Greek-turkish dictionary or otherwise cypriot dictionary', exposing thus interethnic influences in language. Another example where humor and playfulness are employed relates to army service in Cyprus. The army and army service that Greek-Cypriot boys are obliged to attend once they turn eighteen is criticized and rejected by using the well-known characters and graphics of the famous comic Asterix & Obelix. In introduction to the comic story entitled 'Asterix and Obelix Army Objectors' Skapoula writes:

'Roman Empire 50 B.C. or perhaps Cyprus 2011? The state treats youth exactly like Caesar treated the Galatians: as a threat. That is because youth, who have not lived in this world for too long, are not used to its rottenness. They don't accept the mess around them as normal, and come into conflict with the establishment and with normativity'.

The army is exposed here as another instrument through which the Cypriot state – as a metaphor of dominant, patriarchal, gerontocratic authority – attempts to subdue any potential form of resistance coming from what are perceived as ‘threats’ to its constitution. Youth as depicted here is conceptualized as a category, a subject less corrupted by authoritarian discourses. This understanding relates to the potential of youth to act as saboteurs of adult authority. The allusion to youth as a space-time less corrupted, further relates to an invocation of childhood (as a time of greater innocence as it is constructed in the West) as one’s homeland referred to above.

‘Our only homeland, our childhood dreams’ would seem to expose an allusion to childhood as a time of play and freely acting upon one’s imagination, upon one’s dreams. Therefore this sentence can be read as childhood seen as being a haven of experimentation and play in which Skapoula members construct their alternative myth of origin, in contradiction to the origin myths imposed on them by adult authorities. The trope of the child and childhood is frequently evoked within Skapoula’s documents and used as a resistance trope to overarching rituals of adulthood in Cyprus. In Assixtir 1, which dealt with the educational system, as well as with rising fascism within Cypriot society and its historical links to figures much celebrated within history textbooks and national school celebrations, the following line is emphasized as a response to all the above: ‘I’d rather stay a child and keep my self-respect if being an adult means being like you’. Staying a child here means rejecting the overarching rituals of adulthood in Cyprus which, as seen in chapter 3, relate to becoming an obedient proponent of the Greek and Christian ideals and willing to sacrifice oneself for those ideals. In Cyprus, the primary form of becoming an adult is exactly, as I have argued, becoming ‘a proper Greek’, which is done through being educated in Greek ideals, becoming thus a defendant of the country towards those seen as its long-term historical Enemies. In choosing to stay children, Skapoula members effectively reject being turned into (Greek) nationalists. They reject the choices of adulthood and self-realization presented by Greek-Cypriot authorities and dominant discourses. This is also nicely depicted in a slogan often written on city walls by Skapoula members, alluding this time to serving in the army as a related ritual of adulthood with gendered overtones. The slogan ‘We will never become men’ (‘Δεν θα γίνουμε ποτέ άντρες’) effectively talks back to the gerontocratic authorities that depict the army as the ultimate ritual of manhood-adulthood for boys, in the sense that in self-sacrificing their time and their comfort by living in army camps for two years, manning outposts across the border and going through all the training and hidden ordeals carried out by superintendents, they effectively

become men-Greeks-adults. They are seen as sacrificing for their country, therefore they are no longer children.

This is also reflected in law. Despite the fact that the legal age of adulthood in Cyprus is the age of 18, teenage boys who choose to serve the military at a younger age, simultaneously lose their legal status as children. As seen in chapter 3, teenage boys who served EOKA were promoted to important political and managerial posts and given a number of responsibilities that would otherwise not have been so easily provided to children. In a similar vein, teenage boys who choose to serve the military early immediately become adults.

To conclude, childhood is reclaimed by Skapoula as a resistant time-space to Greek-Cypriot versions of adulthood. In similarity with the thinking of Vaneigem (1963-65), elaborated in chapter 2, Skapoula considers childhood as a stage which escapes adult time. In refusing therefore to grow old they are refusing to succumb to the alienation of adult time that produces children as nationalists and as docile workers, and in the case of the Situationists, as consumers chained to commodified forms of participation. In choosing to stay children, Skapoula members root themselves instead to a time-space viewed as less corrupted and enhanced with imagination, experimentation and play, where the child maintains agency in the process of world-making. Through this reclaiming the minoritization processes of the state are thus turned on their head.

6.8. When serious play becomes too serious: Skapoula's participation in Occupy the Buffer Zone Movement

On the night of 6th of April 2012, I received a message on my mobile phone notifying me that the building squatted by the Occupy Buffer Zone movement was being surrounded by police. The messenger was urging people affiliated to the movement to come down to defend the squat. Picking up a friend who was also involved in the wider peace movement in Cyprus, we went down at the end of Ledra street where the occupation was taking place. Many other protesters gathered in support but the police were not letting anyone get too close to the squatted building, violently pushing people and making arrests. We could hardly see what was happening and the only support we could provide was yelling slogans against police violence. The squatted building was raided and forcefully evacuated that night.

Occupy Buffer Zone (OBZ) was a movement that begun in response to the global call for solidarity with Occupy Wall Street in October 15, 2011. Before that date, a number of street parades organized by youth from Faneromeni, went into the strip of the buffer zone located within the old city of Nicosia, known as the Ledra/Lokmaci crossing, and partied between the two checkpoints, the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot one (Erdal-Ilican 2013), temporarily redefining the use of that space. OBZ followed, with a large participation of Faneromeni youth. OBZ defined itself, on its Facebook page, as 'an inclusive movement' constituted by Greek and Turkish Cypriots, among other ethnicities. Initially, weekly meetings were held in the buffer zone. In November 2011, participants set up tents in the street and after some time the activists moved into one of the derelict buildings that have been kept unused for decades within the buffer zone turning into a social-cultural centre. Skapoula participated in the movement from the beginning and was given a room in the occupied building for its own use. Within the social centre, Skapoula members mostly preoccupied themselves with setting up their own space and with Skapoula's own activities, while a few participated in the organizing assembly of the OBZ movement. Members were further hanging out at the squat as many Faneromeni youth were spending their free time there.

After moving into the squat, Skapoula begun notifying publicly through their blog and facebook page that the assemblies of the group were to take place there for potential pupils interested in joining. At the same time, they intensified their anti-nationalist actions by intervening in two of the most important national celebrations in the Greek-Cypriot context, the 25th of March and 1st of April,⁴⁴ disseminating a text in streets and schools against the heavy nationalist ideology promoted through these celebrations. These actions were complemented with a large banner which Skapoula members hanged on the occupied building. The banner, contained the slogan 'Nationalism is a recipe for subordination, is an ideology of death. Every country a jail, sabotage every national celebration'. The large banner was visible to pedestrians as they walked through Ledra street, a very busy commercial street, and set within the ethnically contested buffer zone that Greek Cypriot authorities turned into a symbol of the national trauma inflicted by Turkey, challenged to the core the very foundations of the origin myth of the Greek-Cypriot establishment and their efforts to present themselves in international fora as the sole victims of the ethnic conflict. This, along with the 'scandalous'

⁴⁴ The 25th of March is celebrated in Cyprus and Greece, with public military or pupil parades, as the beginning of the 1821 Greek revolution for liberation from Ottoman rule. The 1st of April is celebrated in Greek-Cypriot schools and in public commemorations as the beginning of the 1955 EOKA struggle against the British colonial rule.

presence and actions of the multi-communal OBZ, that further challenged the status quo (Erdal-Ilican 2013), led to the brutal evacuation of the squat.



Figure 15. Skapoula's banner against nationalism visible from Ledra Street as one walked towards the frontier crossing. Photo taken from Skapoula's blog.

On the night of the police raid, Skapoula had intended to hold the opening night of the 'Pupils' Kafeneio', an action that would have been repeated weekly and would form a forum for pupils to socialize and have fun while newcomers would have the opportunity to be introduced to

Skapoula and the OBZ. For that reason, that particular night, the squat was full of teenagers. A couple of hours after the opening, police started surrounding the building.

Ermis: We saw them. Someone told us that cops were gathering outside the building. We went on the roof – the building had a nice terrace- and we saw them. Indeed, there were around fifteen Madites (cops from MMAD⁴⁵- the anti-terrorist unit of the police). At some point we saw more coming ... ok what can we do? We decided not to leave the building. We saw them getting in; they went up the stairs kicking and breaking doors on their way. It was scary.

Giorgos: what made it really scary were the people screaming from inside the building.. the worst for me was when Achilleas called his sister and she responded screaming from inside the building, it was quite fucked up ... you could hear Dina and Sophie screaming.

Ermis: Yes we could hear them too; we didn't know what to do. We ran back to our room but realized it was no use so we went back on the roof. We decided to wait for them altogether so that they don't get anyone alone. Some of them (police) who broke doors and found people by themselves ... for example they beat up a girl ... they could treat you much more brutally if you were alone, we were fifteen people on the roof. Two cops came upstairs and told us to sit down, they were from the anti-terrorist squad wearing military helmets and holding automatic guns. Initially they wanted to handcuff us but they didn't, they searched our bags and found nothing, then took us to the station and held us there for several hours.

Chloe: Occupy was a traumatic experience. We were on a roof with flashlights and we could hear them breaking doors downstairs. They had guns and they, men, made a body search to a girl, harassing her ... it was really bad, I mean there were different things, shouting, screaming ... we (Skapoula members) had some intense experiences from which it's not that easy to recover

Calling on the anti-terrorist squad to violently evacuate a peaceful occupation, knowing that many participants were teenagers, treating them in a sense as if they were terrorists, physically abusing some of them while pointing automatic guns at others and arresting them without a warrant is indicative of how Skapoula's serious play, along with the actions of the overall OBZ movement, became too challenging for the authorities. The employment by Skapoula of tactics and talk that are incompatible with the Western perception of childhood, as a space of dependence on adults, of social nurturance and of political neutrality led, I argue, to the suspension of the childhood status for the underage non-institutional activists. Skapoula members were children who betrayed the role assigned to them by authorities by becoming saboteurs of the system, by wanting to change things in the present, instead of remaining bearers of stable worlds (Stephens 1995) through embodying national ideals and social values of propriety and domesticity. Through their actions, they abandoned the status of childhood in

⁴⁵ MMAD –Μηχανοκίνητη Μονάδα Άμεσης Δράσης (Emergency Response Unit) is an independent unit under the direct command of the Head of Police. Its main mission is 'to confront organized acts of violence and terrorism' within the territory of the RoC.

the eyes of the state; they were no longer children. This alleged abandonment facilitated a treatment that would otherwise be deemed inappropriate to be inflicted on children.⁴⁶ Underage antiauthoritarian activism was thus perceived by authorities as *outside childhood*, as an abandonment of childhood, allowing the state to inflict disproportionate violence with the aim to terrorize, as was the case with the much harsher treatment of resistant children in Soweto (Feldman 2002). This treatment constituted an extrajudicial punishment of underage activists resulting in suppression of freedom of expression through disciplining dissenting voices. Although no charges have been placed on the underage activists, the raid and subsequent arrest of a number of underage youth was described to me as 'a heavy blow' on Skapoula and the Faneromeni youth community because it led to far stricter parental invigilation while some youth were forbidden from coming to Faneromeni altogether.

Giorgos: it (the raid) was indeed a heavy blow on Skapoula. Some people did not come down (to Faneromeni) again.

Ermis: the parents of certain people did not know, for example they (youth) might have lied to them about coming down at Faneromeni, imagine (what happened) when they (the parents) found out that they were arrested by cops at a squat. Some parents put their foot down at that point. Some people fought this and we still see them being involved (in antiauthoritarian activism)... some others have disappeared.

Aggelos: in general the act itself constituted a repression towards the movement; I mean many people distanced themselves from Faneromeni because of the reaction of their parents and because they became scared. But those who stayed knew what they had to face, and it wasn't the case that we became complacent, we just became more careful.

At the same time, however, that the authorities suspended the status of childhood for Skapoula youth, they simultaneously drew upon the Westernized association of childhood with innocence, as well as upon internationally dominant discourses associating youth with drug use and risky sex (Bucholtz 2002), in order to justify the anti-terrorist squad intervention. Both police and the majority of media outlets justified the actions of the former through a language that depoliticized autonomous youth activism and criminalized communes through insinuating sexual relationships between children and adults as well as drug use. This is made evident in a conversation on a popular TV channel between a journalist and the head of Greek Cypriot police (HoP) about OBZ⁴⁷:

⁴⁶ In a complaint I filed to the Cypriot Commissioner for Children's Rights I outlined all the articles of the CRC that have been violated. The complaint can be read here (in Greek): <http://thetrim1.blogspot.com.cy/?q=%CF%84%CE%B6%CE%B9%CF%89%CF%81%CF%84%CE%B6%CE%AF%CE%BD%CE%B1>.

⁴⁷ I copy the full conversation as captured by Nikos Trimikliniotis (2012).

HoP: It was proven that there was drug use.

Journalist: Is it true that the space was turned into a commune?

HoP: Exactly, the space was used for all this, and the young people... you can see what I'm saying... 16 year old girls, 16 year old boys to be in the same space as 50 year-olds, 38 year-olds, 40 year-olds, you can understand what the situation was

Journalist: But we heard about unspeakable acts Mr Michailides!

HoP: I can't talk about these things, they are still under investigation, but you can imagine what can happen when 16 year-old girls are living with the rest of them in what you characterized as 'a commune'.

The police found no drugs in the occupied building beyond one gram of cannabis and it was later revealed that they had no warrant to enter the building to search for drug use. The media and the police however, drawing upon dominant constructions of childhood, immaturity and risk legitimized an otherwise illegitimate intervention. This was done at the same time that the childhood status was suspended for underage non-institutional activists in order to allow for a type of disciplining involving the anti-terrorist squad.



Figure. 16. Skapoula's poster for

the Pupils' Self-Organized Kafeneio. The main slogan: 'So that we reclaim the stolen space and time of our teenage years'.



Figure 17. Member of the OBZ protesting during a march to protest the eviction.

6.9. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I illustrated Skapoula's play with and sabotage of adult top-down definitions imposed on the pupil and child categories in the Cypriot context and beyond. I have argued that, through its distributed counter-talk, Skapoula essentially aimed at politicizing the neutralized categories of the child and the pupil and thus carve out space for them to actively participate in public affairs. In this way Skapoula challenged the assumed political illiteracy of children and pupils, constructed as an infantilizing intellectual inequality (Ranciere 1991), and validated them as subjects that have important contributions to make in the now. It further sabotaged the dominant knowledges that structure the field of action of pupils by actively resignifying and expanding the issues that constitute the concern of children.

Politicizing the pupil category was done in a number of ways. First, Skapoula members exposed the depoliticizing individualistic rendering of the pupil and child by the mechanisms of neoliberal education, human rights, and the familial and societal conceptualization of progress (prokopi). They challenged the construction of the pupil as a competitive monad among other monads in school settings by collectivizing the category through exposing the common resistances, both everyday and direct, taken by pupils themselves within schools and beyond,

as well as finding associations between the pupils' position and larger social movements. In this way, the pupil category, mobilized by Skapoula as a category that all school-age youth could relate to, was infused with different meaning by being understood as a collective social position and a site of struggle. The pupil, as an identity imposed from the outside, was not rejected in its totality, but rather reclaimed, through collectivizing the category and through privileging the aspect of the learner within the category, particularly associated to a form of learning that was relational and held in common, not in isolation. Echoing Paulo Freire (1972), Skapoula argued for *morfosi*, not *ekpaideusi*, meaning a type of learning that is interactive, joyful, participatory and critical. In Skapoula's understanding, knowledge forms the substance for nourishing relationships between peers, in contrast to the sterile, numbing, museumized knowledge instructed within schools. In the latter sense, I would argue Skapoula's understanding differs from that of Freire as knowledge is primarily understood as medium for peer to peer relationality –making sense together- and collective undertakings, distancing it from the binary relationship of teacher-student, the focus of Freire's criticism. Moreover, Skapoula's carving out space for pupils to have a political say in the now, challenges the false consciousness position underwriting Freire's work (Howard 2017; Selmeczi 2014), demanding equality 'not as an end to attain, but a point of departure, a *supposition* to be maintained in every circumstance' (Ranciere 1991, 138).

By examining Skapoula's definitional politics, similarities can be traced to traditional identity-politics in the sense of mobilizing around one category of identification –the pupil category- and thus partly homogenizing that category. On the other hand, Skapoula's autonomous politics differentiate from liberal identity politics by not seeking recognition or reforms from a hegemonic order, but rather addressing their fellow-pupils and, politicizing and resignifying the pupil category, claiming that it need not be associated with capitalism, antagonism, nationalism, passivity and hierarchy, but with collective struggle, play and active peer learning. In the latter sense, Skapoula's reclaiming has similarities with the reclaiming of the 'queer' category which also involved a politicization of an otherwise apolitical, and stigmatized in this case, category (Daring et al. 2012), as well as a new definition characterized by playful fluidity, in contrast to the rigidity through which LGBTQ categories were formerly expressed (Rand 2014). Moreover, in similarity with queer militant reclaiming, Skapoula's reclaiming of the pupil category was not about seeking tolerance or acceptance, but about declaring *an unapologetic equality* through claiming a playful humanity.

Skapoula further politicized the pupil category through challenging the assumed apolitical nature of patriotism within schools by presenting it as nationalism- as a particular political

position that children and pupils are expected to occupy. Education, as has been argued, is used by adult gerontocratic authorities as a rite of passage to becoming fully Greek-adult, effectively becoming a Greek nationalist. Skapoula's declaration that they would rather stay children is thus seen in this context as a rejection of this dominant subject-position for adulthood. Childhood, as a time of experimentation and play, a time seen as less corrupted by adult authorities, is thus mobilized as a resistance trope and as the preferred origin of the 'children' who will never become adults in the eyes of power. Skapoula uses childhood as a resistance trope to resist the dominant options of adulthood – and thus self-realization- that Cypriot society offers. By maintaining themselves in the timeless space of childhood, Skapoula members refused to grow old, thus effectively refusing to become (Greek) nationalists, 'men'- in regard to the male members- and docile workers-consumers. They refused to have their life time turned into labor-school time (Lemke 2002), or in other words adult time.

The Skapoula collective as a metaphor of serious play, as time claimed for communal use, time where children have agency in the process of world-making, is used by Skapoula members to sabotage the enclosed definitions of adult authorities and resignify them in their own terms. As has been argued however when serious play becomes too serious, when it threatens to an effective degree the establishment, non-institutional youth activism is seen as an abandonment of childhood, in which case harsher punishment, not fitting for those defined as 'children', is imposed. Children activists are punished for betraying the role assigned to children by adult authority and modernity as the bearers of stable worlds (Stephen 1995) and as inhabiting a time-space of becoming adults, therefore being unequal to adults and not entitle to a voice in the now.

Overall, by exploring the politics of children/pupil non-institutional activists I aimed to problematize their obscuring within academic and activist literature, and more particularly within social movement literature, under the 'catch-all' category of 'youth' or the university student positionality. At the same time, I responded to a gap in literature relating to children as social and political actors within anthropology and youth participation literature, which largely focus on institutional participation and working children in the informal economy, with minimal consideration of the political action of children in 'informal', that is, non-institutional politics. Finally, this chapter speaks to anthropological literature on the conceptualization of time by providing an example of resistance to the depoliticization of the governance of time through turning the occupation of one's time into a political concern.

Through conceptualizing Skapoula's attempts to reclaim communal time, as well as the categories of pupil and child, as attempts primarily to politicize these categories and bring such concerns back to the political, I aimed to show how children need to carve out their own conceptual – as well as physical and temporal -- spaces, their spaces of appearance, in order to have a say in public affairs. In this sense, I attempted to demonstrate that the possibilities and boundaries for political action for children are not only constructed through chronological criteria – above 18 for example -- but are mainly constructed through overarching discourses about what is considered as 'proper' political behaviour and concerns, if any, for those defined as children. By talking back and undertaking what are perceived as 'serious' issues, like nationalism and militarism, reserved for the adult public sphere Skapoula pupils expanded the field of what is perceived as being the concern of children and challenged the politics of maturity of the Cypriot and international establishment. By pushing the boundaries of the possible for children and pupils, they confirmed Ranciere's position that social movement practice is also intellectual practice, in the sense of 'reconfiguring the frameworks of the visible and the thinkable' (Ranciere 2003, 203), thus challenging the intellectual inequality of those defined as 'children'.

Chapter 7

Assemblies: Relational Democracy

‘If we believe in a world of difference and dignity, democracy cannot be postponed until ‘after the revolution’, but must be constituted here and now through concrete practices. Democracy must be learned by ourselves. There is no teacher out there who can give us the model that satisfies all the needs and aspirations of our pluralities, so democracy must be self-taught. We learn by reflecting and acting on the ways we relate to each other.’

DeAngelis 2003, quoted in Maeckelbergh 2009

‘Skapoula magazine is a self-organized pupils’ venture for the promotion of libertarian ideas. It is published by an assembly where all decisions are taken by consensus without any form of hierarchy. Our anti-hierarchical character reflects our resistance towards any form of domination, promoting practices of self-organization and collectivity. We stand against any kind of discrimination, and we find ourselves in direct opposition to the political party institution and the ‘leaders’ and ‘saviors’ of society. What we do is according to our own capabilities and we refuse any type of do-gooders and sponsors.’⁴⁸

‘About’ section on Skapoula’s blog and in Skapoula’s Magazine

7.1. Introduction

In the context of this chapter I explore the practice of decision-making of Skapoula. Skapoula makes decisions by holding assemblies where in principle everyone attending participates actively and decisions are made through consensus, observing the principle of horizontality. The idea is that everyone’s opinion must be respected, given equal attention, discussed and to a certain extent represented in the final decision. The reason for focusing on assemblies as a practice of the group is in order to show the process of collectivizing and politicizing the child and pupil category in and through practice; it is further an attempt to demonstrate the potential challenges faced by local underage actors when they engage, as they do in this case, with a process of direct democracy.

⁴⁸ Skapoula is presented here as mainly a collective set up for the production of a Magazine. Although this was the initial aim, soon after the group was formed, Skapoula became a collective whose actions expanded beyond the publishing of the Magazine.

Direct democratic assemblies have been a practice of decision-making in the context of autonomous/DIY movements from the 1970s onwards, as well as in the context of the alter-globalization movement. Participatory democracy came to be embraced since the 1960s due to the failure of class politics and communism that led to a delegitimizing of representative bureaucratic systems of democracy, as well as through the insistence of groups, 'especially women and "minorities" that the means used to organize within the movement should reflect the ideals desired outside the movement' (Maeckelbergh 2009, 13). This conceptualization on how to organize as to reflect the desired ends captures the notion of prefiguration and prefigurative politics that were widespread in the 1960s and 1970s movements (Shepard 2011). According to Maeckelbergh (2009) there have been developments since the 1960s particularly in structuring participatory democracy more concretely and conflating it with consensus decision-making. This conflation is still exercised today through the alter-globalization movement but also through smaller autonomous, DIY and anarchist groups in various locations, including Skapoula, that attempt to work with prefigurative politics in their decision-making processes and beyond. This conflation between consensus decision-making and participatory democracy is enhanced by the notion of horizontality, which is effectively a rejection of hierarchical relationships, a practice, I would suggest, of actively creating equality. This notion of horizontality is reflected in Skapoula's principles guiding the decision-making process of the group as evident in the excerpt above.

In the context of this chapter I reflect on the assembly as a process that goes beyond decision-making practice. First, I argue that the direct democratic assembly, particularly in the context of a pupils' collectivity, becomes a context for peer learning and unlearning of institutional ways of being and acting. In this way it is associated with the process of becoming a horizontal antiauthoritarian activist that participating youth are undergoing. Thus, an emphasis is placed on the pedagogical potential of this practice.

Second, I illustrate how the *parea* (the group of friends) of initial members of Skapoula transformed into the assembly, thus extending friendship into the field of politics. Building on work that examines the internal dynamics of country-based anti-authoritarian collectives and direct-actionist groups (Katsiaficas 1997; Polletta 2002; Shepard 2011), I argue that friendship and the related process of creating intimate relations, *zymosis*, become essential parts of the power that underage and new actors feel in the process of asserting a voice within the context of an assembly. I argue that 'making friendship/*parea*' should be considered in this case as *a political practice*, a process of supporting one another in the making of radical political subjects. I further show, however, how this process was not duly recognized as such by

members of Skapoula, contributing to an extent in unbalanced power dynamics. Overall, I aim to show how in the process of trying to overcome certain power issues with regard to adult society and extend the field in which pupils and children can act politically, other, more subtle issues relating to power dynamics within Skapoula, such as issues of ownership of the group and gender issues, went unmarked or did not receive equal attention. In this sense, I aim to show how prefigurative politics work in practice from the –underexplored- perspective and through the experience of pupil activists.

Finally, through looking at the internal politics of the group, I try to map the overarching political processes to which they are reacting. These processes relate to the emergence of a growing extreme right-wing movement and its presence in Cypriot society, and to intense gentrification processes taking place in the old city of Nicosia. At the same time, they arise within the wider societal crisis in Cyprus following the 2013 financial crisis, with its increase of youth unemployment and underemployment and the austerity measures imposed in response.

7.2. Assemblies as spaces of peer-learning and unlearning of institutional ways of being

Ermis: Somehow, because we were all, more or less, the same age, ok up to a degree what I'm saying is not always the case, they (pupils) generally felt more comfortable talking in relation to other assemblies where not everybody would be little (μυτσοί, μικροί, young)

Giorgos: Ok the same was the case with past assemblies (of Skapoula), some people would talk, some...

Ermis (interrupting Giorgos): In past assemblies however the people who did not talk were those who would come on and off or they would come for one month and then they would never return

Giorgos: Yeah ok if the assembly was 5 people or 7 with 2 people who weren't talking then ok, but what I mean is that in general some people always spoke and some...someone's (opinion) will have more weight, these things are understandable. I think it is not so much a matter of age, but the way we tried to function was difficult. Why? Because we never *learned* to act in this way. In school they would give you something to read and you would read it and you would then go and write exams about it. You never learned to be in a team and attempt for everyone to be equal and to produce something together, to write a piece of writing together with another person, to organize something and have everyone take different responsibilities to see it through. I can imagine that some people still expected the teacher or their father to tell them 'do this' for example. Or in a much lighter version, they expected the other person

within Skapoula to tell them 'go do this'. And it needs a lot of effort to break these things, it's very difficult and this is understandable. (my emphasis)

What helps youth in 'break(ing) these things'? How do they take their power back? The above discussion that relates to the practice of assemblies exemplifies a number of issues that emerge when pupils and children attempt to implement processes of direct democratic decision making and collective undertaking in practice without intermediaries. One of them, as illustrated by Ermis, was becoming comfortable in talking within assemblies, in addition to the fact that Skapoula maintained a loose structure of organization and participation which meant that assemblies would not always be attended by the same people. I touch on this issue in the third section. In the context of this first section, I would like to delve more into conceptualizing assemblies as spaces of peer learning and self-education, and as spaces of unlearning of institutional ways of being. Looking at assemblies in this way means to examine them beyond their practical function and their common conceptualization as horizontal decision-making practices. As Giorgos points out, there was a type of pedagogy, a process of learning taking place within assemblies.

In the context of Cyprus where, as analyzed above in the previous chapter, education within schools is transmitted in a one-way, instructive manner, attempting to act in a communal, horizontal way constitutes in itself a process of learning and unlearning. Participation within assemblies, therefore, was not for everyone a straight-forward task. Rather, pupils entering Skapoula needed to go through a process of unlearning of instructional and hierarchical ways of acting and to experiment with forms of horizontal self-organization and collective action conducted in and with the group's own terms and means. Self-organization is described as key to groups that work with prefigurative power and is 'a process of repossession of the power to collectively determine every aspect of our lives' (Maeckelbergh 2009, 121). Part of this learning and unlearning therefore was the process of raising a voice within the context of an assembly and feeling oneself to be on an equal ground with other members of the group. Thus, the deliberative process of consensus was hard to achieve because pupils and children were accustomed to hierarchical processes of decision-making, where someone else was in charge of their life decisions, such as a teacher or a family member. Wider political processes, social norms and forms of relatedness influenced such processes of achieving equal standing within the group in different ways.

For example, this unlearning did not only consist of hierarchical ways of acting, but for some also involved a process of deconstructing the idea that as children they are perceived to be apolitical beings, not meant to deal with 'politics'. This was shared with me in the form of a

complaint by some members of the group towards other members who, at their initial stages of participation, saw Skapoula not so much as a political group, but rather in a neutralized sense, as a group of pupils organizing things together; they therefore resisted putting the label of politics on those actions. Understanding oneself and one's social position in the world as political was in itself a process that pupils at Faneromeni were going through. Therefore for some newer members the fact that Skapoula was a political group was not directly obvious or desirable. This understanding reflected their own process of becoming political subjects in the sense of first, understanding their social position as children/pupils as political and not neutral, and second, disassociating from a common-held perception that politics are ethically corruptive (or 'morally suspect', Papataxiarchis 1991, 164) and, therefore, can be handled only by adults, male adults in particular, while children's 'innocence' was not suitable for such type of action.

Contributing to this, according to some members, was the fact that some new members did not read material related to the philosophy of the group before joining Skapoula in order to understand what the group was about, but rather joined through an enthusiasm with the self-organized parties. Reading was also part of what gave power and confidence to group members in terms of participation. Many, such as Billis and Racoon, pointed out to me that when they first encountered Skapoula they felt too 'politically immature' to participate in such a group and that they needed to read first before feeling ready to engage in Skapoula's actions. Reading and self-education were resistant practices in themselves and gave the group power, as the knowledge brought to the assembly by different members enhanced the collective effort of talking back to power through a mutual educative process of peer to peer transfer of knowledge.

People who read usually had more say within assemblies or more confidence in sharing their opinions with the group. However this was also an incentive for some members to engage with the type of counter-knowledges available, and produced, in and around Faneromeni and to develop their political awareness while being members of Skapoula. This awareness was further developed through engagement with Skapoula's actions and with each other. Even if someone did not read as much, exchanges on different issues would be carried out in the context of the assemblies. This was done in a number of ways one of which was via members writing up articles for the Magazine; other members, usually older ones, would comment on those drafts, edit them or propose changes. I followed this process in one of the assemblies of the group where articles written for the Magazine were reviewed. Fotis, an older member of Skapoula, did a very thorough reading of different articles and a number of problematic

perceptions included within them were discussed. For example, Billis was worried whether in an article he wrote about the army he insinuated that women should participate in the army too in order to have equality. Billis felt uneasy about making this point to which Fotis responded that the aim is to have no armies, not include more people within them. Various people nodded in agreement and Billis agreed to revise the draft to reflect this common position. In the same assembly Fotis, commenting on an article on sexism in Cyprus written by Thiseas, a relatively new member of Skapoula, said that Thiseas should indicate that despite women's role changing in Cyprus towards more participation in the labour market this became possible mainly via their substitution in the home with female domestic workers, in this sense indicating that power inequalities between women and men did not effectively shift in this process.

Through assembling therefore new members engaged not only in a process of unlearning of institutional ways of being, but also deconstructing various normative perceptions about gender, race and equality. Such conversations, though commonplace within Skapoula, were excluded from the limited human rights discussions within schools. Developing a counter-talk was a collective process and often group members were teaming up in writing Magazine articles or other material to be distributed and then presented them at the assemblies. As Giorgos observed, this co-writing and co-organizing process in order to bring Skapoula's actions to fruition, and attention placed on treating each other as equals, was contributing to 'breaking' the normative meanings and forms of relatedness of 'pupils' and 'children' in Cyprus by communalizing and politicizing these categories in practice. For this reason, knowledge and practical skills-sharing between older and newer members were crucial for the continuous functioning of the group: older members were effectively modeling to new members processes and practices of self-management and self-organization, which are key for collective repossession of the power to determine one's life. This transferring of skills and information was done in a relational, organic way, through assemblies, parties and socializing at the square through a type of peer to peer learning that was not mediated or supervised by anyone.

It is important to note here that this peer to peer learning further corresponded to a particular understanding younger members of Faneromeni, including Skapoula, held for the actions they were organizing. A common point constantly raised particularly by the younger members of Faneromeni, rather than the older adults, was that 'we need to do things for ourselves as well'. There was never a singular understanding that Skapoula/Faneromeni youth should do an action simply for outsiders, to have a political effect outside the group or the community. Rather, the understanding was that they do these actions for themselves as well, to engage

with themselves, experiment in their relationships with each-other when they hold an action together against authorities, or by skipping authorities, and gain in experience of doing common actions with each-other. They thus acknowledged the need for the constant cultivation of the skills and abilities of being collective horizontal actors, constantly enhancing the ability to engage in alternative social relations that could sustain a more egalitarian world.

This is reminiscent of what Ramza and Kurnik (2012) described as a politics of becoming other-than-one-now-is that Slovenian direct actionists were undergoing in interactions within their assemblies. Taking into account this understanding of Faneromeni/Skapoula youth, as well as the process of unlearning of institutional ways of being, such as politicizing the apolitical version of themselves as children, I would argue that, for these pupils and teenage youth, the process of becoming constituted an essential part of their activist practice which should be analyzed and valorized as such. Prefiguration in this sense, understood as implementing in the now of the world that one envisions for the future, might overshadow such processes of becoming that do not assume an overtly worked out vision of utopia but one that is constantly enhanced through collective effort and engagement.

7.3. Relational organic education

The pedagogical aspect of participation in Skapoula was further highlighted in a conversation I had with Chloe and Aggelos. Chloe emphasized that ‘Skapoula was a great school for us’. Describing her participation as a learning process revealed that a form of alternative education was taking place that extended the capabilities and the empowerment felt by members of the group. This was mainly taking place through assemblies, a process that actively requested everyone to participate.

Chloe: I think the direction that I want to take (in the future) is to be engaged with theatre. However now I have a background and I will go and tell them (future collaborators) ‘let’s sit and have an assembly’, because I went to many assemblies and I know how it’s done. And this thing, which is to learn to speak in front of people. Others need to hold debates at English School to learn to do that. We simply participated in Skapoula and we were having fun at it. We learned things that others learned in a much more academic way, and they were learning such things through paper (learning them on paper she means -- not in practice) while we were learning from each other and this was far more personal.

Aggelos: and this is a support for us to continue afterwards (after Skapoula), I mean, I don't believe that most people from here (Skapoula) are going to stop reading.

Chloe: a *Fascism without a Swastika*⁴⁹ can turn into Foucault, Derrida, whatever, I mean you learn to read political speech (πολιτικό λόγο) and then you can take it a step further. Because we had some people around us telling us 'read this, read that, this thing happened yesterday' and you acquire a vocabulary to read these concepts and then you move levels up. You focus on a human interaction that is immensely important and Skapoula helped me very much in speaking more and helped Aggelos in speaking more.

Here Chloe points to a type of learning that is much more organic in nature, not mediated by 'paper' – textbooks and manuals -- or adult-staged debates, but by a particular way of relating to one another, that is, peer to peer, horizontal relationality. This was done through a process of discussion in assemblies for the purpose of producing a common counter-talk and deciding on future actions of the group, as well as through socialization at the square in the form of informal discussions held in the public space. Learning here was mediated by alternative ways of relating to one another, at the same time as nourishing those relationships through peer to peer exchange on a number of issues.

In this sense the assembly is much more than a decision-making procedure; rather, it extends to a type of relational self-organized pedagogy that empowers individual members through cultivating their ability to speak and their awareness on a variety of public affairs. It becomes a space where pupils sit together and discuss current affairs and various theorists and their works and try to make sense collectively of the world around them without a rigid curriculum or by regurgitating knowledge, but with themes that are continuously changing, in an organic way, depending on the interests and input participants bring in the conversations. Skapoula, as a pupils' assembly, therefore enacts a type of direct relational pedagogy.

The ability of 'speaking' in this context means raising a political voice, being facilitated to understand complex constellations of power within society and how they affect one's predicament and having the vocabulary to express them through speech. Engaging with the vocabulary to talk about different issues was a key aspect of assembling in Skapoula and, looked at from this point of view, the assembly contributes significantly to an egalitarian democratic ethos. It provides members with a vocabulary to understand their situated subject positions and express themselves as political beings extending their capacities to have a voice and to speak against authority. In other words, it collectively holds a space for them through

⁴⁹ A book on the workings of fascism in contemporary societies published by the Autonome Antifa Assembly in Greece.

this process of becoming. It does that by providing an intellectually nourishing and supportive space in their process of becoming political beings.

The lack of particular vocabularies as a disempowering tactic is made evident through literature on the struggles of indigenous peoples, and other disenfranchised groups (Selmeczi 2014), with technocratic states where the language of technocrats excludes indigenous people from participation in conversations that affect their lives (see Samson 2001). Also research on children who were sexually abused has shown that their lack of vocabulary to talk and understand what they have suffered undermined their ability to express themselves in courts (Lamb 1995).

In this sense, 'speaking more' does not refer to the mere act of speaking. It involves rather a type of speaking that reclaims power back to the individual pupil through co-existing in a collectivity. The collectivity further seems to provide, beyond the actual vocabulary and the opportunity to practice in raising one's voice, the emotional support to stand against racist and sexist attitudes within the classroom and beyond.

Chloe: 'I went to an interview with Youth Voice, this is something that is done at English School, and they were discussing the migrants' issue. I went in and I told them about this and that because Skapoula necessarily offered an awareness to the pupil that when you entered the classroom you could argue: 'no, what you're saying is wrong, I know about this and that (incident) and this thing that happened the other day with that particular migrant'. I mean Skapoula kept us very much aware on different issues that were happening and this helped us in discussions held in classrooms, *it educated the pupil to be somewhat differently within the classroom*. If you entered the classroom and they were saying 'Migrants are evil' you could argue against that position with facts like 'this thing happened the other day'. [...] I knew that I was not crazy because I was not the only one being bothered by such things, they bother Aggelos too, so when I would stand up in the classroom and say to my classmates 'you know it's ok for a guy to sleep with another guy', I had this feeling that I have a whole Skapoula behind me that supported me'. (my emphasis)

This type of unity, solidarity and support is important in sustaining motivation for collective action and empowerment in talking back to authoritarian and discriminative positions. As Barbara Ehrenreich (2007, 259) notes, 'People must find, in their movement, the immediate joy of solidarity, if only because, in the face of overwhelming state or corporate power, solidarity is the sole source of strength'.

7.4. Transforming parea into assembly: 'Making friendship' as an active political practice

As mentioned above, Skapoula had a loose structure of participation and membership which meant that people could come in and out of the assembly at any given time; consequently the composition of Skapoula at different assemblies but also when organizing diverse actions varied. Some members were more regular than others in attending assemblies and taking on responsibilities for the group. At the same time, members of the larger community of Faneromeni youth would come in and out of Skapoula's assemblies at different times and frequently help with the various responsibilities in organizing its actions. The people that were coming on and off usually talked less in assemblies, the exception being regular members who were away for a while, due to exam periods for example, and who then returned to the group. Being a regular member of the assembly created some sort of unofficial leaders within the group who due to their regular engagement with the group, had more 'say' or whose opinion weighted more. This was also the result of the experience that members gained through organizing different actions; less experienced members would necessarily follow one's lead in such cases. As the group is composed of those who participate and contribute their opinions in it, in terms of attendance at assemblies, regular members' voices were in effect more prominent within the group's decisions than others. This is not a characteristic specific to Skapoula alone, but something that I noticed and discussed with people participating in various collectivities of the wider Choros (anti-authoritarian field) in Cyprus. On the other hand, the loose structure of Skapoula helped to maintain a wider network of Faneromeni youth who would join in Skapoula's actions and assemblies at different times. This wider network resembled an extended group of friends -- a parea of people that is more extended than the usual parees that youth maintain. The regular extended parea around Skapoula amounted between 30 to 50 people. This network was further maintained through the online Facebook group of Skapoula in which many Faneromeni youth were members in addition to those officially known as Skapoula members. Occasionally, minutes from the assemblies were uploaded to this Facebook group or to another online forum maintained by Skapoula; thus, members who did not attend could ask for clarification or add suggestions to the decisions already undertaken.

In this sense, the participatory and collective character of Skapoula was to a certain extent maintained beyond the physical assemblies taking place. Skapoula's assemblies were always open to this wider community of youth frequenting Faneromeni, who benefited from self-organized practice through their occasional participation in Skapoula's actions. In return,

Skapoula benefited from this wider network of support. Although not always participating in key decisions of the group, young Faneromeni regulars participated in the micro-decisions that needed to take place urgently in the context of implementing a collective action. These micro-decisions were themselves experiments in non-hierarchical democracy through the building of the type of relationality that is necessary to bring to fruition a self-organized collective pupils' action. This means that a cooperative spirit is demanded by such actions which do not leave much space for adversarial egos to prevail. Friendship, as a relational type, worked well in such cases. In the context of a party for example, where there was some urgency to decide on where to put the megaphones or to determine who was going to go and bring additional beers, feeling comfortable enough to ask people to do things to help is important for the success of the action. Friendship and solidarity thus facilitated -and were facilitated by- the instrumental process of bringing a collective action to fruition.



Figure 18. Informal assembly at the square.

How quickly, however, one would begin to raise a voice within assemblies depended on a variety of factors. Physical presence alone did not guarantee active participation nor did the process of direct horizontal decision-making, at least at the initial stages of one's participation to the group. The pupils that engaged with Skapoula were not necessarily empowered for active participation, but were going through a process of becoming politically radicalized and empowered to raise their voice. Important factors in this process related to familiarity and intimacy created with other members of the group through the process of zymosis that led to the building of new relationships. Being a pupils' self-organized collective, which meant that all

actions of the group depended on the voluntary undertaking of responsibilities by members of the group, made feelings of trust, camaraderie and intimacy important in sustaining the group and in maintaining motivation for participation, as well as in facilitating the process of politicization that members of the group were undergoing. As discussed by Willis (1977), in his classical study in a British Midlands school, friendship relations among pupils facilitated the challenging of the status quo and the circulation of critical discourses on class inequality. Friendship was further identified as important in facilitating 'an egalitarian and consensual collective practice' among members of affinity groups, which constitute small units of larger social movements or of large-scale direct actions (Dupuis-Déri 2010, 47).

Friendship and the extent of zymosis among group members therefore played an important part in relation to the levels of agency and legitimacy a pupil felt in taking part in discussion in the context of Skapoula's assemblies. In the first weeks of fieldwork it was pointed out to me that Skapoula began from a group of friends (parea, 'από μια παρέα παιδιών') that hung out at the square. Key, regular members of this initial group that emerged in 2011 was Ermis, Giorgos, Chloe, Olga, Sotiris, Iasonas, Pavlos, Demetra and Fotis. All of them were pupils from the English School, except Iasonas, Pavlos and Demetra who were in a public school and Olga who was in another private school. Most of the people that started off Skapoula, like Sotiris, Ermis and Giorgos, were close friends already while the rest became friends through hanging out together at Faneromeni as well as through co-creating the group at this initial stage. In this sense, this parea of initial members of Skapoula, which also grew closer together during experimentation with Skapoula's actions, extended friendship relations in the context of political action. As Polletta (2002, 123) has explained about the founders of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the US, few of them

'had had experience in directly democratic organizations. To make decisions -- to frame issues, identify and adjudicate options, and negotiate compromises -- they instead took behavioral norms and expectations from a relational style with which they were familiar: friendship. Treating their fellow SDS members as friends made it easy to delegate tasks and to resolve differences of opinion and interest. By infusing friendship with political commitments, moreover, activists countered the traditional division between public and private spheres. By extending friendship to a wider circle, they countered its usual exclusivity'.

Skapoula and by extension the counter culture at Faneromeni was exactly about that: politicizing (by physically and conceptually bringing to the public domain, to the street) spheres of life, categories and relationships that are either deemed private and/or apolitical. My experience with assemblies where these older members of Skapoula participated gave me a sense that the parea extended and became the assembly. This was evident in the comfortable

and humorous way they were talking to and teasing each other, often using some code words that only they could understand between themselves. ‘Trolling’ each other was also a constant activity on the online facebook group of Skapoula. Different members would constantly joke with one another and those more talented in graphics would produce funny images of one another and share with the group. Others would occasionally post funny issues and mock Cypriot politicians and their opinions or mock practices of the political party youth wings. These jokes and trolling would mostly come initially from older members of the group who were already friends and could joke with each other without being offended. Yet overall, this lightness of spirit helped new members as well to feel more comfortable with the group as well as associate themselves with older group members that they admired but felt intimidated by, due to the latter’s levels of knowledge and experience with group practices.

Friendship for the pupils engaging with Skapoula and the square was seen as a relation between equals, that similar to the SDS it provided ‘the trust, affection and intimacy that were so palpably missing from mainstream politics’ (Polletta 2002, 130). Disenchantment with mainstream politics, as well as ‘the decline in state support for social reproduction and the breakdown of established forms of family and kinship’ after the 1990s (Dyson 2010, 483), had as a consequence the increase in importance of friendship relations among youth who are actively seeking community elsewhere. This type of friendship and peer to peer relations that Skapoula youth engaged with actively challenged differences in class status reflected in pupils attending private and public schools (although there were children from working class families who also attended private schools like Miltos who had a scholarship). This active equality was further reflected in the simple, overused, non-labeled clothing mostly worn by youth occupying the square, as status is often represented for youth in Cyprus through brand wearing. ‘Making friendship/parea’(κάνουμε παρέα ή κάνοντας παρέα) as is the expression in Greek, indicating an understanding that friendship as a relation is something people do – it is a practice, an active process – was important in making and sustaining political initiatives. The egalitarian and collective characteristics of this type of friendship, which is directly associated to politics, in this case adds a different perspective to the ways politics and friendship have been discussed in the Cypriot and Greek contexts. That is friendships as mask for relations of patronage (Campbell 1964; Loizos 1977) and as dyadic relationships primarily of emotional nature (Papataxiarchis 1991).

At the same time, in congruence with the work of Papataxiarchis (1991) and Kennedy (1986), friendship seems to work here as part of an ‘antistructure’ (Papataxiarchis 1991, 156), as a way to cope not only with ‘the structural demands of domestic kinship’ (Loizos and Papataxiarchis

1991, 21), but with the structural demands of schooling and neoliberal education, as well as the aspirations for upward mobility (prokopi) invested in Cypriot children by their families. Like the friendship relations of lower-class men in Mouria analyzed by Papataxiarchis (1991, 172), friendship becomes in this case an outlet for youth 'who experience as impositions the hierarchical structures of state, work (schooling in this case), and domesticity'. In the case of Skapoula, this 'antistructure' is expanded in terms of numbers and infused with direct political meaning.

Pupils that joined Skapoula after the initial group was formed needed to go through this same process of zymosis. Familiarity and intimacy was created through spending time together at the square, outside of the context of assemblies, where exchanges would take place on a variety of issues, from those perceived as 'serious' to far more playful such as video games, sharing music tastes, sports and common interests such as stencil and graffiti. As has been argued, the co-organization of parties also helped new members gain familiarity of group's practices and engage with older members in a lighter atmosphere that needed more practical, rather than intellectual engagement.

However, when the process of zymosis did not take place, it was much harder for new members to express an opinion in the context of an assembly, if older members were also present. This was made particularly obvious in September 2013 when a number of new members, like Maria, Vasiliki, Fanos and Ariadni, joined the group while some initial members went abroad to start off their studies. These initial members -- Ermis, Iasonas and Giorgos -- continued to participate in online discussions of the group held on Facebook, and also helped with the preparation of the Magazine through graphic design and writing texts. The new group that emerged in September 2013 consisted of the aforementioned new members, some others such as Billis, Petros and Thiseas who had joined Skapoula the previous year and had a chance to spend approximately one year in the presence of initial members, and a number of older members who had been in Skapoula for a few years already like Chloe, Miltos, Raccoon and Aggelos. Billis, Petros, and Thiseas had already gained some of the know-how that was necessary for the actions of the group through their interactions with older members. They also felt much more intimate and comfortable with older members than new members.

In the context of the physical assemblies of the new group both Maria and Vasiliki felt relatively comfortable and were sharing their opinion while often trolling Petros and Billis with whom they had extensive interaction at the square. They also felt comfortable with older members like Raccoon and Aggelos who had been in Skapoula since early 2012. They appeared

to be less comfortable, however, taking part in the online facebook group discussions where older members they did not know well also participated. The absence of zymosis that led new people feeling uncomfortable in assembling online was noted as a sensitivity by Miltos, an older member of the group who was also participating in the new Skapoula. Attempting to attend to participatory democracy, he made a clear remark that the assembly to be prioritized is the one taking place in Cyprus where members can participate physically as this in itself makes members more comfortable, through direct interaction with one another. Direct interaction was thus crucial as participatory democracy – at least for smaller groups and younger, new actors -- is a relational form of democracy, very much dependant on bonds of trust and camaraderie between various actors. ‘Feeling comfortable’ therefore is essential for observing the principles of direct participatory democracy.

The fact that Skapoula consisted of new people along with some older members after September 2013, meant that all current members needed to go through the process of zymosis in order to be able to extend their collective self into the field of politics and composition a common political voice. This process was to an extent sidelined or not given due attention by older members that were currently abroad who seemed to have the expectation that the new group would essentially function in the same way as the old group. This was made obvious through some pressure placed in completing a new version of the Magazine but also through a constant subtle criticism from some older members to newer ones about not being as effective in their actions as the older group. It was further made obvious to me in the context of an event that happened at the early stages of formation of the new group in November 2013. Some older members of Skapoula along with some former pupils from Limassol that participated in another pupils’ collective in Cyprus, held an online assembly and decided that they wanted to hold a 2-day antifascist event in Cyprus during Christmas time, when they would return to Cyprus. They posted the minutes from this assembly in Skapoula’s online forum.

Although framed as a suggestion, this actually imposed a specific expectation -conducting an event against fascism- on the new group that was still in a process of formation. It also suggested a cooperation with another group before the new Skapoula group had an opportunity to solidify their collective political self. Some older members of the group still participating in the current assembly in Cyprus reacted, asking ‘who was this assembly that had taken decisions on actions to be done during Christmas time?’ without effectively consulting with Skapoula’s current assembly. They questioned the legitimacy of such an action by essentially insinuating that this was not participatory democracy. Newer members of the

group like Maria, Ariadni, Fanos and Vasiliki did not react however, partly due to lack of experience with the process of decision-making within the group, also possibly sensing the sidelining done by older members. As the ability to assert oneself within the collective depended on 'making friendship' and intimacy with one another, the absence of these left new members in silence. Their process of *becoming politically radicalized* was not effectively supported, but skipped by older members who felt they had more ownership of the group due to extended periods of participation. New members could not hold older members accountable for not attending to process, in the sense of attending to the principles of horizontality and active participation, like other older members did, due to the absence of friendship that facilitates ownership of the group and active participation. This was noted as a problem faced in other collectives as well, such as SDS and the women's liberation movement (Polletta 2002).

The lack of feelings of ownership of Skapoula and its initiatives, however, became a constant feeling for new members and were not exclusive to this incident. New members felt these feelings due to expectations created by older members of the group on what type of actions Skapoula should undertake based on their previous experience with the group. The lack of feelings of ownership of the group were often expressed to me by Maria, as well as a couple of other new members, who felt that to a certain degree it was like participating in someone else's group and needing to match some type of standards of action set by the previous assembly of Skapoula. This lack of feelings of ownership of the group by new members reflected to a certain extent that the workings of participatory democracy within the group did not always match the ideal of horizontality, participation and non-hierarchy set out in the principles of the group. As Maeckelbergh (2009, 111) describes for the Dissent! network, 'there is no horizontality without a 'feeling of belonging'. Those who are participating should not only be present and involved, but they should feel that they belong and that they have ownership and control over the process, and the network as a whole'. Some older members of Skapoula, feeling more ownership of the group, felt legitimated to pressure the group for the undertaking of certain actions; unintentionally, they sometimes evoked feelings of inadequacy to new members by being overly critical. This shows that they did not effectively attend to the process of becoming radical political actors that new members were going through and which is largely facilitated through the active pursuit of friendship and camaraderie with one another. In a context, I would argue, where friendship works as part of the antistructure to hierarchical authorities and relations, being a horizontal anti-authoritarian actor means actively pursuing bonds of friendship as part of political practice. By doing this Skapoula would

further challenge the emphasis placed on the apolitical and private nature of this type of relation in the West (see Silver 1990).

As shown in this section, friendship played an important role in securing active participation and enabling the process of becoming radicalized. The friendship between older members was far more strengthened due to the time period spent with each other, and at times it proved difficult to expand beyond the original group. The idea that actively 'making friendship' would be the way to facilitate new members' induction in the group was not done to an effective degree and was not adequately recognized as a direct political practice. Although older members would generally respect the rules of participatory democracy, which indeed saved the process of decision-making at times from being unfair or one-sided, still the lack of facilitation of bonds of friendship was a cost to the group, in terms of inclusion and motivation for collective action.

Horizontality, and how it is entangled with friendship as well as gender relations among youth in the context of Cyprus, will be further explored in the following section.

7.5. Modeling participatory democracy: Experiments in horizontality

Building on the above discussion, in this section, I aim to further examine power dynamics within the group in order to assess the challenges faced when attempting, as a pupils' assembly, to implement horizontal structures of decision-making. These issues are explored by recounting a series of assemblies that related to preparing for an anti-fascist event. A coordinating movement against fascism that would unite different individuals and groups that had an antifascist agenda was missing in Cyprus and the need to talk about that with wider allies in Faneromeni and beyond was identified as a necessity by Skapoula, due to increasing levels of extreme right-wing activity, and explored in an assembly held in May 2014.

Billis suggested to the assembly to hold a 3-day antifascist event that would include a discussion on current forms of antifascism in Cyprus, during which they would present the book *Fascism without a Swastika* (2010), written by the Assembly Autonome Antifa in Greece, and collectively reflect on it. In a follow-up assembly in June 2014 the issue was discussed again; this time, a number of initial members also participated as it was already June and they had returned to Cyprus after their first year abroad for studies. As discussed, Skapoula's loose

structure and flexible assembly would include members that left and returned to the assembly at different points.

The assembly began with older and newer members participating. These included Ermis, Iasonas, Giorgos, Vaggelis, Vasiliki, Maria, Billis, Aggelos and Ariadni. Billis restated his suggestion to present the aforementioned book and reflect on practices of Antifascism in Cyprus. Ermis challenged him to explain why he thought the presentation of the book was necessary; Billis responded that by discussing the themes of the book, a further discussion could start on practices of antifascism, whether these exist or not in Cyprus and what should be done about them. This exchange was precipitated by a heated debate between Ermis and Billis in another assembly, where Ermis had challenged Billis to become clearer about his suggestions and not just put issues out there without proper justification, mentioning that this book had been already widely read by members of the Choros. I had experienced this kind of tension between Ermis and Billis a number of times. Billis was a newer member to the group and many times felt, as did others, that he had to prove himself and his opinion to older members.

Enthusiastic to be included in a group of people they admired and perceived as charismatic, new members, particularly boys such as Billis, showed an eagerness to play an active role in the group. They tended to alternate between embracing and competing with those perceived as leading things. Chloe, in particular, noted this about Billis in one of our conversations: 'Billis is a good case because he came in Skapoula and he really claimed his position within it, he begun to read relentlessly and somehow he managed to stand on an equal footing against Ermis -- the hero'. The description of Ermis as the 'hero' refers to the fact that Ermis was seen by many as 'the driving force' of Skapoula, as Fotis described him to me, due to his intense involvement with the group, a fact that also gave him certain authority within Skapoula's assembly. This made some new members fearful of expressing an opinion in case they might appear 'naive'. Chloe's note about needing to stand on an equal footing and proving oneself against specific members showed that to an extent certain preconditions existed on how much one's opinion mattered within the group. New members were not always facilitated in their participation within the group but had to claim it at times by *proving* that they were rightful members of Skapoula. This further related to the fact that Skapoula was an autonomous pupils' group and how much diavasma each member did contributed to the power of the group as a whole.

However, Ermis's challenge to Billis's suggestion was not simply a confrontational attempt to 'test' Billis. It was, rather, argumentative as it effectively called on Billis to show to the group the relevance of his suggestions in today's political circumstances. This intervention helped in improving and refining the activity that would take place. The argumentative nature of discussions and the need for one to account for her/his opinion was a constant type of exchange within assemblies that newer members effectively needed to learn and this was modeled to them by older members. An understanding and leniency towards such a learning process, a process of becoming, sometimes eluded older members, however, and was not necessarily facilitated by them. The need to show leniency and understanding of such learning process is important in horizontality.

As the assembly continued, Giorgos intervened to note that actually the book was not that widely discussed within the wider Choros. He suggested that they combine it with talking about gentrification and the expulsion of migrants and youth from the old town, in combination with the initiatives started by residents of the old town. At that point in time the commercialization of the old city started to take immense proportions and the availability of public space for collective action and socializing outside consumer logic was proving to be increasingly difficult. A number of groups, including organized old town residents and regulars of Faneromeni, organized through general assemblies and attempted to resist the actions of the Mayor of Nicosia. This was mainly done through confrontation at the rare events the Mayor held to explain such policies to people living and using the old town, as well as through dissemination of their opinion in streets and blogs, but to no avail.

Ermis agreed to Giorgos's proposal stressing that gentrification contains aspects relating to fascism which they could combine with the commercialization of the old town. Billis at this point suggested that one person should make the presentation. A number of older members resisted this, suggesting that the preparation of the presentation should be participatory and anyone who wanted to take part should meet up in a separate assembly and discuss this issue. In this sense older members modeled to newer members the process through which participatory democracy should take place. This was also an effort, through participatory direct democracy, to reduce Billis's dominance within the new group through decentralizing responsibility for a particular action. If Ermis was the driving force in the older group of Skapoula, Billis seemed to be the driving force in the new group taking many responsibilities upon himself at the expense sometimes of a more collective effort. This was particularly obvious in the case of events where the group needed to make a presentation on an issue.

Usually this presentation would be prepared and presented by Billis and members would not rotate in taking up such a role.

On the other hand, Skapoula mostly worked in this way with members taking up responsibilities that they enjoyed and felt more comfortable with or had a specific inclination in. This privileged the talents and interests of different members contrary to an understanding of democracy that levels up all difference. Polletta (2002, 150) in her study of women's liberation groups actually showed how this leveling up of members' talents to supposedly achieve equality worked contrary to their antiauthoritarian efforts and participatory ethos. Shepard (2011, 83) makes a similar point about how the Lower East Side Collective made people feel ownership of the initiative by allowing them to 'personalize how they participated', through making use of individual qualifications and proclivities that unleashed their creativity. Not rotating enough in preparing presentations or texts for distribution, however, meant that the counter-talk of Skapoula was not always as collective as desired in principle. Furthermore, older members seemed to have the final say on the content of articles presented in the Magazine, sometimes to the disenchantment of new members like Thiseas, who in one case felt that the severe changes done on one of his articles did not respect the process of direct democracy as there was no collective consultation on the changes made. Such issues and feelings of unease on the language and content of the Magazine will be further discussed in the next section.

Modeling participatory process was further undertaken by older members through attention to diversity. Throughout the assembly, Ermis was attentive to the active participation of girls, urging them to share an opinion. To this end, he proposed that we do 'a circle', a procedure that all members seemed to be aware of, in which everyone would give their opinion in turn about the topic under discussion. I witnessed Ermis use this procedure in other assemblies whenever he felt that a few people dominated discussions and not everyone got a chance to share their opinion. However, in this case, the procedure was not enough to elicit the participation of new members, girls in particular, who did not feel comfortable enough to talk when it was their turn. The lack of friendship, zymosis and feelings of intimacy with older members rendered these girls literally speechless in the context of the assembly. This was made evident when Maria managed to reverse her lack of assertiveness after spending time with Ermis at the square to the point of telling Ermis off for not making a poster as visibly attractive as could have been. Direct democracy as mentioned before was not a straight forward case for everyone, but instead was a process of learning to take decisions with others with active participation in the process. It was through their participation in assemblies that

these girls were forced to express an opinion and to co-create the actions of the group. Gaining the confidence to do so, though enabled by the process, further depended on feelings of familiarity and friendship among members. Thus, simply attending to a formal, rational process of participatory decision-making, as it is done in transnational forums (Maeckellbergh 2009, 67), proved inadequate, in this context, for engaging new members' participation.

Gender played a role to a certain extent as well. Being a girl and woman in the context of Cyprus you are intensely more aware and more sensitive to the opinion others hold of you, especially men. There is in this sense a greater monitoring of one's behaviour and a greater restriction in freedom of expression emanating from a masculinist culture that is far more critical of women's opinions, especially about public affairs, than of men's. This, as explored in chapter 3, is due to a traditional association of women to the domestic sphere that renders their association to the public as immoral in sexually denigrated terms (Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991; Skapoulli 2009; Vasiliadou 2004). This was further evident by the quicker way new male members became assertive and expressed themselves within Skapoula's assembly. Furthermore, being a group of teenagers, Skapoula members needed to overcome the fact that friendship relations in the context of Cyprus usually form along same-sex lines where both boys and girls feel more comfortable within *parees* (groups of friends) of the same sex and where a boy seen to constantly hang out with girls risks the danger of being called 'sissy' (Christou 2013). Thus, the strong heteronormative ethos within Cypriot society which is reflected in the construction of rigid gender identities was another issue to overcome in order to achieve horizontality and active participation. As friendship in this context of antiauthoritarian youth activism forms part of the antistructure to hierarchical relations, supporting horizontality means actively pursuing bonds of friendship with everyone.

In this context, process was not enough to achieve the aim of active equal participation as it did not necessarily enable minor members to raise a voice within this minors' group, who effectively needed a relatively different type of empowerment and facilitation during their process of becoming. As the process of participatory democracy requires newcomers to participate from the beginning in group deliberations, groups that work with such process, 'should be better at incorporating newcomers' as Polletta (2002, 167) suggests and make 'people feel immediately that they are full members'. This relates to feeling comfortable and to feelings of belonging, that were discussed previously, and which are enabled in this context, I argue, through the active creation of friendship and intimacy. Older members' interventions to make the process more participatory and effective, although proven helpful in modeling participatory democracy and refining arguments, and enhancing the collective learning process

of the group through argumentative discussion, were undermined by lack of attention to subtler issues of power that affected new group members' assertiveness. Furthermore, older members' lack of attention to the process of becoming horizontal antiauthoritarian actors, by which new members gained the know-how of how Skapoula operated, undermined the participatory character of Skapoula's assembly and the principle of horizontality that the collective was following. In this case the assumption that simply the process of participatory democracy can make up for these things, works in contradictory ways by overshadowing, rather than enhancing, individual members' development, which is necessary in 'the process of repossession of the power to collectively determine every aspect of our lives' (Maeckellbergh 2009, 121). Technical means such as the circle or attention to the participation of girls in the assembly had proven inadequate in dealing with the subtler workings of power.

I would argue that a combination of direct democracy, which includes horizontality, consensus and prefiguration, along with some form of identity/minoritarian politics, is necessary to guarantee active participation as most actors in this case are *in a process of becoming*, rather than already being, fully-fledged antiauthoritarian horizontal actors. These identity politics however need not be understood as dividing actors into pursuing different aims, but can be seen as enhancing the process of collective assertion and of collective repossession of the means to determine one's life. This runs contrary to theory on direct democracy at the global level, in which identity politics is seen as overcome (Maeckellbergh 2009) or as in decline through the creation of more participatory collective democratic processes. Such a view, however, might overshadow such processes of becoming at the local level, and thus contribute to reproducing hierarchical relations, through an assumption that dealing with identity politics is backward or contrary to the current intersectional forms of anti-authoritarian activism, or through the assumption that the participatory direct democratic process can solve everything. Especially for teenage actors that are in a process of shedding mainstream identifications, however, identity politics remain important as also seen in Skapoula's emphasis on the pupil category. Furthermore, I would argue that a theoretical overemphasis on the homogenizing attributes and strategic essentialism of identity politics (Eschle 2001; Mirza 1997; Young 2000) has sidelined its important contribution in empowering participants to realize their positioning within intersecting systems of oppression, whilst also gainfully providing them with the vocabulary to talk about/express their repression. Therefore, identity politics did not have the sole function of putting marginalized social groups back into history and politics, but they also, through activists' internal discussions and practice, empowered participants to understand how their subjectivity was formed and overcome the limits imposed on it from hegemonic

discourses (cf. Stephen 2005). Moreover, as noted elsewhere (Katsiaficas 1997) intersectionality has often been part of perceived as 'single-issue' movements, while identity politics form the starting point for many new members of antiauthoritarian struggles who are in a process of understanding the predicaments in which they find themselves lodged.

7.6. Wider processes influencing decision-making and power dynamics: Financial crisis, gentrification and rising fascism

Beyond the above, wider political processes came also in play and affected the power dynamics within the group. The radicalization that older members experienced in the context of Faneromeni during the previous years, that is before 2013, where a number of active squats and spaces of informal counter-information exchange were vibrant in the old town was not the same as the one experienced by newer members of Skapoula. The latter entered the group at a time when the old city started to become increasingly gentrified and commercialized. The commercialization of space through the opening of a great number of restaurants and coffee places, suffocated many of the counter-cultural initiatives taking place as well as the active counter-culture forming at the square. In effect, the tables and chairs of surrounding cafes minimized public space at the same time as creating a noisy and densely populated environment constituted by middle-class consumers-customers⁵⁰.



Figure 19. From an action against gentrification in the old city by youth regulars of Faneromeni, all of which Skapoula members. Posters were prepared and posted along city walls with the main slogan:

⁵⁰ For a short, comprehensive coverage of the gentrification process in Nicosia's old town and for comments from various regulars see Christodoulides 2014.

'Business-men go to hell. We are the city'. The poster included a number of pictures such as of trees, animals, spray cans, anti-fascist flags, and bicycles to illustrate the type of city youth were reclaiming.

This was a direct cost to Skapoula in terms of the minimizing of space for alternative education and community support in the process of radicalization. Members of Skapoula felt increasingly isolated in their process of asserting a counter-voice to the establishment and it became constantly much harder to recruit new members to the group. It furthermore meant that the very process of political radicalization was turning out to be much more of an isolated endeavor than was the case before where groups of friends in the square would sit and discuss books or where there was the opportunity to attend presentations and discussion in counter-cultural centres. I constantly heard from new members that they lacked 'orexi' (ὄρεξη), meaning 'appetite', for becoming more actively engaged in collective action. This was partly due to a number of members of Skapoula moving abroad for studies, but another important factor was gentrification itself. The dispersion of community around Faneromeni severely limited the motivation for collective action and for engaging in diavasma that was one of the main sources of power of the group. This difference in the process and degree of radicalization between older and newer members caused to a certain extent frictions within the group. However, it also led to a re-assertion of the new group to fit more the concerns of the newer members of the group.

Frictions emerged when the new group, setting a new framework for the functioning of the group, replaced the word 'antifascism' with 'antiracism'. Some members participating in the new group that emerged in September 2013 felt they did not want to frame all actions of the group through antifascism, something that the older group started doing since late 2012. Members from the older group such as Iasonas and Ermis felt an urgency to respond to rising fascism in Cypriot society; therefore, they had started framing the actions of the group through an antifascist agenda, partly influenced by antifascist groups active in Greece. The latter framing was resisted by the new group: some members felt that antifascism was a more aggressive and militant agenda while antiracism presented the group as more approachable. The new group felt that presenting a more approachable public face was necessary given the demise of Faneromeni square community due to gentrification and the need to make new alliances with wider societal groups. This might also be related to the process of politicization and radicalization of newer members that were still in a process of disengaging from the apolitical character of the pupil-child within the context of Cyprus. Disengaging from such widely-held societal beliefs was neither self-evident nor immediate. For the newer members

who were too young during the Insurrection of December 2008 following the murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos in Greece, which was the cause of radicalization for many older members, and engaged with Faneromeni square community towards its demise, the process of radicalization and politicization was slower and less intense than it had been for older members. Thus, for them antiracism, as a subject also touched upon within schools, was seen as less confrontational.

At the same time, some older members felt that in the context of Cyprus, 'antiracism' was a de-politicizing framing and language. They felt it shifted the politics of the group towards less radical positions and that it was more associated with a liberal framing of diversity, human rights and equality, which did not match the radical agenda Skapoula was meant to pursue. This liberal framing was promoted through the schooling system and other state authorities through a type of 'boutique multiculturalism' approach (Fish 1997; Zembylas 2010), that failed to address the structural inequalities of racial politics. Such multiculturalism failed to address the rise of neo-fascist groups in Cyprus, including the institutions and practices that effectively promoted the actions of such groups and delegitimized the migrant working class on the island. Instead, it confined pupils to 'discussions of peripheral importance' (Selmeczi 2014, 248) – such as apolitical celebrations of diversity -- in line with their top-down articulation as peripheral subjects to politics, as apolitical beings. In this sense, older members felt that the group should maintain a harder line towards rising fascism, which was increasingly fed by the financial crisis and corresponding austerity measures implemented in Cyprus in 2012-2013. The process of direct participatory democracy, however, meant that the framing of the new group was respected, at least in principle, and older members participating in the current Cyprus-based assembly were sensitive to such feelings coming from new members.



Figure 20. Poster by Skapoula prepared in December 2013 exposing fascism within Cypriot society. It demonstrates the approach of the group particularly that of older members towards rising fascism, which for them included not only neo-fascist groups but also media channels, certain right-wing politicians and the Archbishop that promoted them. The state too was implicated in its management of migrant workers. It further relates current neo-fascist stands in Cyprus with recent events that led to the ethnic division of the island and to constant efforts of preservation of this division. This more comprehensive approach to present-day fascism is heavily influenced by the writings of *Autonome Antifa* in Greece.

The hardening of Skapoula's stance was a source of uneasiness between group members even before the emergence of the new group in September 2013, as these wider political processes –financial crisis, gentrification and rising fascism- were going on since 2012. In a discussion I had with Chloe she mentioned that some members were starting to take a harder line due to rising fascism within Cypriot society and Europe more generally, and a simultaneous increase of police repression on Faneromeni's actions, such as the Street Parade and Occupy Buffer

Zone. This was reflected in assemblies of the group, where Chloe's suggestions that related to more playful forms of activism like street theatre were blocked by members taking a more confrontational line with authorities. She told me that they called her a 'hippie' for wanting to do actions related to theatre. She further mentioned another example where she suggested an action for an antimilitarist event in which they would dress up as a clown army, a common tactic of some groups of the alterglobalization movement like the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA). These more playful forms of action were disregarded by other members as 'childish' or at least as not hardcore enough. Chloe felt that after a point, 'Skapoula stopped being our play', thus indicating to me that the experimental aspect of activism, characteristic of Skapoula's praxis, was to an extent eclipsing and being replaced by a harder line of action. At that point, Chloe felt that her personality and interests were not reflected in the group's decisions, something that showed again a divergence from the group's participatory democratic principles. Chloe partly blamed this failure to take everyone's opinion into account on the fact that the assembly was simultaneously a *parea*, a group of friends:

'It was more about what Skapoula wanted to act upon and one of the positives and negatives of Skapoula was the fact that we were a *parea* (group of friends) so I remember that they blocked me a couple of times with things that I wanted to do, with the theatre, that many called me 'a hippy' because I wanted to use theatre. I mean they were blocking various thematics.'

In this case the informality of friendship relations that sustained the assembly worked to stifle diversity of opinion within the group in conjunction with the wider political processes taking place. The latter political environment hardened the positions of some group members who felt they had more ownership of the group. The embedded informality in a teenage group of friends that formed Skapoula's assembly in this sense worked as counter-productive to democracy, as Chloe's opinion was disregarded without providing adequate justification. In the context of a more formal procedure in assemblies among participants not so intimately involved this kind of disregarding may not have been so easily possible. Instead, it is the informal nature of Skapoula's assemblies, much like the gathering of a group of friends at times, which seemed to make such type of responses/attitudes possible. Although friendship must be seen, as I argued above, as an indispensable political practice in the creation of intimacy and in facilitating the process of becoming, especially for new and teenage actors, the informality ingrained in it can also sometimes risk the participatory process.

Chloe further felt that after a certain point Skapoula's counter-talk had become more 'wooden', meaning that the talk coming out of the Magazine was itself stiff like a wood, and not playful and approachable as it had been at earlier stages of the group. This stiff, strict talk

that attempted to talk back to these wider political processes was a talk that Chloe and some others felt had become more militant and, as such, was disassociated from the more associational earlier talk of Skapoula. It increasingly reflected ways of expression of adult or more hardline anarchist and antifascist collectivities in Greece. I further noticed the change in the talk when older members of the group, were revising material written by newer members to the group, especially in the later stages of fieldwork. The change made the texts sound more 'professional' and less experiential or associational.

As mentioned above, articles included in the Magazine were reviewed by older members who discussed them with newer members for potential stereotypical perceptions included in them. This was a form of peer to peer education, beneficial on the one hand for younger members who were in the process of shedding away mainstream perceptions of adult Cypriot society. On the other hand, some younger members, like Theseas and Fanos, felt that in their texts written for the Magazine and for wider distribution in the streets, the interventions by older members did not respect the experiential aspect included in the documents, which reflected these pupils' opinion and lived experience of the issues. The older members turned this way of writing into a more impersonal and 'harsher' type of writing, what Chloe described above as 'wooden'.

These discrepancies in feelings and priorities and the fact that at times Skapoula's counter-talk was not as collective as might have been in the past reflected the power dynamics in the process of attempting to counter-talk to power. These divergences also reflected how wider processes, which threatened to extinguish this counter-voice, could in themselves influence the content and form of the talk and actions of self-organizing pupils' groups. As Chloe, Aggelos and Fotis told me, Skapoula in general, and people writing extensively for the Magazine in particular, were very much influenced by anti-authoritarian and autonomist antifascist movements in Greece and, particularly, the very few pupils' groups within those movements. Trying to find associations that would empower the actions of a pupils' collective, when they were attempting to discover who they are and to grapple with the power constellations around them, meant that the few pupils' groups found in Greece influenced Skapoula significantly as other examples were rare. In this context, the groups in Greece provided Skapoula members with ways of understanding themselves in the face of global processes, such as the financial crisis, gentrification of public spaces and the rise of the far right, processes that aimed at further regulating those categorized as pupils and disciplining the autonomous sections of such a population. The harder and more confrontational line taken by Greek anti-authoritarian groups, both pupil and adult groups, in a stage where the

crisis in Greece was in itself becoming much deeper, was at later stages reflected in Skapoula's actions as well and in some members' writing. This led to feelings of alienation for some members within the group, as the way of addressing issues seemed to change in the face of rising societal trends of intolerance and political suppression of minor voices.

Rising fascism, austerity measures and their implication with state practices of gentrification reflected in the minimization of public spaces and counter-voices was contributing to a 'maturing' of the group. This 'maturing' was reflected in the professionalization of language and confrontational practices which stifled to an extent the more 'childlike', in the sense of playful and experimental, aspects of Skapoula's practice.

7.7. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I demonstrated how Skapoula attempted to collectivize the pupil and child categories in practice and break the normative perceptions associated to these categories in Cyprus. I did this by engaging with the decision-making process of the group, that is, through their assemblies informed by the principles of horizontality and self-organization. This decision-making process is informed by the notion of prefiguration, according to which the internal life of the group should reflect the type of society the group envisions for the future. In this sense I explored prefiguration in practice as implemented by a pupils' collective and the challenges faced in such implementation.

Direct participatory democracy and direct action have been extensively theorized as prefigurative (Franks 2003; Graeber 2002; Graeber 2009; Juris 2012; Shepard 2011). This involves an understanding that groups implement in the here and now, in their actions and in the internal structures of their functioning, the type of world they envision in the future. This undertaking, although it may seem as an action in the now, in the sense that movement actors attempt to *be* the future they envision, at the same time, it is, I argue, essentially *a process* in attempting to implement the means -- that is the social relationships -- within the group that they also envision for the society as a whole. It is a process that effectively changes participating actors themselves. This is what Razsa and Kurnik (2012, 252) are referring to when they talk about a complication of 'any rigid distinction between a politics of being and becoming' within direct democracy and direct action. The idea that this is also a process seems to be overshadowed by an over-emphasis on a theoretical plane on direct democracy as

prefigurative, as acting in the now of the world that one wants to see in the future. This has negative effects in the sense of limiting a wider understanding that is necessary for the processes movement actors, particularly new and young, go through in order to become horizontal antiauthoritarian actors. The prefiguration claim assumes an overtly worked-out vision of utopia in the present, therefore overshadowing the effort and process that is involved in becoming an anti-authoritarian collective actor and how such process may change the utopian future one envisions. Such effort and process deserve analytical attention and consequently valorization as part of activist practice. This process, in the case of Skapoula members, included an unlearning of normative perceptions within Cypriot society about the possibilities of children to be political actors, of gender socialization and patriarchal perceptions about participation in public affairs, as well as a learning process of horizontal collective structures of participation and self-organization. As indicated in this chapter, it also involved a direct relational pedagogy, enacted through assemblies, which provided the political literacy that is necessary to talk back and stand up to power. In this sense, for children and teenage actors assemblies go beyond their decision-making role and become forums of alternative education and peer-to-peer learning.

Particularly for groups constituted by children and teenage youth, such as pupils' collectives, the process of becoming is *an essential part of their activist practice*, which would therefore call for theoretical and analytical attention. On the one hand this was recognized by Faneromeni and Skapoula youth in their desire to do actions 'for ourselves as well' in order to experiment on how they relate to one another when they go about doing an action, such as setting-up a squat or self-managing a social centre. This was also recognized in the need of Skapoula youth to 'start from where they are, from a politics in the first person', in other words explore the pupil positionality that they were currently faced with and critique the ambiguous and contradictory predicaments in which they found themselves in the present moment. Although acting many times 'as if they are already free' from unjust structures of authority, as Graeber (2009, 203) describes direct action to be, through actions such as partying in public space without the authorities' permission, or practicing direct decision-making without adult intermediaries, they were at the same time conscious that achieving an alternative society was a constant struggle, one embedded within the messy predicaments of nationalism, ageism and militarism in which they found themselves situated. They further acknowledged that they constantly needed to work on themselves in becoming less authoritarian and more horizontal, collective actors. In this sense, Skapoula implemented a combination of politics, or what elsewhere has been described as 'multiple politics' (Edelman

2001; Warren 1998), which combined both prefigurative and identity politics, as well as politics of becoming 'other-than-one-now-is' (Razsa and Kurnik 2012, 252; Razsa 2015, 199).

On the other hand, older members within Skapoula in their attempts to implement direct democracy at times did not understand or disregarded the processes of becoming that many new members were going through. Lack of sensitivity towards such processes made new members feel lack of ownership of the group, as well as lack of assertiveness within assemblies. This is an indication that the process of becoming has direct effect on the ideal of direct democracy, therefore, despite implementing the inclusive techniques of direct democratic decision-making, direct participatory democracy is not always effectively prefigured as an alternative to hierarchical structures. As direct participatory democracy is relational democracy, which means that it is highly based on the type of relations developed among participating actors, particularly when it comes to smaller-scale collectives, the social relations of friendship and intimacy need to be pursued first, as conscious political practice, so that participatory democracy can be effectively prefigured.

In the case of Skapoula, the friendship relations developed among members, as well as with the wider circle of Faneromeni youth worked, I have argued, as an *antistructure* to hierarchical relations within schools and families. Similar to what Papataxiarchis (1991) describes for the case of men in Lesvos, friendship in this context was an escape from institutional roles and forms of responsibility. As I have demonstrated, this informal antistructure was turned into Skapoula's assembly with regular and irregular members, embedding it thus in a field of direct political practice. The initial regular group of Skapoula members grew closer together while a common shared awareness on the ways of acting of the group was developed. This type of intimacy and knowledge, however, was not effectively extended to newer members of the group, particularly members that did not have the opportunity to engage with all older members in the context of the square or within physical assemblies of the group. The lack of extending friendship along with an expectation that the group would continue working in the same way as the old group made new members less assertive and confident in the context of assemblies. It contributed to a silence and/or insecurity that the process of direct democracy alone could not alleviate. An attendance to and facilitation of the process of becoming of new members and sensitivity towards the diversity of new members -- for example, of girls and the contextual gendered challenges they faced towards assertiveness -- proved a necessary requirement for achieving horizontality, in addition to the active pursuit of friendship. Furthermore, an overemphasis on the decline, and homogenizing tendencies, of identity politics on the theoretical plane might have overshadowed issues such as gendered

inequalities in assertiveness that deserve a different treatment, and which cannot be solely alleviated by the process of direct democracy. As direct democracy expects new members to participate immediately in the deliberation process, showing leniency to and facilitation of their learning process, as well as an understanding of diverse needs towards assertiveness, must also be simultaneous.

Therefore for the case of Skapoula, as well as for the case of women's liberation groups and the SDS (Polletta 2002), it was not so much the loose character of the assembly or the structurelessness of the group, as Freeman (1970) has argued, that discouraged a commitment to the principles of participatory democracy once new members were involved. It was, rather, the lack of an active pursuit of friendship and intimacy as political practice -- by falling back on a view of friendship as an apolitical form of relating -- as well as failing to acknowledge new members' process of becoming. Especially in the case of children and youth who live in a context of highly hierarchical relationships, as in Cyprus, and who are in a process of becoming horizontal, anti-authoritarian actors, friendship through its horizontal attributes, can be a highly valued model of relating that, if it overcomes its apolitical and exclusive nature, can form a functional basis for children and pupils' activism. As Willis has illustrated, friendship among youth can facilitate their critique of the status quo and the distribution of antiauthoritarian opinions (Willis 1977). This was further evidenced by the fact that Skapoula's practice of assembly helped overcome the typical single-sexed teenage friendships in the context of Cyprus and extend the meaning of friendship in this sense from an exclusionary to a more inclusionary relationship.

Therefore, for direct democracy to work at least on a smaller scale, rather than inventing new formal structures with the potential of enabling participation, a greater awareness of friendship, in the non-exclusive sense, as direct political practice should be promoted. As Polletta (2002, 165) has argued, discussing friendship and participation in the context of women's liberation groups, 'in the absence of some functional substitute for friendship, formal rules may not create fair and functioning democracies'. On the other hand, when friendship relations sustain the assembly, as is the case of a pupils' group like Skapoula, the informality ingrained in such relations risks being used at times as means to sideline the process of direct democracy as discussed above.

Attendance to external processes affecting internal dynamics is also a case in point. As was seen in the case of Skapoula, the diversity of opinions in the group was stifled to an extent due to a response by some older members, who felt more ownership of the group, towards

increased levels of intolerance in Cyprus that were reflected in the rising of the far right, gentrification processes in the old town centre and austerity measures imposed during the financial crisis. In this sense the external militancy outside the group was reflected in the internal procedures and in the talk of the group itself.

The external wider processes of intolerance influenced the group in another sense. Gentrification proved catalytic in dispersing the community of Faneromeni and therefore making radicalization of youth an isolated endeavor. DIY skills' sharing and development along with diavasma became increasingly isolated endeavors emptied of the fun of conversation and interaction in the process of learning. The motivation for collective action and for engaging in diavasma, that was one of the main sources of power of the group, was thus severely limited. All these were at the expense of a pupil's collective like Skapoula whose source of power was from intimate peer relations and from a continued presence of community in the public space. The dispersion of the square community meant that it became increasingly more difficult for Skapoula to recruit new members to the group, as the square continuously attracted more youth through the alternative forms of sociability instituted there.

Under these terms, and despite its challenges in implementation, the very act of the assembly must be seen as an act against gentrification and against the rising fascism in Cypriot society and beyond, as it effectively helped in enhancing the process of zymosis, extending friendship to politics and enhancing the process of creating direct horizontal relatedness which fed the creation of collective action and community. If what fascism does is effectively to break down autonomous, self-organized communities, unions and collectives either of the working class or allied to the working class, in order to isolate those that stand against it, then assembling is one the most empowering and promising responses against that.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

‘The moment of revolt is childhood rediscovered’ - Vaneigem (1963-65, 111)

One morning after my return from fieldwork I was coming out of Falmer station – the train stop at University of Sussex – and heading towards University premises. As I was walking down the narrow path among other university students I noticed a young guy, probably a first or second year student, slightly touching one of the pillars lighting the path as he continued walking towards university premises. He did it with such grace, touching the pillar without interrupting his walk that it surprised me to see that a sticker was left at the place he had just touched. I might have been the only one to notice this subtle move as I stopped to read the sticker which conveyed an anti-fascist message.

Given the expanded discussion in the two past decades since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on taking the interests of the child seriously and giving children and youth a voice, it surprised me to see how there was simultaneously almost complete silence about children who do raise a voice about the problems of educational systems, the army, policies on migration, war, right-wing extremism and so much more. Why is nobody taking such participation seriously? Why are we failing to ‘see’, read and recognize practices such as street parties and the circulation of counter-discourses through stickers as forms of youth participation and resistance in the public arenas of nation-states and the international community? Puzzled by this paradox, I aimed with this research to bring to the fore and simultaneously explore the politics of underage youth as they exercise them in the now, without necessarily having mediators or working through institutional adult frameworks that set the terms on what these politics should be. I further aimed to question and problematize the political construction, and use, of the subject-position of the child and minor positioning in modernity, as well as the processes through which children are constituted as inside or outside childhood. Inspired further by the double meaning of the word ‘minor’ as covering both children but also adult-members of minority groups within society I was led to explore how mainstream configurations of childhood and youth further govern chronologically-adult individuals.

Although the study of childhood, and children as active agents, has since the 1990s received a particular impetus within anthropology, and the social sciences in general, the study of children as *public* actors –including as activists engaged with direct forms of politics and with social movements– has been largely absent within anthropology and beyond. My PhD project problematizes the reasons why the social sciences have not engaged with children as public actors and activists by inquiring into the colonial endowment within modern conceptualizations of the child, building on the work of Sharon Stephens (1995) and Michel Foucault. As I have argued, modern childhood is conceived as the past of adulthood and children are not taken seriously until they grow older and ‘come of age’. Modern childhood has been informed by European colonial experience and vice versa: like colonial subjects, children are seen to lack the qualities of rationality, control of emotions, and efficiency characterizing white European males, qualities that are seen as indispensable prerequisites to any form of ‘serious’ politics. Children who assume a role outside of the domesticity and apolitical position implied through notions of immaturity and care politics, are seen as outside childhood. They are perceived to be ‘non-vulnerable children’, a characterization nowadays considered almost a contradiction in terms. Non-vulnerable children, such as those who are the object of this thesis, children who undertake forms of autonomous self-organizing, who occupy public space and who attempt to build alternative communities and ways of being in the now are seen as *out of place* with normative definitions of childhood. Moreover, these children activists destabilize the political order of modernity by subverting their role as symbols and bearers of stable worlds. As a result, in the eyes of the establishment these children shift from ‘vulnerable’ to ‘threats’.

This perception of child activists/public actors as out of place with childhood extends, I argue, to scholars as well. It explains, to some extent at least, these children’s absence from childhood and youth studies and the participation literature, as well as studies on social movements. It helps explain why their politics are not ‘seen’ within academia and beyond. To make such politics visible therefore would entail decolonizing and de-modernizing our adult gaze and ways of seeing; it would require taking seriously the politics that underage actors implement on their own terms, acknowledging and validating them as forms of political participation in the now. It would also entail recognizing minoritization processes as a form of regulation and governing of populations, with racial undertones. As I have argued, minoritization processes work through the embedding in the conceptual space of childhood and youth of adult subjects that, like children activists, are perceived as impeding the flows of the neoliberal order by materializing their difference from the population. This difference from

the population forms a threat to the biopolitical order that is perceived to sustain the vitality of race. By embedding them in the conceptual space of childhood the politics of these adults are defined as immature and 'childish', and thus as unworthy of serious consideration. Due to their perceived childish character these politics are simultaneously defined as threats to the vitality of race, as coming from underdeveloped or somehow degenerate adults. As has been analyzed, given the intensely pastoral character of Cypriot authority structures, minoritization processes are an exemplary tactic of population government in the Cypriot context. Such processes are nonetheless definitely evident elsewhere in the management of recalcitrant others, of those who *refuse to be the population* and who, in so doing, remain out of place with definitions of modernity.

Thus, 'place' in 'out of place', in the context of the current research, is not only about children's physical place in the order of the city (as has been elaborated in studies of street children), but also about children's conceptual place in the order of modernity. It is about how institutional definitions of childhood define and limit the type of politics children are expected to undertake. It is further about whether they will be considered as children or not when for example they implement such politics on the street, an activity which, in Cyprus, holds strong anti-nationalist connotations. It is further about children's, and to an extent categorical children's, place in the current neoliberal order that entails new forms of control and surveillance such as gentrification processes and cameras on the streets, and neoliberal education which consistently demands more of children further severing them from communal time which is the prerequisite for collective political action. Under these terms, children and youth are *displaced* on a physical and conceptual level from politics.

Cindi Katz (2005) has noted how the ecology of youth is deteriorating in recent times where informal public spaces of youth peer culture are being dismantled in locations ranging from rural Sudan to New York. Such informal playgrounds form the spaces for development of peer culture, skills exchange and minor knowledges (Foucault 1980b) among youth as I have shown for the case of Faneromeni square and the practice of street parties. During such communal time children appear to each-other with the potential to form publics. Children and pupils as groups who are excluded from the abstract public sphere of politics characterized by adultism, and as groups who do not have the material means to purchase space, form alternative public spheres which are spatialized in the public space of the city. How we gaze upon such public spheres and whether we understand them as such is a question that I addressed through this thesis. By taking the above under consideration, I argued that the right to assembly for children is being violated and threatened in indirect ways by gentrification processes, as well

as through discourses on vulnerability and security which are displacing youth and children from the potential to become public, that is to become political.

8.1. Stasis as pause, as presence, as revolt, as nosos and as crisis

As Low and Smith (2006) have indicated research on spatialized forms of public spheres has been limited, a claim that corresponds to the similar limited ethnographic research on squares. My research on the production of a public square in the city of Nicosia into a space of youth anti-authoritarian politics addresses those lacunae. It further contributes to the emerging research that has explored how squares became main spaces of activism during the Arab Spring, Indignados/Aganaktismenoi and Occupy movements (Butler 2015; Dhaliwal 2012; Sotiropoulos 2017; Stavrides 2012). Bringing my own ethnographic findings in conversation with these literatures, I conceptualized squares as places of stasis, as destinations instead of crossing points, and explored the multiple potentialities that such stasis in the public space enables.

Playing again with the idea of visibility and invisibility, I demonstrated that although the stasis-aragma of youth at the square was seen by outsiders as idleness and passivity, in fact that stasis incorporated active processes of conversation and exchange on public affairs, self-organized entertainment, peer to peer learning and zymosis that formed the ground for more direct forms of action to take place. The association of stasis with inaction, stagnation, and backwardness is, however, not limited to the inherited colonial gaze of Cypriot, and perhaps non-Cypriot, outsiders to the square, but has been repeated constantly within academia as well. Stasis as a concept has been used to imply immobility, which itself has been associated with negative connotations, as indicating mechanisms of exclusion of different actors from the benefits of movement. Such literature (cf. Sheller and Urry 2006), does not take into account that immobility can also be a conscious choice that people might use to resist undesirable forms of extensive mobility that form them into specific type of subjects. In contrast to such approaches, I argue that in a phase of unprecedented mobility which is often highly governed by consumption and increasingly demanding working schedules, stasis and aragma (mooring) form quintessential aspects of the type of resistance groups can inflict on the circulations of capital and scheduled time. Moreover, I argue that territory and territoriality remain important in current circumstances as spaces through which disenfranchised groups still manage to maintain some control over defining the terms of their everyday life.

As city-centres worldwide increasingly become mobile zones of circulation for the purposes of efficiency and consumption (Bulley 2016), stasis in public spaces form a crucial resistance practice subverting and pausing consumption and scheduled time. Stasis as resistance practice enriches the scant research of resistance to circulation. In its manifestation as pausing, it resists circulation's functioning as a biopolitical mechanism of security. Such a view of stasis enables us to analyze it as a critique to security both in the sense of what constitutes good circulation but also in terms of the disciplinary mechanisms that support such circulation. In their stasis in public space, groups subvert forms of biopolitical security which govern through circulation of discourses on cleanliness, domesticity, and health in its association with morality. The interruption of circulation through stasis, then, does not only involve a critique to the circulation of commodities and consumerism, but also disrupts disciplining techniques that aim to produce particular type of subjects. In this sense, stasis against circulation attempts to intervene in the process of production (Aradau and Blanke 2010), the production of docile subjects that form the labor force of tomorrow.

Stasis, however, has multiple meanings beyond its important association, in terms of circulation, with pausing and stopping. Douzinas (2012), who has also engaged with the concept of stasis, pointed to its meaning as 'revolt' by taking the example of the occupation of Syntagma Square in Athens during the *Aganaktismenoi* (Outraged) movement. Douzinas pointed out how stasis simultaneously means 'standing still', 'holding your stance', as well as 'insurrection' and 'revolt', albeit claiming that stillness and immobility are the opposite of revolt. However, in my conceptualization of stasis these two concepts of pausing and revolt are not necessarily opposite, but instead there is movement within stasis. Stillness and mooring do not imply passivity or fixity, but as I have shown, there is activity within the assumed passivity of aragma-stasis through the circulation and production of minor-knowledges at the square and through conversation that puts the bodies occupying the square in crisis. Viewing stasis as passivity replicates the colonial gaze that viewed indigenous *kafeneia* as places of idleness instead of lively public spheres.

Going beyond Douzinas' analysis on stasis, I further explored the concept to show how stasis is also connected with other meanings such as *nosos*, crisis and presence. The bodies at the square were in crisis in the sense of critically rethinking the rigid binaries that inform their lives. Stasis at the square contributed in carving out a critical everydayness in the Lefebvrian sense that challenged the subjectifying processes of nationalism, consumerism and institutional childhood that youth were undergoing. This crisis of youth at the square was enacting stasis as crisis-*nosos* (disease) that infected the social body of the nation. Stasis

facilitated the manifestation of difference from the population that is seen to impede the flow of the market, thus becoming contrary to the needs of the neoliberal order. Furthermore, counter-normative ideas circulating at the square were seen to risk the health of the body of the nation-state, therefore, they were stigmatized as ‘foreign’ (ξένο) to local values and ways of acting. By presenting the body of the nation-state as at risk of contamination from foreign values that could break its connecting tissues, the Greek-Cypriot authorities called for biopolitical security mechanisms of cleansing that manifested in the forms of gentrification, as well as occasional police interventions entitled ‘operations broom’ (επιχείρηση σκούπα) or ‘sweeps’ that targeted migrants sans-papiers who also took refuge in the old city, literally sweeping them away from old city space into prison. Police operations further involved closing Skapoula’s and Faneromeni’s youth parties early, severing youth from communal time and pupils’ collectives like Skapoula from important means of financing their group. As I have shown, city streets and public spaces provide indispensable resources in both material and immaterial forms in enhancing children as autonomous activists and making possible the realization of their politics.

Youth make themselves present for participation in politics through appearance in public space. They manifest stasis as presence, as articulated through the word *ipostasis* (υπόσταση) that means existence, being. Thus, youth excluded from the adult public sphere occupy public space and constitute it as their space of appearance, in other words the space where they appear to each other –a prerequisite for any form of politics according to Arendt– and have the possibility to form publics. As I have argued, through appearance and stasis in public space children revolt against the apolitical child category and the association of this category with the private domain. They are challenging their temporal situatedness in the past of adulthood by presenting themselves as political actors in the here and now and claiming their right to politics in the present. By occupying the streets *children become public in the sense of becoming political*.

In this process of politicization, they are supported as bodies by the material provisions of the public space. As I have claimed, following Butler’s re-reading of Arendt (2011; 2015), appearance in terms of becoming political does not imply only talk/conversation and the expression of claims through speech (often expected to be expressed through a dominant rights discourse), but can also be manifested in bodily forms, through the bodily occupation of space. More specifically, I have shown how the unmediated relation between body and public space at the square informed processes of politicization that were critical to the inclusion of mediators and representatives and enabled relationships of horizontal, direct relationality. City

space therefore contributed to youth's process of politicization at the same time as it was claimed by bodily occupation and not only by speaking. Against approaches that consider youth's occupation of public space as claim-free due to its often un-speakable, non-verbalized forms of claiming⁵¹, I insist that Cypriot youth occupying the square and other public spaces challenged the limits to political action for youth by challenging who can become a subject of appearance and thus have a right to politics. Furthermore, children occupying public space in Cyprus and making it their space of appearance challenged in fundamental ways what is perceived as dominant public sphere and its associated ethno-national and religious limits. Their stasis in public space indicates an attempt to carve out space for presence in Cypriot political life. Moreover, the youth attempted to sabotage adult spaces of political definition through transforming an otherwise highly nationalist public space where the Greco-Christian ideology predominately appeared –through EOKA rituals and through Virgin Mary's appearance (Faneromeni) at the spot– into an alternative public sphere, a shared space open for re-definition and serious play. In doing so, they shifted Faneromeni's symbolic reference from being highly majoritarian to being highly associated with minoritarian politics.

8.2. Serious play as expansion of the issues of concern for children, as claiming presence in politics in the now and as redefinition of what 'child' and 'pupil' mean

Play as activism has been explored recently in analysis over the tactics of groups and members of the alter-globalization movement. This ludic activism as has been described (Shepard 2011) takes the form of carnivalesque politics as well as street parties that through pleasure, caricature and fun mock and challenge existing hierarchies and power relations. In the case of underage youth activists, however, play as activism takes a more fundamental form in the sense that it becomes a constant form of engagement with fellow peers and with actions involving the collective one belongs to. As seen in the case of the Skapoula collective, the very collective itself was thought as play (Skapoula was our play), an acknowledgment that when engaging with Skapoula's activities, pupils were in fact playing and experimenting with the world around them, attempting through their play to create and prefigure an alternative world. In play, as in Skapoula, children maintain agency in the process of world-making. In this sense through playful engagement they challenged fundamental categories through which

⁵¹ See Douzinas (2012) for a claim-free rendering of the Insurrection of December and Sotiris's (2013) critique on the intellectual rendering of the same Insurrection.

their lives are defined as well as infused such categories, like the pupil category, with different meaning. This is what play and the unserious seriousness of city streets allow. Furthermore, through play, they pushed the boundaries of children's possibilities for political action by redefining what can constitute an issue of concern for children. In this sense they challenged the politics of maturity of the Cypriot and international establishment and the intellectual inequality imposed on those defined as children.

Children's and teenage youth's resistance has often been obscured within academia by the use of a catch-all category of 'youth' and 'university-student' positionality. These generalized categories have obscured the analysis of the politics that specific groups of children such as pupils for example might undertake, as well as the different contributions that they make in expanding our understanding of what politics might consist of. The politics that Skapoula used to extend pupil's and children's field of action entailed addressing 'serious' issues such as nationalism and militarism, reserved for the adult sphere, as well as making the occupation of time into a political concern. Their politics involved a rejection of being secluded within the institutional field of education and of the often individualistic rendering of what constitutes a child's concern. Instead, they claimed associations with larger movements and wider issues thus removing the pupil/child subjectivity from the individualizing and apolitical sphere of hegemonic knowledge –human rights, nationalism and neoliberal education– and embedding it in the collective. Furthermore, through Skapoula's claiming of time for play that was also communal time, they challenged the severing of the child from community through the hegemonic knowledges mentioned above, as well as through local nationalist and gendered discourses on propriety and *prokopi* that further seclude the child within the institutional and domestic sphere. Most importantly, Skapoula's claiming of communal and self-organized time, exposes, I have argued, the occupation of time and the envisioned ways in which time should be occupied as a deeply political issue.

By showing how children carve out temporal spaces for presence in the now and how these temporal spaces are essentially a type of resistance to the global flows of capitalism, neoliberal governance of time and global conceptions of childhood, I expand on scholarship relating to youth and globalization that, as Cole and Durham (2008) suggest, mainly considers spatial, instead of temporal, dimensions of youth practice through an emphasis on 'scapes'. I achieved that by demonstrating the simultaneous importance of temporality –such as in the form of 'the everyday' and 'the present'– when exploring discourses on, and practices of, children and youth.

Moreover, by attending to pupils' struggles and children's politics, we come to realize the academic violence that has been inflicted through uncritical use of generalized categories and the failure to recognize that such categories have situated, but also shifting, meanings. The need to direct analytical attention to the shifting meanings of the youth category and the politics engaged in this shift has been highlighted in the anthropology of youth (Durham 2000; 2004). What studies in this field have failed to capture, however, is the ways in which groups might not only claim to belong to the youth category, but they might also infuse it, in direct or indirect ways, with different meaning. As seen in chapter 4, youth were claiming a different definition than the one imposed by adult authorities. The Skapoula collective as well infused the pupil category with different meaning by pointing to its collective, rather than individualizing, attributes and by privileging the aspect of the learner –learning in common– in the pupil identity. In this sense, education and the pupil category were understood by Skapoula as collective goods that can only be claimed and redefined in collective terms.

In the recent upsurge in mobilizations across the world, such as the Arab Spring and Occupy movements, young people have participated extensively and actively. This makes more pertinent the need to conceptualize youth and children as political categories, beyond their socio-cultural framing within anthropology, and as continuously shifting positions. It furthermore urges us to explore the shared categorical framings and knowledges which youth and children use to constitute themselves as political actors and further their political goals. Through such exploration, it is important to consider how definitions of youth and childhood take place within complex processes of globalization and locality.

As shown through the thesis, to resist their individualized rendering and form themselves into collective subjects, Skapoula youth appropriated the pupil category as a connecting link and mobilizing subject-position, as well as a starting point through which to interrogate their position within a system of power relations. Moreover, Situationist ideas and models of participation, explored in their collective reading practices, inspired these youth to understand themselves as actors that have important contributions to make in the now and therefore informed their political tactics. Practices like partying and playful engagement with city streets that run through Situationist thinking felt familiar and accessible to this youth who turned the assumed apolitical nature of the party and drifting in city streets into actions infused with political meaning. Street and DIY knowledge in this sense was developed as an important alternative to the expert knowledge transmitted in schools and private tuition spaces. This minor/street knowledge and skills sharing rehumanized relationships among peers and enhanced collective engagement. Play in this sense and playful tactics shifted resistance from

sacrifice –the privileged expression of resistance promoted through nationalism within Cypriot schools – to pleasure, challenging the seriousness and rationalized inhumanity assumed in adult politics. Furthermore, their constitution of themselves as political actors was informed by friendship, a model of relatedness which was embedded in the field of politics by turning *parea* into Skapoula's assembly. As I have argued, however, friendship needs to be further understood and acted upon as direct political practice, rather than as an apolitical form of relating, an understanding that will enhance the process of becoming horizontal anti-authoritarian actors for children and youth.

8.3. Staying and becoming minor

Skapoula's resistance paradoxically relied also upon the categorical framings of childhood. Instead of resisting this categorization, which might have constituted an overt or expected challenging of minoritization processes, Skapoula youth claimed childhood as their preferred time-space in which they find belonging and origin. Childhood here was not rejected, but instead was acknowledged as a time less corrupted and as a period of imagination and play that should be extended rather than circumscribed into numerical renderings of age. By choosing to stay children Skapoula youth effectively rejected the hegemonic options of adulthood within Cypriot society and beyond which involved being turned into (Greek) nationalists as well as into docile consumers-workers. In other words, they recovered in childhood, in its assumed timelessness, as opposed to the highly rationalized and regimented time of adulthood, different ways of being. These ways of being differed from the majoritarian –nationalist/consumerist- options of adulthood as well as from majoritarian –that is institutional and globalized- versions of what childhood should be and how children's time should be occupied.

This thinking echoes the Situationists who saw childhood as a primary field of resistance, and thus advocated recovering tactics from childhood in order to resist their formation into particular type of adults. Adulthood for the Situationists meant essentially being turned into consumers. Therefore, an important element in Situs's resistance practice was finding ways to subvert the happiness constructed in modernity as the ability to consume. In attempting to find anti-consumerist ways of being, they looked to childhood and playtime to recover ways of being that have been obscured by this modern idea of happiness. Turning to childhood in this sense, did not mean becoming childish; rather, it meant becoming defiantly minor by resisting the hegemonic options for adulthood offered by an authoritarian, hierarchical society. In

childhood they recovered the importance of timelessness, of unaccounted time, as well as of forgetting time and letting oneself wander free (manifested in their tactic of drifting in city streets). By subverting time, they subverted the ground (and in literal terms the city space) on which modernity and hierarchical adult society have been built. In similar ways, one of Skapoula's main claims was to escape adult time and create time for communal use in which they would set the terms of play.

Thus by choosing to stay children Skapoula members rejected becoming major, a position they associated with being nationalist, male, white, patriarchal, heterosexual, and a consumer who reproduces a hierarchical system of inequality. This echoes Day's (2005) reading of the work of Deleuze and Guattari, where becoming minor involves a process realized through engagement with non-hegemonic practices. In choosing to stay children, Skapoula members effectively chose to stay minor, instead of becoming major. This was not simply a matter of remaining stuck in the dominant definition of the child; rather, it involved a creative reappropriation of that category, an active engagement with a process (that can also be termed a project) of becoming minor, that is non-hegemonic, similar to what Razsa and Kurnik describe as a process of becoming other-than-one-now-is (Razsa and Kurnik 2012; Razsa 2015, 199). This process of becoming minor or 'minoritarian', in Deleuze and Guattari's terms (1987, 105), involved constant variation from the hegemonic versions of one's self, as well as variation from society's hegemonic rendering of categories –such as child and pupil– through which to experience oneself. It involved a subversion of these categories through infusing them with different meaning that emanated from a minor rendering of major discourses.

Remaining minor also allowed child activists to reclaim space for politics when they found themselves sidelined within adult assemblies/collectives of Faneromeni, in addition to their overall sidelining from mainstream politics. As analyzed, children's and pupils' worries were not represented in adult discussions therefore the need to create a pupils' collective, and informal youth groups, that would engage with issues that perhaps were perceived as minor – in the sense of secondary– within adult circles of the Faneromeni anti-authoritarian scene became apparent. Skapoula's formation, therefore, emanated from such preoccupations that Faneromeni youth maintained and, along with informal Faneromeni youth groups, held a convivial and supportive space for youth in their process of remaining and becoming minor, or in other words, in their processes of politicization into collective, horizontal anti-authoritarian actors.

8.4. Prefiguration, direct action and pupil and underage youth's politics

The process of becoming a horizontal anti-authoritarian actor forms an important part of what should be recognized as activist practice for children. My youth interlocutors believed that their collective actions were undertaken not solely to effect the world, but simultaneously, even sometimes primarily, 'for ourselves as well'. This meant that their actions were seen as means of continuous cultivation of themselves into horizontal anti-authoritarian actors. However, the strong connection between prefiguration and direct democracy and action within theory on current autonomous social movements, that considers the actions of anti-authoritarian activists as actions in the now of the world that one envisions for the future, obscures such processes of becoming. It obscures, in other words, the processes movement actors, particularly new and young, go through in order to become horizontal anti-authoritarian actors as it presupposes an overtly worked-out vision of utopia in the present. Such processes call for theoretical and analytical attention to better illuminate our understanding of the struggles of children on a political level. As was discussed by Razsa and Kurnik (2012, 252) we must complicate 'any rigid distinction between a politics of being and becoming' within direct democracy and action.

Much as I have argued for stasis –that in stasis there is movement– I would argue that 'being' always incorporates the 'becoming' which is not visible, or at least not necessarily fully visible. In other words, 'being', 'stasis', 'presence' do not assume a static situation but rather, always incorporate processes of becoming that must be acknowledged and validated for themselves. This is especially evident in the case of children activists where politicization involves complex processes of learning of horizontal democratic ways of being and unlearning of institutional ways of being. Although theorizing direct action as action in the now of the world that one want to see in the future –which is the same as the definition for prefiguration- and as acting as if one is already free (Graeber 2009, 203), we must also acknowledge that such action in the now is effectively also *a process* of learning to maintain the type of social relationships that one envisions for a community of the future. In other words, although we must value prefiguration for the potential it entails for activist practice, we must at the same time not repeat a type of analysis that might neglect the present by equating it with a future yet to come.

Furthermore, as I have argued with respect to children's autonomous politics, the theorization of direct action as acting as if one is already free and as if the state does not exist (Graeber 2009, 203), obscures the micro-scale negotiations that underage youth actors need to engage

with in order to bring their actions to fruition. In this case combining a poststructuralist analysis of the diffusion of power to the micro-levels of everyday life with an ethnographic lens allows us to trouble the understanding of the forms that direct action takes. Adults in everyday spaces who incorporate state and majority power can and do become actors that mediate access for children to what are otherwise perceived as public spaces, such as neighbourhood parks and school yards. For children activists therefore who are vulnerable in specific ways to majoritarian authorities, direct action is never straightforwardly direct but involves negotiation with actors beyond the state itself or corporate power.

Through the above ethnographic findings my project contributes to emerging literature within anthropology on current forms of resistance active on a global scale such as prefigurative politics and direct action. It adds a critical outlook to such forms by exploring them from the so-far underexplored perspective of children activists who implement such practices and the complications and negotiations that such pursuit entails.

8.5. Metastases

Faneromeni square and the community of youth and adult anti-authoritarians installed there that was active for more than seven years started slowly to decline, partly through the departure abroad for studies of many of its youth regulars, but mainly through the gentrification processes in the old town that intensified from 2012 onwards. State policies minoritizing the anti-authoritarian community of Nicosia took concretely spatial forms and involved reducing the space in which this community could be active. This occurred through a policy to commercialize the old town, through a rampant issuing of permits by the Nicosia municipality allowing entertainment and commercial businesses to open their premises there.

Chairs, coffee-tables, cars, shopping bags, security guards and a great number of clients-consumers came to occupy the old city space, including Faneromeni square, a process that slowly led to the decline of the community of the square. Many regulars stopped hanging out there, while the playground that otherwise formed the square was slowly cut off from access to youth and others through higher bars set by Faneromeni church's committee around the courtyard of the church to keep out the unwanted. The slow dispersal of the community of Faneromeni made it all the more difficult for pupils' collectives like Skapoula to form and maintain their capacity for action. The dispersal affected by gentrification made the practice of *diavasma* (collective self-education) an isolated process and posed impediments to the peer to

peer transfer of skills. As Raccoon pointed out to me, in recent years there was a 'reduced productivity of the square' ('υπογεννητικότητα της πλατείας'), meaning that the square increasingly failed to attract new people but also that the processes of politicization immanent of the square were declining. The square was increasingly failing to give birth to new horizontal, anti-authoritarian actors.

On a more global level an emerging fear of crowds and a museumization of city streets through commodification and various forms of city branding for touristic purposes is displacing the possibilities for categories perceived as apolitical, such as childhood, to become political. The occupation of the streets must be seen as an opportunity to bring issues allocated to an apolitical private sphere into the public space and subvert them in the unserious seriousness of the city streets. Therefore, restrictions on gatherings in public spaces that we have seen taking place in recent years either with overt policies of forbidding assembly, such as in Spain, or with indirect processes of gentrification that effectively mean eviction and turning lived space into spectacle, do not only violate rights to political protest of the marginalized, of those who have no other space and time to make their claims visible, but equally importantly they forbid categories associated with the private sphere, such as childhood and by extension children, from turning public, becoming political. I think the latter is an equally important effect of recent policies that has not been efficiently acknowledged in research on the suppression of protest. The street does not only form the public sphere of the politically excluded, but it also forms a relatively loose field of social interaction that engenders the potential of making those that appear on the street political. As I have argued, in the streets, the conducting effects of government become subject to experimentation and enter into a playful, critical mode.

Nonetheless, despite the gentrification of Faneromeni square, the square was embodied in the users: the practices and ways of being developed at the square were carried in other spaces to which the square community members transferred. There were in this sense metastases of the square, manifested in new spaces and initiatives self-managed by Faneromeni regulars. Metastasis essentially is a word composed by stasis and the prefix 'meta' which means 'after', but also indicates 'transit' and 'movement'. Metastasis therefore essentially reproduces stasis in other places and it literally means a movement from one place to another (μετακίνηση, μετανάστευση). It is also connected to the meaning of stasis as nosos and the spreading of nosos –in this case the minor anti-authoritarian position which subverts majority in its hegemonic sense– in other spaces that Faneromeni youth occupied. After Skapoula, a great number of this youth formed the Antifa Λευκοῦσα (Nicosia) collective and continued to be engaged in anti-authoritarian politics further connecting through online assemblies whose

effects became manifested in online zines and collective actions in the city space of Nicosia. A number of others currently participate along with older members of the anti-authoritarian community of Cyprus in self-managing a social centre and in a number of wider initiatives emanating from the centre's community which further connects with networks of anti-authoritarian activists across Europe. Metastases are further manifested in the engagement of Faneromeni and Skapoula youth with collectives and initiatives in the countries they have migrated: Chloe participates in a feminist collective in London and street theatre initiatives, Billis became member of a collective at the School for Agriculture in which he currently studies in Greece, Petros produces his own hip hop music in the Cypriot dialect participating regularly in initiatives of this emerging Cypriot underground music scene, Ermis writes for anti-authoritarian zines in Cyprus and abroad and participates in a newly founded Cypriot collective for self-organized publishing. On a more general level, Faneromeni square, remains a common symbolic –and for some embodied– resource of minoritarian anti-authoritarian politics, a constant point of reference for future initiatives of the anti-authoritarian Cypriot Choros and a symbol of the possible for minor collective actors.

What kinds of metastases of this research can be envisaged? They could include further exploration of pupils' collectives and autonomous children politics in many other cultural contexts with the aim both to document children's struggles in their own terms, but also to explore the categorical framings and knowledges children and youth use in order to form themselves into political actors and frame their political actions. Interesting in such explorations would be to document how children in this case negotiate their position within adult establishments and relationships that effectively pre-define their possibilities for action. Despite extensive anthropological literature in relation to how working children are excluded from participation in the decision-making processes that affect them, there is limited academic literature which considers how children and teenage political activists are kept silent through a variety of mechanisms, some of which associated to overarching conceptualizations of childhood and youth. In similar ways to my research on the Cypriot context, further study could explore the limits to children's political action placed by local discourses in combination with globally circulating definitions of what being a child entails.

In analyzing children's politics, a combination of a Foucaultian approach of understanding power as structuring the possible field of action of people in their everyday environments along with a Lefebvrian and Situationist approach to the everyday as the possible critical field of resistance of the disenfranchised, constitutes a fertile framework for analyzing and understanding children as political actors. In my research there was need to theorize children

as political actors, a theoretical undertaking that was missing in studies on childhood and youth as well as in studies on social movement action. In theorizing the non-institutional politics of children, I turned to the everyday as the time-space in which children have direct access and which they can use to put forward their politics. Foucault, Lefebvre and the Situationists are theorists to whom the everyday was central in their elaboration of power and how it is imposed on the micro-levels of life. In the current research I attempted to bring these theorists together, along with anthropological inquiry, to reflect on the ways they can work in concert to explain key ways in which power is currently imposed and the potential for those considered or constructed as prepolitical or apolitical subjects to resist. In engaging with these authors I found that in a number of ways they complement one another. Lefebvre's elaboration of how power leads to dispossession and alienation by providing ready-made knowledge, products and categories of being, thus inhibiting people from direct participation in the creation of their own life, works well with Foucault's ideas about the disciplinary and conducting techniques of power. People need to first be disciplined and conducted into apolitical and governable positions before they can accept dispossession as something normal. Foucault's detailed analysis of everyday subjection through disciplining and governing techniques is complemented by Lefebvre's and the Situationists' theories of resistance that involve active subversion of the everyday as a form of resisting the dominant use of this time-space by power. By making the everyday a problem critical practices start to become possible. I believe that such a theoretical combination can be useful for studies of politically-excluded groups such as children whose access to politics is mainly through and during the everyday, and particularly the everyday in public space. Children are considered to be non-exceptional and non-expert subjects. They are subjects that still need to be cultivated to become experts and specialists in different fields; thus children, much like the everyday, represent the non-special, the underdeveloped, the non-exceptional. These non-exceptional bodies find space for politics in the non-exceptional, mundane space of the everyday.

Moving to the field of Cypriot studies, I believe much more research is needed on the everydayness and politics of youth and children beyond institutional spaces. More broadly, anthropological and sociological research on politics in the context of Cyprus needs to move beyond the prism of nationalist studies and ethnic conflict frameworks –that has to an extent become majoritarian within our own discipline– and engage with other actors whose politics are not primarily, nor exclusively, defined by nationalism. In this sense, my research forms a contribution to this field of study by studying forms of horizontal anti-authoritarian and

counter-cultural politics of youth and the wider anti-authoritarian community of Cyprus, as well as the ways in which such politics speak to wider social movements.

Furthermore, another urgent metastasis of this research would be the study of minoritization processes and the specific forms that such processes take in other locations of the world. More specifically, how groups in other social contexts might be incorporated into the conceptual space of youth and childhood and what would that entail for their potential autonomy and politics. Such groups can go beyond children and anti-authoritarian activists, to include groups such as ethnic or sexual minorities who also face a minor positioning within majority society. At the same time as studying processes of minoritization, it would further seem pressing and timely to study and make visible resistance towards such processes, as well as other ways that groups of people attempt to remain or become minor, given the current upsurge of extreme right-wing politics that feed on majoritarian hegemonic discourses in Europe and beyond.

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