# A CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF WORK AND THE SELF AS AN EMPLOYEE IN PRESENT-DAY GREECE

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# A CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF WORK AND THE SELF AS AN EMPLOYEE IN PRESENT-DAY GREECE

**Doctoral Thesis**
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**Una aproximación crítica a la construcción discursiva del trabajo y a la autoconstrucción como trabajador en la Grecia actual.**

Tesis Doctoral

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## ABSTRACT

The current discussion across various social science disciplines has drawn attention to the ongoing, strategic depoliticisation of paid work, the constitution of subjects as self-reliant business agents, and the reengineering of the social world according to the enterprise form. Adopting a critical perspective, the present doctoral dissertation focuses on the point of junction between the discursive configuration of the meaning of work and the construction of identity, in present-day Greece. More specifically, it explores the ways in which paid labour is constructed by Greek employees, the webs of meaning upon which each of their constructions draws, as well as their possible implications on a micro- and macrosocial level. In the same vein, it illuminates the subject positions that individuals adopt in colloquial speech when talking about work, as well as the discursive formulations that have managed to establish their definitions of the working relationship as self-evident.

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative research design was developed. We conducted 22 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 11 women and 11 men, aged 23-43; the interview sessions were enriched with respondent-generated visual material, as the participants were asked to take pictures, prior to the interview, that would answer to the question: "What does being an employee mean to you?". The interviews were recorded and discourse analysis was conducted for selected fragments, drawing upon social-constructionist approaches to discourse, informed by post-structuralist assumptions about language use, the subject and the social world.

Focusing on the discursive configuration of the working selfhood, we identified three contextually performed, flexible discursive patterns: the "entrepreneur of the self", the "socioeconomically determined", and the "occupation-oriented" self, as we named them, which were repeatedly mobilized when the participants authored versions of themselves as employees. As regards the discursive pores drawn upon by individuals when talking about wage labour, we identified three interpretative repertoires – the "school", the "journey" and the "slavery" motif – grounded in different presuppositions about the social.

By identifying patterns of talk on the local level, our study also draws attention to the broader networks of knowledge and power that render these argumentative practices intelligible; it could be argued that although neoliberal and capitalocentric discursive formulations seem to have established their significations as natural, counter-hegemonic discourses do exist, carving out spaces for the enactment of alternative subject worlds.

## RESUMEN

Estudios en varias disciplinas de las ciencias sociales han señalado que se está desarrollando una despolitización estratégica del trabajo remunerado, junto con la constitución del sujeto como emprendedor autosuficiente y la remodelación de sociedad de acuerdo con los principios del mercado. Desde una perspectiva crítica, esta tesis doctoral se centra en el punto de unión entre la configuración discursiva del significado del trabajo y la construcción de identidad, en la Grecia de hoy. Más específicamente, explora las formas en las que los empleados griegos construyen el trabajo asalariado en su habla, las redes de significados en las que sus construcciones se basan y sus posibles implicaciones en un nivel micro- y macrosocial. En la misma línea, ilumina las posiciones subjetivas que los individuos adoptan en su comunicación coloquial, así como los discursos que han logrado establecer sus definiciones de la relación laboral como evidentes.

El estudio utilizó un diseño de investigación cualitativa. En este marco, llevamos a cabo 22 entrevistas semiestructuradas en profundidad con 11 mujeres y 11 hombres, entre 23-43 años; las sesiones de entrevistas fueron enriquecidas con material visual generado por los participantes, quienes contribuyeron con fotografías tomadas por ellos, respondiendo a la pregunta: "¿Qué significa para tí ser un empleado?". Las entrevistas fueron grabadas y se analizaron discursivamente fragmentos seleccionados, a partir de perspectivas socio-construccionistas, en base de premisas post-estructuralistas sobre el uso de lenguaje, el sujeto y lo social.

En cuanto a la configuración discursiva del sí como empleado, se identificaron tres patrones discursivos contextualmente performados y flexibles; los llamamos: el "empresario de sí mismo", el "determinado socio-economicamente", y el "centrado en la profesión". En cuanto a los recursos discursivos mobilizados en el habla sobre el trabajo asalariado, se identificaron tres repertorios interpretativos: la "escuela", el "viaje" y la "esclavitud", manteniendo diferentes presuposiciones sobre la identidad y las relaciones sociales.

Mediante la identificación de patrones de comunicación en el nivel local, nuestro estudio también llama la atención sobre las redes de conocimiento y poder más ámplias, que permiten que estas prácticas argumentativas resulten inteligibles; se podría argumentar que, aunque las formulaciones discursivas neoliberales y capitalocéntricas parecen haber establecido sus significaciones como naturales, existen también discursos contra-hegemónicos, liberando espacios para la promulgación de identidades alternativas.

# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

… bring something incomprehensible into this world.

–Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux*

Apart from the production of material and immaterial commodities, work has always been a fundamental site for the production of subjectivities; to be more precise, its trajectory through time and its geographical particularities, its historical mutations and structural transformations are inextricably interwoven with a genealogy of identity. Integrating understandings about personhood, interpretations of the social relations, and conceptualizations of the political organization, discourses on work have played a crucial role in the configuration of societies and their subjects; in fact, the latter are both creations and creators of the discursive formulations about labour in a constant interplay, at the heart of the social struggle over meaning.

In the liberal imaginary of the "West", humans are perceived as rational economic actors in pursuit of self-interest; individual achievement and meritocracy figure among the central themes that furnish the narratives which legitimize the capitalist regime, representing subjects as free to choose among limitless possibilities. The neoliberal rationale, which has come to infiltrate the contemporary interpretations of work, casts the worker as an "entrepreneur of the self", individually responsible for the maximization and management of her/his "human capital", forging society as consisting of individual business agents (Foucault, 2012), depoliticizing the capital-labour bond.

## 1. Our Goal: To "Rob the Monopoly of Capital"

Against this backdrop, this thesis focuses precisely on the point of junction between the discursive configuration of the meaning of work and the construction of identity. Throughout this project, the terms "work" and "labour", will be used indistinctly, referring to work under capitalism, or the "form of labour that is given social and institutional recognition by the reward of money-wage" (Dinerstein & Neary, 2002, p. 10). This choice does not imply a reduction of all working activity to the specific form of waged labour; it was rather made for the sake of the simplicity of the text and dictated by the space limitations that rule it. However, we try to use often the adjectives – paid, salaried, waged, etc. – which make clear that we refer to work bought and sold within the "official" labour market.

What is at stake is not how – material or immaterial – commodity production determines the production of subjectivity in a hierarchical relation, but rather how they intersect and interplay. Our project principally aims to denaturalize the conceptualizations of work that now appear as commonsensical and render them open to discussion and change. In Klein's (2002) words, we aspire to "rob capital (or the state) of its monopoly and singular definitions of time, space and value, thereby destroying its hegemony" (p. 220). Like Deleuze and Guattari (1999) suggest in the epigraph of this chapter, we seek to "bring something incomprehensible into the world" (p. 378), in the sense that we wish to estrange ourselves from the dominant vocabularies and the reified forms of intelligibility of the subject and the universe of paid work. In order to do so we examine the argumentative strategies deployed by individuals when they negotiate their interpretations of wage labour and when they author versions of themselves as employees, casting light on the symbolic pores that they mobilize.

More specifically, our main objective is to explore the ways in which paid labour is constructed by Greek employees, the discursive networks upon which each of their constructions draws, as well as their function on a micro- and macrosocial level. In the same line, we intend to illuminate the subject positions adopted in colloquial speech, what they take for granted concerning the self and the social, and which discourses have managed to establish their definitions of the working relationship as self-evident. By analyzing the creative articulation of discursive resources by individuals, we aspire to draw attention to the meaning-making devices that legitimize the current state of affairs, and discuss their impact on the identity construction processes; at the same time, we seek to identify the points of resistance that emerge against the hegemonic meanings ascribed to the capital-labour relation, exposing the forms in which individuals deconstruct and contest its dominant significations, proposing countervailing interpretations, as they entertain alternative subject worlds.

## 2. Why Bother with Work?

Some may question the relevance of a study on paid work today, when the extraordinary transformations spurred by the disintegration of Fordism have led many to argue that paid labour has almost vanished from people's lives, has ceased to constitute an important source of meaning for the formation of subjectivity, and that, as a result, the work ethic has been consigned to the dustbin of history. A number of social theorists (e.g., Aronowitz & Di Fazio, 1994; Bauman, 2004; Beck, 2000; Gorz, 1999; Offe, 1985; Rifkin, 1995; Sennett, 2006), usually departing from different theoretical starting points and reaching distinct propositions,

maintain that the diminishing jobs, the rise of immaterial labour, and the flexible working arrangements signal the end of "work society".

The "increasing hetereogenity" and the growing variation of the forms of labour and of the respective experiences from it are said to impede the formation of a social identity around a shared identity of the "employee" (Offe, 1985). At the same time, precarity is intensified within the context of a "risk society" (Beck, 1992, 2000), due to the "spread of temporary and insecure employment, discontinuity and loose informality", which in turn have made Western societies resemble "the patchwork quilt of the south, characterized by diversity, unclarity and insecurity in people's work and life' (2000, p. 1). Under the post-modern labouring regime, "institutions no longer provide a long-term frame" and as a result "the individual may have to improvise his or her life-narrative, or even do without any sustained sense of self" (Sennett, 2006, p. 4). Bauman (2006) even goes so far as to suggest that "capital has cut itself loose from its dependency on labour" (p. 149), given that "the employment of labour has become short-term and precarious, having been stripped of firm (let alone guaranteed) prospects and therefore made episodic" (p. 148).

Apart from the arguments that are related to the destandarization of employment, the "end of work prophets" (Cleaver, 2002) also put forth that contemporary society primarily "needs – and engages – its members in their capacity as consumers" (Bauman, 2004, p. 77). According to this position, the social organization which revolved around production, the "society of producers", has given its place to a "consumer society" in which labour has lost its "privileged position as an axis around which all other efforts at self-constitution and identity-building rotate" (p. 100). Empirical studies like the one conducted by Lloyd (2012) with young people working at a call center showed that there is a "shift away from a central identification with work and towards a stronger identification with leisure and consumer activities" (p. 631); as he explains, in industrial modernity, workers relied on the cultural compensations of class and community, two elements that, according to him, do not exist anymore, thus magnifying the feeling of exploitation and dissatisfaction.

We would not doubt for a moment the fact that the emergence of the post-industrial model has brought about a notable differentiation regarding the content of jobs, together with an even more notable differentiation of contract types, leading to a decisive internal fragmentation of what once used to constitute a more or less homogenous working class[1].

[1] We should always bear in mind that we are talking about the so- called "West"; the situation in many other places on the planet is considerably different and we would need a lot more space and time to discuss it.

Nonetheless, regardless of their employment status, all employees are involved in a social relation that presupposes power inequality and exploitation; they may not share entirely the same needs, problems, and demands, but they are all obliged to sell their labour power for an income, even if this does not always come in the "stable" form of a wage. Therefore we propose that the "worker" should be viewed as a "political process, not as sociological identity" (Read, 2007, p. 125), recognizing in paid labour a form of subjectification; and this is how we propose that we should approach the field.

As regards the time dedicated to work, the statistics concerning working hours may be misleading; even though part-time contracts have multiplied, this is most often done in order to cut down on labour cost and employees have to work overtime if they are to deal with the workload, which has increased as a result of the mass layoffs (Eurofound, 2010). Nonetheless, even when this is not the case we ought to take into account that in the modern "factory" of cognitive and affective capitalism, life is infused to labour and labour pervades all facets of the social (Hardt & Negri, 2000). According to Weeks (2011), "profits in the service- and knowledge-based economy depend increasingly on simultaneously activating and controlling, on releasing and harnessing, the creative, communicative, affective, and emotional capacities of workers" (p. 56). In turn, individuals invest time which does not officially count as working time in order to develop these capacities, obeying to a mutated but still powerful work ethic: Enhancing employability emerges as a primordial duty of every citizen and encompasses the institutional workfare programs (e.g., Cremin, 2009; Smith, 2010; Papagaroufali, 2013) which establish a new ethos of work, revolving around the demands for activation, flexibility and adaptability to the market mandates (Tsiolis, 2013, p. 151).

There should be no doubt that the proliferation of part-time and "on-call" employment calls for changes of workplace and impedes the development of bonds of commitment and devotion on behalf of the employee towards her/his employing company, colleages, or even profession, in contrast to the Fordist regime. However, we argue that the readiness to reinvent the self and reengineer the working identity is among the pivotal prescriptions of the neoliberal work ethic and does not challenge the importance attributed to the participation in the labour market in general. At the same time, precarity is forged as emancipatory for workers (Vallas & Prener, 2012), with managerial and political texts inculcating "chameleon" subjectivities (Sennett, 1998), sustaining, in a more covert way, the dependency on an employer and the laws of the market as the only way to earn a livelihood.

Whereas in industrial modernity the dominant ethos preached devotion to the organization that provided long-term employment prospects, today the hegemonic dogma dictates that loyalty is owed to one and only enterprise, and this is the self. The construction of "professionalism", as a concept abstracted from the standards of a particular occupation or corporation, tethered only to the management of oneself as a "brand", and the impressive circulation and appeal of the discourses that promulgate it, is indicative of the new "softwares of control" devised in order to engineer self-disciplined subjects, malleable even under the most flexible forms of organization (Fournier, 1999). As opposed to the clear-cut prototypes and norms established by capitalism under Fordism,

> [n]eoliberal ideology does not provide symbolic identities – that is sites from which we can see ourselves. In their place, it offers opportunities for new ways for me to imagine myself, a variety of lifestyles with which I can experiment. […] Thus rather than providing symbolically anchored identities (structured according to conventions of gender, race, work, and national citizenship) neoliberalism offers its subjects imaginary injunctions to develop our creative potential and cultivate our individuality, injunctions supported by capitalism's provision of the ever new experiences and accessories we use to perform this self-fashioning (Dean, 2008, p. 62).

Hence, although "symbolic prohibitive norms are increasingly replaced by imaginary ideals" (Žižek, as cited in Dean, 2008, p. 62) this does not mitigate their effect on the sense of becoming; the appeal of the "fantasmic businessman" (p. 58) rather points to the exact opposite conclusion.

Turning to the claims about the dissolution of the dogma of work and the related dominance of an "aesthetic of consumption" (Bauman, 2004, p. 99), we agree with Weeks (2011) who maintains that the ethic of consumption has always been integral to the work ethic, which in all times "avows the necessary, legitimate, and indeed ethical link between hard work and whatever might count in different economic phases as deserved and responsible spending" (p. 50). On another level, we should consider the bidirectional process which has marked the unfolding of the "capitalist postmodernization" (Hardt, 1999), what Jameson (1998) describes as "the becoming cultural of the economic", whereby the production of immaterial commodities becomes inseparable from the production of new ways of feeling and existing, and the simultaneous "becoming economic of the cultural", insofar as "the market and capitalism itself have become objects for aesthetic enjoyment and the investment of desire" (Read, 2001, p. 27). Du Gay (1994) also gives prominence to the

aestheticization of the contemporary economic life: In the entrepreneurial corporation "work and leisure, reason and emotion, pleasure and duty are once more conjoined and thus the human subject is again a plenitude –restored to full moral health" (p. 661).

At the same time, the prevalence of aesthetic criteria that have inevitably affected the world of work as Bauman (2004) argues, does not signify axiomatically the end of the centrality of work in people's lives; the transition may merely lie in a displacement from work linked to asceticism and discipline towards another form, namely "fulfilling work", mediated by hedonism and creativity, something that would not reduce the importance granted to it (Blanch Ribas, 2006, p. 82). The "delay of gratification" which lied at the foundation of the identities of modernity (Bauman, 2006) is now substituted by the "duty" to find immediate satisfaction in fulfilling working environments. In the same line, subjects are invited to enact "consumer identities", rehearsing the discourse of "freedom of choice", even in their capacity as "producers": The neoliberal imaginary depicts one's labouring trajectory as a series of individual choices that aim at enhancing one's human capital, and job selection ultimately becomes another, probably the most important, path towards self-growth (du Gay, 1996; Webb, 2004).

This shift is reflected in empirical research which demonstrates a notable transformation of the social representation of work (Kesisoglou, 2014); in the study realized by Papadaki (2009), the desire for self-actualization through labour emerged as one of the most important expectations from employment, while participants said that even more than pecuniary remuneration, participation in the organization of tasks and the setting of the final goals constituted a catalyst for motivation. Similarly, Kesisoglou (2014) found that authoring versions of themselves as "effortful subjects" (Gibson, 2009), who try hard to realize their potential within work, was a central concern of young people in Greece; his analysis brought to light accounts echoing a work ethic which interpellates individuals as sovereign choosers, taking for granted the precarity ruling the labour market.

Nonetheless, as we already pointed out, the reduction of the number of jobs, intensified by the ongoing "economic crisis", makes it all the more difficult for work to keep its "promise" for self-development and social integration. At the same time – and maybe because of that – the work ethic, disguised as "entrepreneurial spirit" is even more vigorously preached: The structure of educational and public administration systems are every time more oriented to the needs and the logic of the labour market, establishing work's meaningfulness and constituting subjects that incarnate the legitimization of the dominant discourses; political discourse is colonized by economy, setting the social on the sidelines and Media texts

interpellate individuals as subjects of neoliberal ideology (Nikolopoulou, Psyllakou, & Tsachli, 2013), where economic achievement and social recognition come as fruit of personal effort.

Empirical research confirms this paradox: In the study under the direction of Nicos Panagiotopoulos (2008), work emerges as a major source of suffering. However, unemployment is one of the toughest experiences, with its psychosocial consequences – feelings of insecurity, low self-esteem etc. – being even more painful than the lack of material resources (Kouzis, 2008), a fact indicating that the symbolic importance attached to employment as a form of social integration is high. The findings of the research "Injustices; L'expérience des inégalités au travail" (Dubet, 2006) reveal a similar paradox: Even though the representations of work among French employees are extremely negative, work still holds a prime position in their lives (classified just below family).

Thus we could suggest that the "wage-based" society may be on the verge of extinction, since more unstable and individualized payment systems have been introduced. But we could not claim the same for the "work-based" society and even less for the work ethic; jobs may be vanishing but work continues to emerge as a "privileged vehicle of self-realization" (Dardot & Laval, 2014, p. 6); the workplace may be acquiring different forms but the work ethic seems to be mutating to: The "discourse of enterprise" (du Gay, 1996), all the more prominent within the framework of post-industrial, knowledge-intensive economies, invokes the figure of the employee as seeking self-fulfillment through work, and the latter as "an essential element in the path for the self-realization of individual identity" (Miller & Rose, 1995, p. 456). Thusly, in its revamped version as "business ethos" the work ethic is deployed seeking to hijack people's aspirations for individual accomplishment. Still, its central pillars survive intact and include "the identification with and systematic devotion to waged work, the elevation of work to the center of life, and the affirmation of work as an end in itself" (Weeks, 2011, p. 46).

While the post-Fordist paradigm heralds the advent of an era when the primacy of the capitalist working relation could be overthrown by the autonomous determination of activity and time management, impressively – or not so much if we consider the stakes in the perpetuation of the capital-labour relation – job creation and, most importantly, the implementation of strategies that can provide an active and employable workforce are represented as panacea to every social problem. As Dardot and Laval (2014) put it: "We have not emerged from the iron cage of the capitalist economy to which Weber referred. Rather, in some respects it would have to be said that everyone is enjoined to construct their own" (p. 8).

**3. Centering on the (De-centered) Subject**

Another strand of objections may target the questions that this dissertation poses in order to explore the realm of labour. Some may regard this study as a dissonance within the current academic trend which seeks *how* work should be done; either from the managerial point of view that looks for more efficient and productive performance, or demonstrating concern for the employees, in the pursuit of less stressful working structures, or both, the mainstream focus is on "how to do the job" and not "why do it". Even though in some cases this kind of research offers valuable insights, it most often ends up reifying the wage-labour relationship, conceptualizing it as an inevitable fact that can be modified only on certain levels.

Our perspective may also be considered ignorant, insofar as several studies have posed the question of "what work means to people", targeting large samples of populations with quantitative techniques. However these endeavors also tend to extract paid labour from the nexus of discourses where it is engineered and ignore its social configuration; instead they examine it as a taken-for-granted phenomenon, further consolidating its status as a timeless and natural condition, since they invest it with the objectivity that supposedly characterizes scientific discourse.

Fortunately, in recent years, interest in the discursive formulation of work and the working self has become more popular; often though these academic ventures present certain limitations. As Fridman (2014) contends, current research deals with the formation of subjects in neoliberalism adopting a top-down outlook scrutinizing institutional policies and texts, often neglecting the fact that subjectivities are fashioned through mundane practices by drawing on resources that are not evidently linked to neoliberal-inspired government programs.

At the same time, the "meaning of work" scholarship tends to adhere to individualistic perspectives of sense-making, ignoring its social and cultural dimension (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). Hence the contribution of our research is considered crucial, given that it takes a step towards filling that gap, aspiring to achieve a more profound understanding of the field. Furthermore, focusing on views "from below", apart from giving voice to those who are frequently excluded from public dialogue, we seek to avoid contributing to the consolidation of the neoliberal discourse as a homogenous and reified ideology, but rather to deconstruct it and demonstrate its time- and space-specific nature, and hence contestability, (e.g., Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010; Springer, 2012), as well as the fact that it is shaped and perpetuated through everyday discursive practices.

Moreover, empirical investigations that have sought to scrutinize the formation of the "entrepreneurial" subject (e.g., Doolin, 2002; Knights & McCabe, 2000; Mangan, 2009) do exist, but often center on a particular profession or organization; albeit their illuminating findings from which our study has greatly profited, they restrain their scope within the organizational boundaries, failing to pay closer attention to the broader political and social culture that nurtures individual accounts of selfhood and the working relation (Vallas & Cummins, 2015). In order to offer a more well-rounded view of the assemblage of working identities in the neoliberal scenery, we did not confine our study within the "walls" of a specific organization; the "setting" of our research is present-day Greece and the discursive matrixes that shape the dominant understandings of labour and the working subject are thoroughly discussed and taken into account during the discussion of our findings.

## 4. An Overview of our Setting: Greece in Numbers

Right in the middle of the elaboration of this thesis, the political life in Greece was marked by the rise in power of SYRIZA, the Coalition of the Radical Left party, after almost 40 years that the two traditionally big parties, the socialist party, PASOK, and the conservative party, New Democracy, have been taking turns in the governmental offices. In the general elections held in January, 2015, SYRIZA defeated the incumbent New Democracy and received 36,3% of the vote and 149 out of 300 parliamentary seats. In order to form a government, SYRIZA party chairman Alexis Tsipras formed a coalition with the right-wing party ANEL (Independent Greeks).

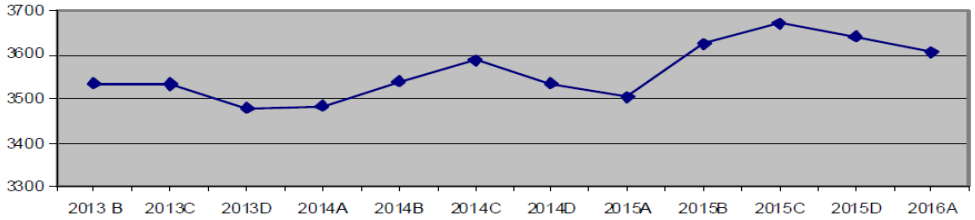
Both parties based their pre-electoral programs in opposing the agreements signed by the previous governments with the Troika, maintaining firm anti-austerity positions, and promising to denounce the legislation issued in this framework. Notwithstanding their participation in the social movements that fought in the streets the austerity programs of the previous governments, only months after its election, the new government accepted the third Memorandum on the country's dept, which, in line with the previous two, included harsh measures of neoliberal inspiration. Following that, a group of 25 SYRIZA MPs who disagreed with this decision disapproving of the terms of the bailout, left the party and formed a new one, Laiki Enotita (Popular Unity), under Panagiotis Lafazanis. Lacking the parliamentary majority, Tsipras called a new election, which he won, attaining 145 seats. The coalition with ANEL was renewed for the formation of government.

More will be said about Greece in the next chapters, as we will be discussing aspects of its political culture. At this point though, we think it would be useful to provide a more general overview concerning the working reality in the country at the present day.

In Greece, a country of almost 10,8 million people (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2014) the number of employed amounted to 3.504.446 persons in the first quarter of 2015 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2015), the time when the interviews for the study were conducted. According to the same report, the percentage of part time employed corresponded to the 10% of the total of the employed. Among part-timers, those who recurred to this form of contract because they could not find a full-time job was 68,6%, while 6,7% chose a part time job for personal or family reasons, 3,4% because they were in education, 2,6% in order to look after children or incapacitated adults, and 18,8% for other reasons.

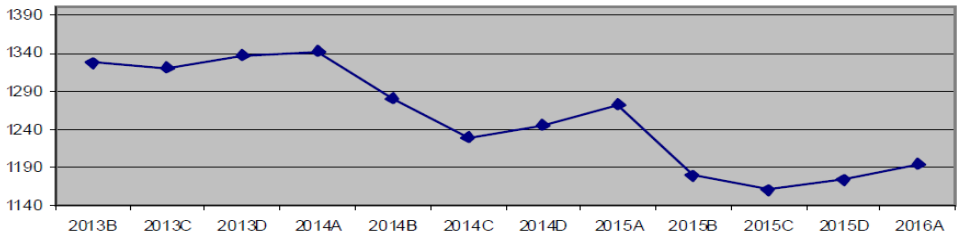
During the same period and according to the data of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2015), the unemployment rate was 26,6% compared with 26,1% in the previous quarter, and 27,8% in the corresponding quarter of 2014. The unemployment rate for females was as high as 30,6% whereas the respective rate for males was 23,5%. For young females in particular, the unemployment rate was 57%. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the data, while Figure 3 presents the evolution of the employment rate from 2001 to 2014 and the 2020 national employment rate target.

Figure 1. The number of employed persons in thousands per trimester.




*Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2016.*

Figure 2. The number of unemployed persons in thousands per trimester.




*Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2016.*

Figure 3. Employment rate (20-64 age group) evolution in Greece, and the 2020 target.


| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Greece | 61.5 | 62.5 | 63.6 | 63.9 | 64.4 | 65.6 | 65.8 | 66.3 | 65.6 | 63.8 | 59.6 | 55.0 | 52.9 | 53.3 | | | | | | 70 |

*Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2015.*

Of particular interest are the statistical findings that focus on the period of the "economic crisis", presented in by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (2013). Greece figures among the countries that experienced a stark increase in job insecurity (24,9%) between 2008 and 2012, an index that, according to the study, was largely affected by the modifications applied to the employment protection legislation. At the same time, the average minimum wage fell by 6,4% from 2009 to 2011, while labour productivity experienced a 1,9% fall; this means that the unit labour cost was reduced by 4,5%. As the data of the foundation demonstrate, Greece is the only EU country with a nominal reduction in the minimum wage since the outburst of the crisis (by 22%).

According to the same report, "the Depression Helpline of the University Mental Health Research Institute (EPIPSI) has registered a surge in anxiety and depression symptoms that are mainly due to a lack of work perspective, professional insecurity and uncertainty, failure to find work or unemployment" (p. 54). More than 50% of the users of the helpline said that they were unemployed while 17,7% of those who could not find a job gave as a reason the general unemployment in Greece. It should also be noted that almost 65% of these people were women, 37,3% were young people aged between 21 and 35 years and 46,7% were tertiary educated graduates.

The deregulation of the labour market, with the pretext of the reduction of unemployment, was supposed to result in the reduction of poverty as well; the latter is canonically attributed to the lack of employment, due to the hegemonic assumption that poverty stems from individual choices rather than from the organization of the economic system per se (Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour - INE/GSEE,

2012). In the National Reform Programme 2014 (Greek Ministry of Finance, 2014), it was professed that the adoption of neoliberal policies such as the cutback in public spending, the flexibilization of labour relations and the implementation of a series of privatizations would produce a rise in employment, by rendering labour more "attractive" to capital: Limiting the labour costs through interventions in the wage formation system and in the redundancy scheme, as well as through the flexibilization of the forms and terms of employment were set as the cornerstones of tackling unemployment, in line with the European orientation and the Lisbon strategy.

Indeed, according Eurofound (2013), in 2010 "the cost of laying off employees was reduced by shortening the notice period in event of contract termination, reducing redundancy compensation payments and extending the minimum period of employment necessary to oblige an employer to pay redundancy compensations" (p. 13). Although presented as measure against the "crisis", the strategic disintegration of the rules protective of employees, the attack on the welfare state and the wages was nothing but new. As Milios (2015) contends, the share of wages in value added has been following a predominantly downward trend since the 1980's due to an economic policy that systematically considers the reduction of labour costs as a crucial factor for the improvement of the profitability and competitiveness of business.

In the National Reform Programme 2015 (Greek Ministry of Finance, 2015) it is stated that "[a]ddressing the acute problem of unemployment and mitigating the intense negative impact of the crisis on society and the economy becomes a strategic choice of high priority" (pp. 17-18). The top two funding priorities towards the attainment of this goal are "Enhancing competitiveness and internationalisation of enterprises" and "Capacity building and development of human resources – active social inclusion", through the alignment of education with the needs of the market. We should note however that the report also presents labour market reforms which shall include "interventions which will upgrade the workers' negotiating ability and the level of minimum wages" (p. 40) and measures to achieve greater dispersion of the social benefits and support for the unemployed, among others. Still, despite of the signs of the non-viability and the integral deficiencies of the work-based economy, all efforts and financial pores are directed towards its restoration rather than its substitution with a more just and sustainable model.

Furthermore, as Dafermos and Papatheodorou (2012) argue, a significant portion of poverty is represented by in-work poverty, given that a significant number of European employees are below the poverty threshold. According to their analysis, the deregulation of

the labour market as well as the high margins of flexibility may have a negative impact on in-work poverty, findings that generate doubt about the suitability of such policies. In addition, research of the Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour – INE/GSEE (2012) showed that, among the employed, those who are engaged in flexible forms of employment run a particularly high risk of poverty and that the elimination of restrictions on working time significantly increase income polarization, multiplying the number of those who fall below the poverty threshold. Suffice it to say that according to statistical data of the Greek Ministry of Labour (Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour - INE/GSEE, 2016), 126.956 employees are paid a gross monthly salary of 100 euros, while a total of 343.760 employees receive a gross wage between 100 and 400 euros.

According to the data, these are basically workers with part-time employment contracts or engaged in job rotation, working two or three days a week or even a few hours a week. It is worth noting that, according to the Greek Social Security Institution, the average wage for part-time work ranges from 400 to 420 euros gross per month. In total, the figures show that in Greece the number of new poor workers who are currently remunerated with gross wages up to 510 euro amounts to 432.033 people. Surprisingly – or, again, not so much– OECD (2014) in a recent report laments the fact that "deregulation has been only partial, and restrictive provisions still harm competition", given that there remain obstacles "for larger stores and chains to adopt more flexible hours" (p. 79).

## 5. Our Theoretical and Methodological Grounds

Against this backdrop, the question of why our societies do not systematically and on a large scale turn to different economic rationales emerges with increased intensity. Before embarking on our venture to explore this question, we feel urged to expose our epistemological, theoretical and methodological premises. All knowledge production, even scientific knowledge production, is situated (Haraway, 1988) and unavoidably, or rather, strategically, in order to critically examine the capitalist relation of production, we adopt a particular position, aiming at certain goals: As we have already made clear, our purpose is to dissolve the aura of necessity that surrounds the hegemonic thinking about work. However, we argue that it is crucial for a scientific research to give a brief but comprehensive account of its theoretical and methodological foundations in order to enhance its transparency (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). So this section is intended to present the ways in which our study is inspired by the autonomist Marxism tradition and the governmentality studies as well as justify the selection of the particular methodological strategies and techniques.

"Work" has been the privileged focus of autonomist Marxism (e.g., Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2004; Lazzarato, 1996; Virno, 2004; Weeks, 2011), which sees in it the "heart" of capitalism. Although there are several internal debates and different strands within this line of thought, also called "post-operaismo", they all share a number of important points about labour, having their origins in the Italian "operaismo" movements[2] of the 1970's. One of its fundamental tenets is its critique towards those socialists who tend to romanticize labour, treating it as "a title of nobility" (Negri, 1979), rather than the chief apparatus of capitalist domination. Baudrillard (1975) saw in this "sanctification of work" Marxism's commitment to productivism, its inability to critically oppose the work values that encompass and support the capitalist economies, where the "plurality of social practices and relations are subordinated to the instrumental and rationalist logic of productivity" (Weeks, 2011, p. 82).

Against this tendency, autonomist Marxist thought suggests the "refusal of work", which emerges as the urge to contest the present system of work altogether, rather than merely renegotiate some of its terms. However, the "refusal of work" is not just a negative attitude towards labour; it constitutes a political form of action and being, having two firmly entwined facets: Firstly, it entails a challenge towards the wider apparatus of paid labour, a critique of its values and structures, and the "insubordination to the work ethic" (Berardi 1980, p. 169). On the other hand, it appears as a "constituting praxis" (Negri, 1991), a constructive force which produces new ways of being, inventing new modes of production. It is at once a destructive process of rebellion and a productive politics of manufacturing new ways of relating and understanding the world, "a new mode of life and above all a new community" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 204).

Hence, given that capitalism is defined as "a social system based on the imposition of work with the commodity form" (Cleaver, 2000, p. 82), it becomes obvious that "the refusal of work does not negate one nexus of capitalist society, one aspect of capital's process of production or reproduction. Rather, "with all its radicality, it negates the whole of capitalist society" (Negri, 1979, p. 124). From this standing point, capitalism is not viewed as an irrational system which can be rationalized through a series of modifications; instead autonomy restores the primacy of subjectivity, invoking its potency against the power of objectified relations (Viano, 1991; Weeks, 2011).

Autonomist Marxists have paid a great deal of attention to the shifting locus of value production, foregrounding the implications of the qualitative prevalence of immaterial labour

[2] For a critique of the name "operaismo" see Berardi (2003).

and the centrality accorded to flexibility. Hardt and Negri (2004) insist that immaterial labour is almost always combined with material work and it essentially remains this way since it involves our body and brains. They also stress that on a global level in quantitative terms, material forms of production remain dominant. However, it is on a qualitative level that immaterial labour exerts its hegemony over the rest, given that "today, labor and society have to informationalize, become intelligent, become communicative, become affective" (p. 109). Therefore, the locus of control and command becomes subjectivity itself. In this framework, post-Fordism, grounded in flexibility, cognitive and affective labour, presents at once an emancipatory alternative for workers and a path to their total subjugation (Gorz, 1999).

Against this backdrop, one of the central challenges of capitalism is the "task of fashioning productive forms of subjectivity, workers who are simultaneously self-directed and manageable" (Weeks, 2011, p. 56). "The capitalist", Lazzarato (1996) explains, "needs to find an unmediated way of establishing command over subjectivity itself; the prescription and definition of tasks transforms into a prescription of subjectivities" (p. 133).

And it is on this level, regarding the centrality of subjectivity, that the "autonomy" strand can be combined with the governmentality scholarship (e.g., Burchell, Gordon, Miller, 1991; Miller & Rose, 1990; Rose, 1998, 2004) which scrutinizes the neoliberal "art of government", in order to form a useful device for investigation. The studies on neoliberal governmentality constitute a useful theoretical framework, providing "nuanced and fine-grained analyses of processes of subjectivation" (Weidner, 2009, p. 391) in the contemporary setting. Without reducing power to capital, analyses of governmentality have presented a convincing account of neoliberalism as a political project which "operates on interests, desires, and aspirations rather than through rights and obligations; it does not directly mark the body, as sovereign power, or even curtail actions, as disciplinary power; rather, it acts on the conditions of actions" (Read, 2009, p. 29).

Drawing upon the Foucauldian conceptualization of governmentality as the exercise of power through the conduct of conduct and self-government (Foucault, 1997b), this body of research, notwithstanding its discords and heterogeneity, instead of reifying neoliberalism as an ideology, it aims to cast light on the webs of knowledge and power which make possible and naturalize subjective worlds that revolve around entrepreneurial identities. This line of thought greatly informs our understanding of the extant economic rationale, and we therefore subscribe to the view that "any opposition to neoliberalism must take seriously its effectiveness, the manner in which it has transformed work subjectivity and social

relationships. […] A political response to neoliberalism must meet it on its terrain, that of the production of subjectivity, freedom and possibility" (Read, 2009, p. 36).

Hence we suggest that a creative articulation of the contributions of the autonomist Marxist ideas with the insights offered by governmentality studies can enable a more profound understanding of "the ways in which contemporary capitalism and neoliberal forms of government intersect and resonate with each other, as well as the ways in which the subjects of contemporary capital and neoliberal subjects often are subjected to similar mechanisms of control" (Weidner, 2009, p. 392). In this way we can mitigate criticism against the autonomist tradition as overly optimistic, inscribing the configuration of identity within the post-Fordist context in a broader project of government which cannot be reduced to capitalism; concomitantly, we can enhance analyses of governmentality with the theoretical tools advanced by post-operaismo regarding the developments in the contemporary relations of production.

Considering the aforementioned, it comes as no surprise that we chose to place our focus on discourse in order to explore the realm of work and the working subjectivity. Grounding our approach in social constructionist understandings about the configuration of identity, we understand the latter as the result of communication processes, traversed by discourses, texts, power relations, all mutually constitutive (Gil-Juárez & Vitóres González, 2011). In general, we view the symbolic sphere at a given place and time as a discursive fabric, woven by antagonistic discourses, providing the material to individuals to manufacture different versions of selfhood and the world. Hence the choice of critical discourse analysis as the optimum medium of accessing the field.

More specifically, the analysis of the produced information intents to integrate different approaches of discourse analysis. Having as primary objective to restore the contingency of the concept of work and denaturalize the meaning ascribed to it, it draws on Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory and their "discursive struggle" (e.g., Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 1995), as well as on a rather Foucauldian strand of discursive psychology, viewing subjects both as producers of and produced by discourse, focusing on the content rather than linguistics (e.g., Wetherell, 1998).

At this point, we need to clarify the use of the terms "discursive" and, especially, "non-discursive", although we will return to that with a more extensive discussion in following chapters. We argue that every social event, practice, or relationship, is imbued with meaning in the realm of the symbolic; it is, in other words, constituted in discourse and is hence discursive. When we refer to something as "non-discursive" we do not imply that it is

positioned outside discourse; our distinction is analytical, taking on Fairclough's (1992) conceptualization of "discursive practice" – as the articulation of discourses for the production and consumption of texts, as opposed to the wider social structure and processes – without sharing his ontological distinction between the two. To our best knowledge, some of the scholars we invoke here have not taken sides in this ontological debate (e.g., Lazzarato), whereas the stance of others is disputed by their commentators (e.g., Foucault).

We could deploy the term "non-linguistic" in order to refer to administrative procedures, state or organizational programs; however they too have a linguistic aspect, and a rather important one, given that they involve documentation, texts for their announcement and dissemination etc. Therefore we mobilize the term "non-discursive" in order to talk about practices which have been crystallized and materialized in specific policies, as objectified meanings which have managed to conceal their contingent nature.

Regarding the techniques applied in order to carry out this project, we selected to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews based on a researcher-generated guide and on participant-generated photographs. As an interface that hosts the creative articulation of socially available meanings, the research interview provides access to the symbolic resources mobilized by individuals when they interpret their social surroundings, casting light both on their availability and on the ways in which subjects are positioned within them. In other words, it gives us the chance to "explore our socially and historically contextualized modes of understanding and acting" (Tangaard, 2009, p. 1511) and consequently to better understand the ongoing social debates and the ways they affect the sense of becoming. Therefore interviewing was intended to bring to the foreground the argumentative strategies that are fashioned in the employees' talk and illuminate the subjective positions preferred by them. Thusly, we also address an important shortcoming of governmental studies which often overlook the ways in which individuals interact with neoliberal programs and discourses (Rose, O'Malley, & Valverde, 2006).

As for the use of the participant-generated photographs, they were added in the array of our techniques in order to provide the respondents with an additional way to imagine aspects of their selves and visualize potential alternatives concerning the meaning of work. Using an adaptation of "photo-interviewing" (Hurworth, 2003) and inspired by the "photointervention" technique (Cantera Espinosa, 2009), we had a twofold objective: Apart from enhancing the sense of active involvement on behalf of the participants, we expected to facilitate the investigation of a field that is largely obfuscated by the "political correctness" notion (Cantera Espinosa, 2009).

On another level, this technique is in itself another argument in favour of the central posture adopted in this research, regarding the contingency of the social and the normalization of certain discourses that have achieved the state of "natural". The act of photographing, of choosing an object and a standpoint, manifests itself the manufactured nature of the social, belying the sense of an objective and undeniable reality that is merely reproduced in the photographical image. In addition, when participants are called to talk about their creations, they are expected to realize that the same text can be signified in various ways according to the angle of the viewer, prompting them to ask themselves "what we know about the social world and how we know it" (Stanczak, 2007, p. 9).

## 6. The Organization of this Thesis

Although bearing in mind that the reader will craft her/his own meanings in every stage of her/his interaction with the text, it is considered useful to briefly explain how it is intended to be read and provide some clues about what one should expect.

The present thesis is structured as follows: The first part is devoted to the discussion of the relevant literature and the critical overview of the theoretical approaches to work, the working subject and the contemporary work ethic. The organization of this section is subordinated to the overarching goal of this study, namely the denaturalization of taken-for-granted assumptions about labour, subjectivity and social relations.

The first chapter contributes to the endeavor of destabilization of crystallized meanings by adopting a historical perspective, showing that the signification of work is subject to historical and cultural change. Rather than presenting the different positions labour occupied throughout history as products of an inescapable determinism, or attempting to demonize or idealize them, it examines work against the backdrop of the historically and geographically situated discursive matrixes that gave it shape and value. In this way, contemporary understandings about the capitalist mode of production that are today presented as timeless, are stripped of the guise of truth and appear as merely social constructions without a universal or natural status. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) argue, by establishing a locus external to the current sociocultural setting, what is considered commonsensical within it can be recognized; although this process of distancing is unavoidably mediated by one's existing perceptions, it fosters a critical approach towards the sedimented conceptualizations and practices, making it possible "to stand against the maxims of one's time, against the spirit of one's age, against the current of received wisdom" (Rose, 2004, p. 20).

The next chapter discusses the metamorphoses of the organization of wage labour in the modern era and in particular from the beginning of the 20th century until the present day. We explore the rise of the Fordist regime of regulation as a stage of the development of society rather than just of work and industry, casting light on the conceptualization of subjectivity and society that underpinned its expansion and domination. The commitment to full employment, the growth of the welfare state and the consumption model that gave shape to the Fordist paradigm are scrutinized as cultural pores used for the production of selfhood. Subsequently we move on to the transition to post-Fordism, drawing attention to the shift towards the prevalence of immaterial, cognitive, and affective production, where social life itself is "put to work" (Hardt & Negri, 2004), illustrating the contemporary backdrop against which the working self is engineered.

In the third chapter we examine neoliberalism as a governmental rationality, as the ensemble of practices that aim to generalize individualism and the model of competition and enterprise to all social relations. We engage in a discursive approach of the concept, drawing heavily on Foucault and his 1978-1979 lectures published as *The Birth of Biopolitics*. In this way we attempt to avoid the reification of the concept, viewing it as merely one of the various interpretations of the social world which seeks to obfuscate its constitutive contingency and crystallize as natural the meanings it upholds. In this framework we present the discursive formulations that dominate the contemporary discursive milieu and examine the subject positions they endorse regarding the working subject. The chapter closes considering the countervailing strategies devised by employees, targeting the sedimented meanings and generating alternatives, in mundane manifestations of the social antagonism.

Given the particularities that we have identified in the post-Fordist organization of production, as well as its neoliberal configuration, in chapter four we consider the social theoretical approaches towards the political subject that emerges from the wage labour relation as it is organized today; what concerns us is to find the terms in which to talk about the formation of the political subject, without neither undermining nor romanticizing employees' agency and resistance. We therefore examine the concept of "class", adopting a critical stance; we do not seek though to reject it merely as obsolete, but we are rather interested in establishing a vocabulary that serves our study best. At the same time, we intend to enrich social research, deploying a terminology which captures the antagonism inherent in the capital-labour relation, taking into account its extant configuration, endowing individuals with a certain level of agency, eschewing any deterministic outlooks. The Autonomist Marxism tradition and a Foucauldian conceptualization of power guide our theoretical quest,

leading to the notion of the precarious multitude, which is not used as a sociological category but as a tool that helps us comprehend the "worker" as a "political figure".

The first part of this dissertation concludes with an overview of the Greek context. This chapter aims to deconstruct the discursive practices of the Greek state concerning productivity, in the framework of a neoliberal governmentality. It parts from the hypothesis that state policies, structures and discourses interpellate individuals as productive subjects that embrace the prototype of homo œconomicus and that the establishment of the productivist ethos as hegemonic passes from the engineering of a certain type of citizen: the neoliberal undemocratic citizen. In this context, drawing on Klein's concept of "shock doctrine" (2007) and on Agamben's "state of exception" (2007), the "Greek crisis" is conceptualized as a phase of a de-democratization process. After presenting how neoliberal governmentality has been interwoven in the Greek political fabric through time against the backdrop of a globalized international setting, we set out to explore how the procedure of establishing homo œconomicus as the only viable alternative is facilitated by technologies that endorse the de-democratization of the subject: First, we focus on the way in which the "crisis discourse" legitimates, normalizes, and rewards undemocratic behaviour. Then we turn to the techniques that aim to shock individuals on various levels, rendering them passive towards any abrogation of power. We end this section stressing the alternative subjectivities that are being proposed and enacted, challenging the hegemony of the productivist ethos.

The second part outlines and explains our methodological choices. We position ourselves within the framework of social constructionism (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985) and justify our decision to adopt a critical standing point. Moreover we expound the relevance of discourse analysis and we elaborate on the approaches to discourse that inform our research design, namely discourse theory (Laclau, 1997; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1995), and critical discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 1998). Subsequently, we turn to the techniques employed, i.e. in depth semi-structured interviews and a version of photo-interviewing, and we unfold the rationale that underpins the configuration of both the researcher and the participant as "bricoleur" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966). In this chapter we also introduce the respondents of the study to the reader and we delineate the research procedure and the iterative analytic process that was followed. Moreover, we set forth our ethical considerations as well as our reflections on the value of the produced knowledge. The chapter ends with the presentation of our research questions.

Part three is dedicated to answering those questions. In this direction, we devised two broad categories in order to systematize the presentation and discussion of our findings that

unfold in two chapters. We named the first category "the self as an employee" focusing on the discursive configuration of the working selfhood, and we dedicate the corresponding chapter to the examination of the sense-making apparatuses that are mobilized by the participants when they produce versions of themselves as employees. Our analysis identified three patterns, that we named the "entrepreneur of the self", the "socioeconomically determined", and the "occupation-oriented" self, and which are discussed in three distinct sections. The second category is entitled the "meaning of work" and aims to illuminate the discursive pores drawn upon by individuals when negotiating their interpretations of wage labour. The "school" repertoire, the "journey" repertoire and the "slavery" repertoire were the three motifs that we identified, and are analyzed in three sections considering the subject positions they avail, as well as their assumptions about the social world.

The last part of this dissertation offers an overview of our research, presenting the most important conclusions and highlighting the macro-social implications of our findings. Reflecting on the entire process, we acknowledge its limitations and raise a set of questions that need to be addressed in further research.

In the appendices the reader will find the interview guide, the invitation to the research that was given to the participants as well as the consent form they signed. The original material was in Greek, but it is presented here translated in English. A last appendix includes some data on the participants and the interview sessions, as well as the photographs they took for this study; not all of the interviewees took photos and some of them who did take eventually did not send them to me.

Before we move to the main corpus of the dissertation, there is one preliminary point to be made regarding the "voice" articulating the words that invite you to play with them. It is true that writing is a lonely activity and I sometimes wish the keyboard was the musical one, which can afford four hands playing a tune. However, I am not alone in this adventure; usually it is a collective voice that takes the word: The "we" that appears mostly in chapters that treat theoretical issues echoes the discussions between my tutors[3] and me, as well as our imaginary debates with scientific and non-scientific sources. The first singular person is used as I put myself forward in an attempt to construct my experience as an individual researcher, trying to juggle multiple subjectivities.

[3] I held invaluable conversations with people outside the academic framework, which powerfully impacted the present thesis. Nonetheless, my tutors were those who systematically contributed so that my ideas took a, more or less, coherent form. Of course I take full responsibility for any mistakes or omissions.

# PART 1: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1. Work in the realm of time; a story of mutual inventions and interventions

- 1.1. Employment as a pledge of slavery
- 1.2. Instrumentality in the service of hierarchy
- 1.3. Reforming religion, reforming working subjects
- 1.4. The prevalence of homo œconomicus

## 2. The passage to mass production and beyond

- 2.1. “Rational” legitimization for a “rational” production
- 2.2. Subjectivities on the assembly line
- 2.3. Introducing the flexible, cognitive worker

## 3. The changing forms of power and resistance; neoliberalism and its discontents

- 3.1. It's (more than) the economy, stupid!
- 3.2. More than an ideology
- 3.3. Are we all capitalists?

## 4. On the political subject; reclaiming the right to produce subjectivity

- 4.1. Reinvigorating the collective subject; towards the extinction or the reinvention of “class”?
- 4.2. The precarious multitude

## 5. The Greek case

- 5.1. Simulacra of democracy, or when the content does not match the form
- 5.2. Welcome to Greece, Chicago boys!
- 5.3. The production of the undemocratic citizen
- 5.4. Sites and instances of resistance

## CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Possibility is not a luxury; it is as crucial as bread.
–Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*

In this section we outline social and theoretical approaches to work and begin by discussing the historically and geographically specific discourses that shaped the identity of the worker over time. Subsequently, we seek the most suitable vocabulary in order to understand the political subjectivity that emerges from the contemporary configuration of the capital-labour relation, in an attempt to safeguard its potentialities for self-determination, without overestimating them though. We then examine neoliberalism as a governmental rationality, drawing mostly upon the work of Michel Foucault, aiming to establish it as merely one and not the only interpretation of the social world, considering the new forms of control and resistance in the realm of labour. We close this part with an overview of the discursive milieu as it is being configured in modern Greece, linking the hegemonic discourses on work to a strategic project of de-democratization; we also illuminate the sites of resistance carved out by employees, manifesting the possibilities of alternative modes of being.

Apart from assembling an overview of the field of interest, this section is intended to provide a standing point from which the dominant work ethic can be deconstructed and the possibility for countervailing subjective worlds can be contemplated. A crucial cohesive element of its chapters is that they value the importance of this possibility, as the epigraph above suggests, and were designed to accentuate the contingency of what we consider an undisputed and objective reality.

### 1. Work in the Realm of Time; A Story of Mutual Inventions and Interventions

During the 90s', an international survey on the relative importance of work was conducted by Roper Starch Worldwide, asking participants to choose which of the following two phrases suits them most: "Work is the important thing – and the purpose of leisure time is to recharge people's batteries so they can do a better job"; or "Leisure time is the important thing – and the purpose of work is to make it possible to have the leisure time to enjoy life and pursue one's interests". At this point, we are not particularly interested in examining the results by country but rather to highlight the striking variation in the attitudes on the matter across countries. Even more surprisingly, these attitudes did not match behaviors; as Tilly and

Tilly (1998) referring to this study put it: "the more people claim to value work for itself, the less they work; the more they work, the less importance they place on work" (p. 114).

Interpreting the data, the authors (Tilly & Tilly, 1998) stress the impact of the organization of labour as well as the cultural and socioeconomic structures that frame it on the attitudes that people adopt towards it and note that it has no inherent qualities that mark and distinguish what counts as "real work" and what does not. Its significance is hence configured by social debates and it is culturally and historically situated. Adopting a discursive psychological approach, we could add that these contextualized meanings rather than forming crystallized attitudes adopted by subjects, constitute flexible discursive pores which are creatively drawn upon in order to serve the rhetorical concerns of speakers in interactions.

A brief flashback can demonstrate that the way work is viewed and valued at a given time and space is defined by and simultaneously serves a certain socioeconomic status quo. In other words, it can shed light to the fact that the modern – or any other – organization of labour is not a "natural" phenomenon with indisputable norms and patterns that only obey abstract laws, such as the laws of the market. Similarly, the significance attributed to the concept under scrutiny, as well as others related to it such as leisure or unemployment, is also related to the outcome of social antagonism. Bearing that in mind, the "retrospective" that follows is not intended to serve as a full mapping of the historical trajectory of the concept of work; it rather aims to uncover its bonds with the historical reality within which it is infused with meaning, linking it to the discursive matrixes that organize the social. And it is from this perspective that it will be conducted.

### 1.1. Employment as a pledge of slavery.

> ἀναγκάζομαι νῦν ἐπιδημήσας τῷ σώματι ἐργαζόμενος τὰ ἐπιτήδεια πορίζεσθαι. […] καὶ πόσον χρόνον οἴει σοι, ἔφη [Σωκράτης], τὸ σῶμα ἱκανὸν εἶναι μισθοῦ τὰ ἐπιτήδεια ἐργάζεσθαι; μὰ τὸν Δί', ἔφη [Εὔθηρος], οὐ πολὺν χρόνον. […] οὐκοῦν, ἔφη, κρεῖττόν ἐστιν αὐτόθεν τοῖς τοιούτοις τῶν ἔργων ἐπιτίθεσθαι, ἃ καὶ πρεσβυτέρῳ γενομένῳ ἐπαρκέσει, καὶ προσελθόντα τῳ τῶν πλείω χρήματα κεκτημένων, τῷ δεομένῳ τοῦ συνεπιμεληsομένου, ἔργων τε ἐπιστατοῦντα καὶ συγκομίζοντα τοὺς καρποὺς καὶ συμφυλάττοντα τὴν οὐσίαν, ὠφελοῦντα ἀντωφελεῖσθαι. χαλεπῶς ἄν, ἔφη, ἐγώ, ὦ Σώκρατες, δουλείαν ὑπομείναιμι.
>
> –Xenophon, *Memorabilia, II.8*

Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* (1958) refers to a conversation, as recorded by Xenophon, between Socrates and a poor man, Eutherus, cited in the epigraph above. Eutherus, having nothing in his possession is obliged to work hard, here and there, in order to make a living. When Socrates asks him why he does not find a stable employment in the service of a wealthier man, Eutherus replies that slavery is something he could hardly bear.

Of course, in antiquity no one denied that work was indispensible for material existence; Blanch Ribas (2012) cites Hesiod who thought of works as natural as days. However, in classical Greece work was deemed derogatory and was to be done by slaves, so that citizens could achieve independence of external things (Tilgher, 1930). In fact, Aristotle, systematizing and maybe exaggerating the ordinary Athenian view (Anthony, 1977), using as a fundamental criterion "freedom", rejected all ways of life that evolved around satisfying everyday necessities, including not only the one of the slave, but those of the craftsman and the merchant as well (Arendt, 1958). Unlike liberal arts, which were proper for a free man to acquire and included reading and writing, gymnastics, music and drawing, "banause techne", or illiberal arts, referred to the activities that impeded the pursuit of virtue, to those that deform the body, as well as to all paid employment, because they absorbed and degraded the mind (Aristotle, Politics, 8.1337 b).

What needs to be stressed at this point is that it was not the actual nature of a given occupation what classified it under the one or the other category; it was the purpose that drove it. As Anthony (1977) points out, it was a matter of proper and improper use given that even manual labour executed by a free man for his own sake was considered honorable and praiseworthy. On the contrary, working for a wage in a stable employment relationship, either being a doctor or an artisan, involved giving away one's personal liberty to work in the preferred way and time, to participate in the commons and the public life of the city, and to devote time to friends (Zimmern, 1915). The institutionalized and normalized employment of slaves as well as the fact that the aim of the state was to produce cultivated gentlemen above anything else (Russel, 1946), was clearly better served by such discourses.

In other words, what today is perceived by many as a right, as a relationship between free and equal agents, as the cornerstone of independence and social recognition, i.e. waged employment, was viewed from the classical Athenian perspective as derogatory, as the ultimate lack of freedom, as servitude. One could argue that this outlook takes for granted the institution of slavery, restricting the privileges of non-work to a limited elite. It is definitely so; nonetheless, as Paul Lafargue (1985) vividly reminds us, Aristotle envisioned a society where every tool could complete its work by itself, rendering servitude unnecessary; and this

was a vision that Lafargue thought that, thanks to the technological progress of his time, back in 1880, was already turned into reality.

Returning to antiquity and moving on to the Roman era, we find Cicero (De officiis, 1.2.XLII) expressing contempt for manual professions, regarding wage as a pledge of slavery. For the Roman philosopher, occupations that required higher degree of intelligence were appropriate for a free man, even though agriculture was the one to be most respected. Tracing the transformations in the economic field, we need to acknowledge the expansion of the empire and the transition to a large scale production with the introduction of the Latifundia: the number of slaves rose, their cost was reduced, and their treatment grew worse. At the same time, the influence of the Stoic philosophy and the birth of the idea of equality before a natural law needed to be reconciled with slavery and the law of men (Anthony, 1977). Romans tried to legitimize the contemporary work ethic which sustained the institution of slavery with a juridical distinction; according to Sabine (1951) the *ius gentium*, the municipal law, allowed slavery, even though all men were equal before the *ius naturale.*

### 1.2. Instrumentality in the service of hierarchy.

In turn, the Christian doctrine aimed to overcome this dissonance by linking work to the original sin; in the original state of existence there were no such things as social inequality or private property, but sin and avarice were responsible for their appearance. The ethos that arose was based on a hierarchical understanding of society, where inequality was justified inasmuch as everyone provided her/his services – working for the lower, directing for the higher – for the common good. The discordance was resolved transcendentally, as the human law became the manifestation of the eternal one (Anthony, 1977) and master and servant were both ruled by a divine authority.

During the Middle Ages work lacked any intrinsic meaning. The feudal system, organized around closed agricultural economy with no perspectives for serious growth, was fairly served by the instrumentality Christianity attributed to labour, conceiving it as a means of material survival and as a contribution to the common good, as ordered by God. As Watson (2012) observes, work was not considered neither a way to self fulfillment nor a duty; people needed to get it done in order to meet their natural needs. The organic perception of society, established largely by the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, where everyone had to play the part ascribed to them, successfully reproduced and justified a system of exploitation and inequality. The preaching of obedience by Aquinas, the spiritual danger that idleness posed as

taught by the Benedicts, and church's understanding of labour as self-punishment kept peasants moving in a beat that was given by the drums of nature.

### 1.3. Reforming religion, reforming working subjects.

However, a number of transformations in the ideological sphere as well as in the economic arena were about to give this rhythm a twist. Our intention here is not to prime an idealist or a materialist account of the transition to what would end up being a radically distinct way of economic production and social signification; we would rather draw attention to the complex interweaving of the two, which resulted in the rise and domination of capitalism and the capitalist ethics, focusing, for the purposes of this study, on the realm of ideas.

The prevalence of Protestantism was not the only but beyond doubt one of the most influential factors that contributed to that shift. And the concept of the "calling" it introduced was certainly one of those that would become central in the official discourses on work. More specifically, conceiving labour as a vocation and attributing to it a sacred meaning was, quoting Weber (1905/1992) "most characteristic of the social ethic of capitalistic culture, and is in a sense the fundamental basis of it" (p. 19).

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (1905/1992) detects the inner connections between the protestant spirit and the capitalist culture, observing that it is not in human nature to crave for more and more money and that in the past "the opportunity of earning more was less attractive than that of working less" (p. 24). In order to fight the traditionalist views that would subordinate labour to need, permitting a "comfortable and leisurely life" (p. 29), protestants glorified work, legitimizing the pursuit of economic interests by social groups that were gradually gaining power (Watson, 2012). Sanctioning both acquisition of wealth and asceticism allowed the accumulation of capital, creating at the same time diligent subjects who under no other circumstances would have accepted to work more and harder than the absolutely necessary; much less then, when ongoing industrialization had imposed apart from rigorous discipline exhausting timetables as well. Notwithstanding, the compensation was nothing but insignificant: Success was a sign that the ones who achieved it were among the chosen by God. And who would not find that appealing?

Weber (1905/1992) does not see in the acquisition of wealth a new human tendency nor the core quality of capitalistic ethic; he rather acknowledges that such an impulse has

always existed among men, irrespective of time and place. However, what used to be considered a "morally neutral" personal inclination, now "takes on the character of an ethically coloured maxim for the conduct of life" (p. 17). Weber himself appears to be rather critical towards this shift, highlighting the overthrow of the natural state of things where the making of money was directed at the fulfillment of one's needs and the establishment of a new, irrational one, where work is perceived as a calling and constitutes an end in itself – actually the ultimate end in peoples' lives. This transition required the elimination of the traditionalist outlook and the introduction of rationality as the principal criterion of action – albeit based on an irrational conviction – something that, quite ironically, played a pivotal part in overcoming the religious aspects of the prevailing, now, economic ethos.

Getting his argument even further Weber (1905/1992) emphasizes the prevalence of the capitalistic spirit, noting that "the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs" (p. 124), even when its religious foundations had fallen apart. Illustrating the secularization of the protestant ethic he explains that "the intensity of the search for the Kingdom of God commenced gradually to pass over into sober economic virtue [and] the religious roots died out slowly, giving way to utilitarian worldliness" (p. 119).

Even more acutely, the sociologist (1905/1992) recognizes that the financial organization had passed from being a structure manipulated for existence subordinate to human, to an agent itself, educating, selecting and rejecting economic subjects following its own norms and requirements. It had hence become an all-inclusive entity, presenting itself as the only and unchangeable condition of life. In this way, Weber manages to defamiliarise work ethic as the willingness to dedicate oneself to work as an end in itself, contrasting it both to the traditionalism of the past and the secularization of the present (Weeks, 2011).

### 1.4. The prevalence of homo œconomicus.

According to Foucault (2012), one key point of transition is found in the mid 18$^{th}$ century and the transformation of the market from a "site of jurisdiction" to a "site of truth". With the gradual rise of liberalism, the self-limitation of governmental reason and the frugality of the government became central principles. Due to a number of intertwining economic and social conditions, the market turned into a site of veridiction, in the sense that it was thought to obey "natural" laws, constituting "a standard of truth which enables us to discern which governmental practices are correct and which are erroneous" (p. 46), dictating its own legal regulation mechanisms. The contradiction that emerged between the personal

and the general interest was resolved, once again by a transcendence, albeit a secular one; this time, "the political transcendental of the modern state is defined as an economic transcendental" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 86).

With the prevalence of the ideas of Adam Smith and utilitarianism, self-interest was granted the character of moral principle, "liberating" the employment relationship from any moral concerns. Nonetheless, as Foucault (2012) argues, classical political economy did not pay significant attention to this particular aspect of production; Smith, Ricardo, and even Keynes regarded labour as a passive productive factor, analyzing only its quantitative variable, i.e. the hours of work.

In this context, progressive proletarisation, unemployment, and poverty forced more and more people to depend on salaried work for income. In an attempt to justify economic inequalities, the theory of "self-help" (Smiles, as cited in Anthony, 1977) placed responsibility for one's status on individual effort: The notion that with personal hard work anything can be achieved ensured docility, justified social differences, and isolated individuals. Simultaneously, we could assume that such an understanding compensated, to some extent, for the lack of control over one's working activity caused by the introduction of technology, as well as for the consequent absence of intellectual stimuli that Gilbert (1977) points out. It definitely complemented liberalist understanding of social interaction: This should be based on the pursuit of individual interest, with minimum state intervention. Although Anthony (1977) recognizes the inconsistency and naivety of this theory, he acknowledges the significant impact Smile's ideas have had, even until this day: The "self-made man", occupies a privileged position both in business discourses and the popular culture, keeping hopes for material success high for everyone.

In this chapter we adopted a historical perspective in order to cast light to the contingency of the meaning of work, as it takes shape through the interplay of historically- and culturally specific factors. History was employed here in order to challenge the unquestionable and timeless nature that paid labour has acquired, aiming at "interrupting the fluency of the narratives that encode that experience and making them stutter" (Rose, 2004, p. 20).

## 2. The Passage to Mass Production and Beyond

This chapter discusses the transformations of the organization of wage labour in the modern era and in particular from the beginning of the 20th century onwards. We examine the

birth of “scientific management”, we turn to the rise of the Fordism, and close with an introduction to the post-industrial organization of production. What interests us the most is to scrutinize them as stages of the development of society rather than just of work and industry, in order to address the conceptualizations of subjectivity that underpinned their expansion and legitimized their domination.

### 2.1. “Rational” legitimization for a “rational” production.

At the wake of the 20th century, as automation galloped and the number of the factory workers grew rapidly, the need for efficient coordination and administration came about. Taylorism, or “scientific management”, indicated the passage from the craft system to modern organization of labour (Allen, Braham, & Lewis, 1992), and its rationale equated maximum prosperity to maximum productivity (Taylor, 1919, p. 12). Taylor linked high productivity to high wages, painting a picture of a worker who “what he wants more” is a “high wage”; competitive monetary rewards were therefore proposed as a measure against “underworking, that is, deliberately working slowly so as to avoid doing a full day's work, “soldiering”, as it is called in this country” (p. 13). The author quotes a newspaper article according to which men are “naturally lazy” and intentionally work slower and less than they really can. However, what was even worse was “systematic soldiering”, which was “caused by their relations with other men” (p. 19). Better remuneration was said to not only guarantee maximum effort on behalf of the employees, but also to minimize conflicts and thus render unions useless.

Given that scientific management considered workmen as incapable of understanding the science which underlay their task, “either through lack of education or through insufficient mental capacity” (Taylor, 1919, p. 41), Taylor suggested that managers should take on strict task planning and regulation. They should also gather all knowledge that was hitherto a workers’ privilege and reduce it into rules and norms, in one word, develop a science out of it. The crafter’s skill had to be expropriated given that, as Thomson (1966) notes “the more skilled a workman, the more intractable to discipline he became” (p. 360).

The intensive fragmentation of labour to work tasks, the increased bureaucratization of the work process and of the control exerted over it, as well as the minimum skill requirements and discretion on behalf of the employees, shaped an organizational model which produced and demanded a deskilled workforce. Work was reorganized to enhance profitability by contracting unskilled and hence cheaper labourers on the one hand, and to

deal with ideological issues of legitimacy on the other. Anthony (1977) sees in the development of scientific management the emergence of a new ideology of work that took out of the picture the owner of the means of production, granting it a scientific basis of legitimization which could achieve compliance rather than coercion.

Apart from constructing the manager as the legitimate authority on the grounds of possessing scientific knowledge, on the other side of the equation, Salzinger (as cited in Weeks, 2011) also recognizes how Taylor did not merely prescribe the workers' behavior, but created their subjectivity: When explaining how he managed to raise the productivity of the iron worker Schmidt, Taylor presented a dialogue with him where he constantly asked him if he was a "high priced man", repeating that a high priced man "has to do exactly as he's told from morning till night" (Taylor, 1919, p. 45). As Salzinger observes, this interpellation goes beyond motivation to the very definition of Schmidt's self.

### 2.2. Subjectivities on the assembly line.

Building on some of the basic principles of scientific management, Fordism was developed as a strategy for the management and design of work (Salaman, 1992). However, as Allen (1992) puts it: "whereas Taylor sought to organize labour around machinery, Ford sought to eliminate labour by machinery" (p. 233). Even though we are mostly concerned with the psychosocial implications and ideological facets of Fordism as an era, as a stage of the development of society rather than just of work and industry (Salaman, 1992), we need to briefly review its basic structural and organizational premises as well as the economic environment within which it evolved in order to gain a broader perspective[4].

Murray (1992) names four principles on which Fordist production systems were based: the standardization of products, the mechanization of tasks and the development of special purpose machinery, the teylorist division and design of work, and, probably the most iconic of all, the introduction of the assembly line. Rigid hierarchy and bureaucratized procedures were aimed at achieving maximum control, while fixed-speed moving assembly lines eliminated the pace differences between workers, who needed only limited skills to carry out extensively fragmented tasks. Consequently, the rhythm, the object, and the way of

[4] By no means do we mean to privilege a technological deterministic outlook; we rather view technology as "socially shaped" (McKenzie & Wacjman, 1985) and hence place great emphasis on the workers' struggles that force capital to seek higher levels of technology, mutating the organization of labour and the relations of domination (Hardt & Negri, 2000).

performing were dictated externally and were not chosen by the employees, detaching work from any tangible or comprehensible objective it could have ever had (Bauman, 2002).

However, we believe that the most distinctive feature of Fordist organization should be traced in the weight it placed on the sphere of consumption and the conceptualization of a radically different administration of subjectivities. In order for the assembly line to run smoothly, a set of social processes and interiorized norms were required, which in turn would translate into the desired behaviors and attitudes on behalf of the individuals, or what the school of regulation refers to as "mode of regulation" (e.g., Aglietta, 1979; Lipietz, 1986; Boyer, 1986). The introduction of the "five-dollar day" wage system which significantly boosted the income of Ford workers was allied to the eight-hour day and a specific regulatory basis that was gradually developed, paving the way for the hegemony of the Fordist organization. With evident national variations, the institutionalization of the welfare state and the commitment to ensure full employment within a Keynsian framework reflected the effort to sustain the particular mode of production and consumption.

Thus, the nature of salaried labour as a form of subjection, as a biopolitical device that aims to encompass both the social and the biological aspects of life in order to attain "both a productive body and a subjected body" (Foucault, 1995, p. 26) comes clearly to light. Corroborating this view, Beynon (1973) cites a conversation between Ford and Marquis, as quoted by the latter, in which Ford argues that "[b]y underpaying men we are bringing on a generation of children undernourished and underdeveloped, morally as well as physically: we are breeding a generation of workingmen weak in body and mind, and for that reason bound to prove inefficient when they come to take their place in industry" (p. 25).

In the same vein, Bauman (2002) notices that besides the various commodities factories produced, they also manufactured "the compliant and conforming subjects of the modern state" (p. 62), emphasizing the utility of employment as a method of control and maintenance of social order. Being reduced to their productive functions by the Fordist paradigm, the individuals of the 20$^{th}$ century based their ethic upon the totality of work (Revelli, 2002). Full employment was considered as both a right and a duty (Bauman, 2002), firmly related to the dominant gendered division of labour[5]. Furthermore, Hunnicut (1988) argues that during the Cold War period a tie was established between hard work, patriotism and national security.

[5] On the links between work and family ethics: Weeks, K. (2011). *The problem with work: Feminism, marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Durham [etc.]: Duke University Press.

However, what was central in the then contemporary work ethos was the promise for social mobility, which represented a secularized version of the Protestant ethic: Weeks (2011) underlines their affinity claiming that whereas in the past labour served as a mechanism of spiritual independence, being the means to achieve "the certainty of one's own salvation" (p. 51), during the first stages of industrial period it was held to be the means to social and political independence. She cites Fraser and Gordon according to whom it was precisely at that time when waged labour became synonymous to independence, through a redefinition of the latter in such a way that capitalist relations of subordination were not considered relevant.

Even after the Second World War, work ethic was anything but abandoned; Rose (as cited in Watson, 2012) suggests that it was manifested by a new set of meanings adopted by the more educated, which did not deny its core values, but rather combined them with the concern with self-fulfillment and just treatment. Juxtaposing it with the religious ethos and the promise for mobility that constituted its prior forms, Weeks (2011) recognizes that at the time it appeared as "a more individual justification and the promise of an even more immediate gratification namely, fulfilling and meaningful work" (p. 46).

At this point one should not lose sight of the "class determinant" (Negri, 1988); the working class struggles in Europe and America played a critical role in securing welfare provisions and achieved decisive victories against exploitation (e.g., Mitropoulos, 1993; Bologna, Ferrari Bravo, Gobbini, Negri, & Rawick, 1972). The dominant discourses, even though undeniably powerful and influential, are not always internalized in the way they were originally meant to be; they can even provoke the opposite reactions to the ones initially imagined and aimed at, or be used as a weapon against their inciters, the capturing grip of power on which they turn to to fight it (Foucault, 1995). We therefore hold that the transformations on the institutional level of socioeconomic organization were to a great extent fruit of the militant unionism that flourished in the fertile ground of the factory and the circulation of Marxist ideas. In the same vein, the shift in the signification of employment was considerably stimulated by the demands for better working conditions and the rise of the living standards. Meanwhile, the rising culture of consumption would redefine men and women as consumers of goods and experiences, foreshadowing the post-Fordist condition.

### 2.3. Introducing the flexible, cognitive worker.

We shall not examine in depth the factors that triggered the transition to a different organization of production. We already highlighted the dynamics of the social movements

that demanded liberation from the "iron cage"; we do not mean to overestimate the powers of the workers' though, and charge them entirely with the shift to a more flexible productive model, undermining the strategic interventions of hegemonic structures. At this point, we could add, very briefly, the saturation of the durable goods markets, the 1970's oil crisis, and the deregulation of the exchange rates that restructured the global market (Lucarelli & Fumagalli, 2008) and manifested the constraints of the Fordist paradigm; constraints that rested upon its inherent rigidities and could only be overcome by a distinct economic order centered on flexibility.

Post-Fordism[6] embodied this new regime, revolving around flexibility, knowledge, and immaterial labour, creating new arrangements for the exploitation of workers as well as new openings for their emancipation. At this point we will only concisely review how these factors we consider central interweave and we shall discuss their theoretical configuration, the ways in which they enhance and at the same time menace the dominant discourses in the neoliberal context, as well as their impact on identity in the chapters that follow.

### *2.3.1. Flexible and immaterial labour: towards autonomy or (additional) control?*

In spite of the fact that different theorists have stressed different characteristics of this new socioeconomic organization, there is wide agreement on the centrality of the element of flexibility (Allen, 1992). Harvey (1990) argues that flexible accumulation implied a "direct confrontation with the rigidities of Fordism" (p. 147), establishing a qualitative change in every facet of the market, both production and consumption. As regards workplace flexibility, even though "managerialist" literature tends to focus on its advantages for employees, defining the term as "the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks" (Hill et al., 2008, p. 152), it is acknowledged that flexible working practices have been largely employed to satisfy employers' needs for low working costs (Stavrou, Spiliotis, & Charalampous, 2010).

Despite the promising prospects that such restructuring presents for labourers – there is indeed a dearth of literature on how it can positively impact the balance between work and non-work life, unfortunately usually limiting the latter to family – it is important to take into consideration the aspect of choice; confirming previous studies, Lyness, Gornick, Stone, and Grotto (2012) assert that having, or not, control over work hours affects the life outside

[6] We prefer the term post-Fordism to neo-Fordism, not because we deny the continuity and intensity of the underlying capitalistic relations of power but in order to emphasize the discontinuity of their forms of expression and control.

workplace as well as attitudes about one's job. However, within the current economic configuration, flexibility is identified as the ability to adapt to the changing economic scenery (Beatson, 1995), revealing that its main drive is the "logic" of the market, and is usually integrated in state policies in order to reduce labour costs (Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour - INE/GSEE, 2011).

Whereas flexibility has become the primordial element of the post-Fordist era, immateriality has come to constitute its "nature". The marked shift from an industry-dominated to a service-dominated occupational structure over the last decades has signaled the transition to what has been called "post-industrial society" (Bell, 1973; Touraine, 1971), where information and knowledge, translated to innovation, are the driving forces of economic growth: an information society. Nonetheless, it is not a matter of one sector of economy dominating over the others; as Castells (1989) observes, it is rather their determinative repercussions on every socioeconomic level what grants them central position in contemporary economy.

In this context of "cognitive capitalism" (Moulier-Boutang, 2012), "cognitive capacity is becoming the essential productive resource" and "the mind is put to work as innovation, as language and as a communicative relation" (Berardi & Goddard, 2007, p. 76). It becomes clear therefore that despite the elaborate efforts to define human capital (e.g., Ployhart, Nyberg, Reilly, & Maltarich, 2013) this has become inseparable from the individual subjectivity of its bearer. Inasmuch as the communicative and affective dimensions of identity are intensively incorporated in wage labour, "what is "productive" is the whole of the social relation" (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 146). At this point, Michael Hardt (1999) points out the merge of economic production on the one hand with communicative action and the production and reproduction of affects and subjectivities on the other, indicating its importance to capitalist accumulation and simultaneously its liberating dynamics.

### *2.3.2. The biopolitical nature of work*

The post-modernization of labour, to wit, the passage from the domination of industry to that of services and information (Hardt, 1999), has had a decisive impact on the social structure, insofar as the organizational relations that characterize it, such as communicative networks, mobility, flexibility, as well as the production and management of emotions and human relationships seem to have been infused into all types of work and thusly society itself, regardless of sector and geographical location (Trott, 2013). At the same time,

the vital relationships that make up the realm of reproduction become themselves directly productive (Hardt & Negri, 2000).

Hence work becomes biopolitical in a double sense: On the one hand, the commodities that are produced and consumed are increasingly non-material, in the form of services, information, or cultural products and thusly "the production of capital converges ever more with the production and reproduction of social life itself" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 402). On the other hand, under this regime, surplus value is obtained by the mobilization and commodification of a wide array of socially produced elements, which in reality constitute the basis of our subjectivity: the preindividual, as Virno (2003), after Simondon, calls it. Language, codes, knowledge, affect, are expropriated by capital, involving in the productive processes social life and relations.

In this sense, the concept of "alienation" is illuminated under a whole new light: It does not mean the loss of the self, resulting from the separation of the object from the subject; it rather stands for the separation from the conditions of the production of subjectivity, insofar as the preindividual reality that conditions us becomes commodified and consequently cannot be grasped and transformed (Virno, as cited in Read, 2010). It is what Gilles Deleuze (1988), drawing on the Foucauldian concept of "dispositif", eloquently expresses, saying that "[w]e belong to the social dispositifs and act within them" (p. 164).

Thus social conflict has also mutated. With the primacy of affective and communicative labour, the epicenter of struggle has stepped out of the relations forged in "the factory"; although, instead of assuming that the central point of controversy has exited the factory, it would be more accurate to put it as Deleuze (1995) would and argue that the walls of the factory have broken down, leading to the diffusion of its constitutive relationships to the entire society. Therefore, within the post-Fordist productive organization, the battle is to be found

> everywhere information, language, modes of life, tastes and fashions are produced and shaped by the forces of capital, commerce, the state and the media; in other words, everywhere the subjectivity and "identity" of individuals, their values and their images of themselves and the world, are being continually structured, manufactured and shaped" (Gorz, 1999, p. 42).

However, we should not consider heterodetermination a one-way road: Given that the multitude of minds and bodies is in reality the producer of its own subjectivity, subjectivity does not necessarily have to be synonymous to subjection. As Read (2010) argues, the production of subjectivity "is a method by which the fault lines between

subjection and liberation can be traced" (p. 131). Although under neoliberal capitalism it is capital that gets to orchestrate for its own benefit what could otherwise constitute the conditions for liberation from it (Virno, 2004), the autonomy that biopolitical production potentially entails can present a political opening (Hardt & Negri, 2009).

In this section we reviewed some of the most important structural elements of Fordism and post-Fordism. In the chapter that follows we will discuss how this transition is related to the neoliberal "art of government" (Foucault, 2012) and examine the role of paid work in the configuration of neoliberal subjects. Later we will explore the intersection of the qualitative dominance of immaterial labour on the one hand and the neoliberal governmentality on the other, in an attempt to comprehend the collective subject that emerges from this juncture.

## 3. The Changing Forms of Power and Resistance; Neoliberalism and its Discontents

We ended the previous chapter referring to the neoliberal art of government as the framework of production of the hegemonic discourses on waged work, openly drawing on a Foucauldian conceptualization of both neoliberalism and exertion of power. It is true that especially during the last decades much ink has been spilled over the concept of neoliberalism and the academic debate has been enriched by the introduction of diverse perspectives.

We will not provide here a full catalogue of them; other studies (e.g., Flew, 2012; Springer, 2012) have offered extensive accounts of the approaches on the subject. In the pages that follow we further elaborate on this notion, making the case that neoliberalism is something more than an economic program, a procedure that one day, when for example all public goods have been privatized, will come to an end, insofar as no market regulation nor policy implementation will ever suffice for it to be "completed" once and for all. In the same line, we argue that neoliberalism cannot be understood as merely an ideology, as a set of beliefs that are imposed by a center of power, obscuring some truth that can be found outside of it.

Instead, we will engage in a discursive approach of the concept; taking our bearings mainly from Foucault and his 1978-1979 lectures published as *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2012), we will intent to outline neoliberalism as a governmental rationality that has as a principal form of knowledge political economy; as the ensemble of discursive and non-discursive practices that, targeting populations, aims to generalize the model of competition

and enterprise to the entire society, bearing the subject positions that are performed on an everyday basis by each and every one of us, who, in turn, embodies the mundane exercise of power. A power exercised over the individual body by the incitation of desires and the imposition of laws, and over the population by the institutionalized monitoring of processes and events pertaining to life itself, such as birth, family planning and public health: a biopower.

With this lens, we will try to trace the discourses on work that prescribe the characteristics and attitudes that fit this particular governmental regime, producing the subjects that legitimate and reproduce it, while at the same time being challenged and rearticulated by them.

### 3.1. It's (more than) the economy, stupid!

So what do we understand by "neoliberalism"? The etymology of the word can be misleading, so we need to bear in mind that the element of "liberalism" that figures in it has a strictly economic sense and not a political one (Brown, 2003). In fact, Naomi Klein, in an interview for the documentary "Catastroika" (Chatzistefanou & Kitidi, 2012) maintains that "the first laboratories of neoliberalism had nothing whatsoever to do with democracy"; she refers to the dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile and General Evren's regime in Turkey, where neoliberal policies were first "experimented". These policies revolve around extensive privatization of public services and assets, market deregulation, and cuts in social spending, and are allegedly imposed to engender a more efficient government.

Actually, neoliberalism was presented as the answer to a certain type of excessive government that national-socialist regimes in Europe and the application of Keynsian socioeconomic policies in America had entailed; endorsing health and security for populations resulted too costly, hence a self-organizing subject should be created, to whom a great part of risk responsibility could be transferred (Rasmussen, 2013). The neoliberal rationale was inspired and expressed by the Freiburg School and the journal "Ordo" in Germany and by the Chicago School in the United States, which, albeit some, not always insignificant, differences, suggested that market economy should serve "as the principle, form, and model for a state" (Foucault, 2012, p. 123), as the principle "of its internal regulation from start to finish of its existence and action" (p. 122). It entailed what Foucault describes as the absolute reversal of classical liberalism, in that what we are left with within

neoliberalism is “a state under the supervision of the market rather than a market supervised by the state” (p. 123).

And this brings us to the second shift away from its 18th century predecessor: The core element of neoliberalism is not “exchange”; its central motor is competition and enterprise. Nevertheless, and the French philosopher (2012) insists on that, neoliberalist thinkers knew from the beginning that competition is not intrinsic in the natural state of affairs, it has to be constructed and forced. The free, rational subject that for classical liberalism fulfilled the double function of legitimizing the state form and limiting its governing does not exist in neoliberalism; it has to be constructed. If exchange, that presupposed equality, needed no interference in order to come about, competition, based on inequality, has to be forged; an active government is required to guarantee this type of viable inequality that will ensure it.

Therefore, since the state is not allowed to interfere in the function of the market, it is the population itself, those who actually participate in and compose the market, that have to take responsibility for its effective operation: It is the people the ones who should be managed accordingly in order to keep the “game” going. Thus an appropriate social matrix had to be constructed as the arena where the economic rational ought to be expanded to aspects of life that had never before been viewed under this lens: family, social security, personal relationships, political activity, and the self, among others. Especially in the American version of neoliberalism, the social sphere was exhaustively narrated in economic terms, for a new type of citizen to be shaped, one that was capable of recognizing “a certain responsibility to engage in risk taking and entrepreneurialism” (Kiersey, 2009, p. 380). Rather than being just an economic theory, neoliberalism has served as a “government of society” (Foucault, 2012, p. 146), transformed into a “sociological liberalism” as Röpke (as cited in Foucault, 2012, p. 336) defines it.

So neoliberalism’s task consists in the “multiplication of the “enterprise form” within the social body” (Foucault, 2012, p. 149). And what would be a more effective way of colonizing the social than using as a vehicle the social agents themselves? Embodying both the enterprise and its manager, homo œconomicus was brought to life once again, but this time constituted as such not as a bearer of some inalienable rights but through the subjugation of all social activity to an economic reasoning centered on personal interest. Far from reducing neoliberalism to capitalism, Foucault sheds light to the economistic basis on which what counts as responsible behaviour is judged, a basis that applies to the entire spectrum of a life that is conceived of in terms of transaction (Kiersey, 2009).

Hence, all that neoliberalism stands for encompass the administration of populations and inform the governmental apparatuses and techniques. Recognizing free market as the site of production of the terms of social intelligibility, it is materialized and legitimated through a heterogenous set of discursive and non-discursive practices (Weidner, 2009) that are bound in an ongoing project of government, a perpetual process of subjection and subjectification, totalizing and individualizing at the same time: It is a process of configuring subjectivities and structuring the social in ways that fit the particular regime of truth that it itself represents, offering "the terms by which self-recognition is possible" (Butler, 2008, p. 29), attaching individuals to identities that are bodily enacted and reproduced as reality (Butler, 1990).

### 3.2. More than an ideology.

One of the most oft-cited definitions of neoliberalism is the one given by David Harvey (2005):

> A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices (p. 2).

This interpretation implies a "top down" understanding of power, drawing attention to the globalized, class-based actors that impose the neoliberal ideology as a hegemonic set of worldviews (Flew, 2012; Springer, 2012). Notwithstanding its critical value, we would opt for a conceptualization that captures the "capillary" form of political power that has to be "established at the level of man's very existence, attaching men to the production apparatus" (Foucault, as cited in Weidner, 2009, p. 408). Even if we use a Gramscian vision of hegemony as inherently contingent and fragmentary as Springer suggests that we should, the dimension of subjectivity that particularly interests us here is largely ignored.

On the contrary, considering neoliberalism in its discursive formation permits us to grasp its function as a rationality that "governs the sayable, the intelligible, and the truth criteria" of governance practices and citizenship (Brown, 2006, p. 693). One could call neoliberalisation[7] the specific governmentality, the art of governing which lies in the "conduct

[7] By employing the term "neoliberalization" we don't aim to address directly issues of geographical variation or temporal mutations that other studies have dealt with (e.g., Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010; England & Ward, 2007; Springer, 2011). We acknowledge its variegated materialization in relation to the spatial

of conduct" of individual or collective subjects by structuring their field of possible action (Foucault, 1982), and neoliberalism its regime of truth, "that is, the types of discourse [society] harbours and causes to function as true" (Foucault, 1976, p. 112).

However, without distancing significantly ourselves from these reflections, we will adopt a more general perspective, one that we find more appropriate for our research purposes: We consider neoliberalism as a "capital D" discourse (Bamberg, De Fina, & Schiffrin, 2010; Gee, 1999), essentially as a coupling with practice (Foucault, as cited in Springer, 2009). In this sense, discursive practices (e.g., state laws, academic reports, "expert" opinions, everyday expressions, managerial evaluations, etc.) and non-discursive practices (e.g., administrative procedures, disciplinary technologies, etc.), inextricably entangled, structure the social by determining what is possible to be said and what is possible to be done (Lazzarato, 2009). Rather than obliging individuals to embrace the neoliberal values, neoliberalism modifies the rules of the game (Foucault, 2012), actively constructing what it presents as "the only alternative".

Thus, circulating through "small d" discourses and governmental policies that naturalize and systematize its enactment, it is increasingly less dependent on disciplinary technologies; it moves towards the institutionalization of what Deleuze (1995) has called "societies of control", where "[i]ndividuals 'self-manage' their subjection by assuming responsibility for their adaptation to an 'objective' state of affairs in market societies" (Kioupkiolis, 2013, p. 149). Rose (2004) has described this transition rather eloquently:

> In disciplinary societies it was a matter of procession from one disciplinary institution to another – school, barracks, factory . . . – each seeking to mould conduct by inscribing enduring corporeal and behavioural competences, and persisting practices of self-scrutiny and self-constraint into the soul. Control society is one of constant and never-ending modulation where the modulation occurs within the flows and transactions between the forces and capacities of the human subject and the practices in which he or she participates. One is always in continuous training, lifelong learning, perpetual assessment, continual incitement to buy, to improve oneself, constant monitoring of health and never-ending risk management. Control is not centralized but dispersed; it flows through a network of open circuits that are rhizomatic and not hierarchical (p. 234).

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and temporal context, but the dimension we seek to highlight is its dynamic, non-static and multifaceted nature, that is definitely linked to historical and cultural variables.

Posited in this way, "government" is understood in its "wider sense", as Gordon (1991) puts it: Not strictly as opposed to the model of the sovereign rule but as an "analytical grid" for relations of power. On these grounds we will try to trace how the working subject is constructed through discourses that are granted a hegemonic position, not because they derive from a dominant class unquestionably exercising its power over the rest, but rather because they formulate a political reasoning that has come to prevail through constellations of power, of an ensemble of practices that produce, institutionalize, and perpetuate themselves by determining the possibilities of social life and subjectivities.

### 3.3. Are we all capitalists?

It therefore becomes clear that neoliberal reasoning constitutes an extremely hospitable environment for market-oriented discourses to blossom, discourses that seek to cast individuals as "human capital"; in fact it is grounded in them while creating the space for their development and circulation. The theory of human capital, as the neoliberal approach to work, places the employee in the economic analysis not as abstract labour power, but as an active economic subject (Foucault, 2012). From this point of view, the wage is an income, the return on a capital, and capital consists of all "physical and psychological factors which make someone able to earn this or that wage" (p. 208).

This kind of "anthropology" of man as economic subject (Read, 2009) entails two crucial ramifications: On the one hand, the conceptualization of people first and foremost as producers advances certain meanings of work, effacing the traces of exploitation and normalizing it as a rational behaviour. The "company" turns into the prototype of collectivity, "teaching [subjects] to show contempt for anything that does not relate to realism, efficiency and the sole criterion of instrumental rationality" (Dejours & Derantry, 2010, p. 177).

On the other hand, the capital-labour relationship is stripped of any political and collective content, and thusly the element of domination inherent to it is effectively obfuscated: Men and women are held responsible for their capability to run their own business called "the self", starting from the cultivation and the acquirement of the skills and aptitudes required at each moment by the market, until their efficient presentation and marketing. Unemployment and employability are turned into individual problems in a privatized labour market, where the productive multitude is fragmented into individual entrepreneurs, causing psychosocial effects that we will further discuss later on.

Consequently, since selfhood is itself the enterprise to be managed, all aspects of one's life are measured in terms of personal interest, converting choices concerning education, job selection, social affiliation, parenting, mobility, and so forth, to investments on ones capital. Work and the social universe surrounding it, are constructed by political, corporate, and colloquial discourses that set the rules of the game, instilling traits and inculcating conducts aiming to shape the ideal entrepreneur: Individually responsible for her/his professional trajectory, navigating rationally and autonomously in market-centered societies, with "an aversion to anything that is rigid, ordinary and safe, as opposed to the required availability and commitment to pace, change and risk" (da Costa & Silva Saraiva, 2012, p. 606). Indeed, self-reliance and risk-taking arise as core features of the entrepreneurial subjectivity (e.g., da Costa & Silva Saraiva, 2012; Jones & Murtola, 2012; Rasmussen, 2013) that incarnates individualism and flexibility.

For now, we will leave the discourses and policies articulated on the state level for the next chapter, where they will be linked to the Greek reality. At this point we will turn to the body of literature developed in the field of sociology of work[8] in order to examine discursive and non-discursive resources that are engendered, reproduced, and resisted in corporate settings and everyday situations, bearing in mind that "the analysis of micro-powers, or of procedures of governmentality, is not confined by definition to a precise domain determined by a sector of the scale, but should be considered simply as a point of view" (Foucault, 2012, p. 174). This in turn will enable us to track them in the discourses of our participants and investigate the ways in which they engage with them.

### *3.3.1. De-centering responsibility and control; professionalism and employability discourses*

MacLeavy (2008), outlining how individuals are being "neoliberalized" by governmental policies notices how "the government can work through rather than against the subjectivities of citizens" (p. 1662); similarly, on the level of the corporation, productivity is being achieved by shaping and using rather than repressing subjectivities, allowing for a governmental approach to be applied on the power relations that emerge there, increasingly in biopolitical forms. The "normative" mode of control which imposed certain values and attitudes to employees, exhorting them to hold on to standardized identities has faded away

[8] We will mostly draw on studies that focus on "the nature of power and domination in the contemporary workplace", taking into consideration the need to incorporate postructuralist concerns about identity and subjectivity into the analysis of organizational relations (Jermier, Knights, & Nord, 1994, p. xiv).

(Fleming & Sturdy, 2009). In Deetz's words (as cited in Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 620), "the modern business of management is often managing the "insides" – the hopes, fears, and aspirations – of workers, rather than their behaviors directly".

For that to be accomplished, as we already highlighted, the contemporary enterprise does not seek to contract "working hands", but rather "human capital". Bains (2007) is quite clear about it when he asserts that instead of being urged to adopt an identity predetermined by the corporation, individuals are invited to "bring their full selves into work" (p. 219), their worldviews and values, even if they are incongruent with the organizational norms. According to Fleming and Sturdy (2009), wishing to subsume subjectivity in all its width and depth, the firm encourages employees to "be themselves", achieving control "when what was once protected from the organization via cynicism and psychological distancing is appropriated as a corporate resource to enhance output" (p. 571).

This kind of control exercised through the paradoxical way of existential empowerment is defined by the researchers (Fleming & Sturdy 2009) as "neo-normative control"; without fully displacing the traditional disciplinary form of power, this new regime endorses the rhetoric of market rationality compound of individualism and self-reliance, centering on the normative function of privileged identity traits such as entrepreneurialism. Consequently, apart from expropriating the transindividual demanding the investment of the entire self, by using aspects such as playfulness and sexuality as productive resources, it attains loyalty and discipline precisely through individual regulation.

In the same vein, in the context of this "self-disciplinary form of control" (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009, p. 574) responsibility for failure is transferred to employees, their personality, and the way they "sell" it. Accordingly, reward systems are organized on individual assessments, attributing success to individual characteristics and behaviours that often have nothing to do with the specific prerequisites of an occupation. It goes without saying that those primed are in line with the demands of the market, the "high achievers", whereas "nonperformers" are marginalized (Crowley & Hodson, 2014).

This does not mean that identity precedes work; it is to a great extent constituted in the workplace within discourse (Deetz, as cited in May, 1999). Alvesson and Willmot (2002) delineated how "[m]anagement (and others) act, more or less strategically, to introduce, reproduce, influence and legitimize the presence/absence of particular discourses", constructing "situations in ways that render actions (or non-actions) more or less reasonable and legitimate" (p. 628). They traced nine modes of identity regulation which they grouped in four categories, each one focusing respectively upon the employee, his/her field of activity,

social relations, and the scene (p. 632). They involve the use of particular vocabulary and the application of norms and procedures that may diverge in certain aspects and be mutually reinforced in others, overall though providing self-images and consequently conducts that are compatible with the corporate values and objectives, entailing a mode of control that is founded on "responsible autonomy" (Friedman, 1990).

The responsabilization of the individual is intensively fomented by the discourse of "professionalism": Remarkably popular in our era of the largely "intractable" knowledge worker, invoking professionalism "enables self-motivation and sometimes even self-exploitation" (Evetts, 2013, p. 787). Fournier (1999) particularly stresses the link between the increased appeal to professionalism and the current socioeconomic context of advanced capitalism and flexible working practices, which creates "a discretionary gap which needs to be regulated through new "softwares of control"" (p. 281). As her study, among others, has showed, although highly contestable and thus far from being omnipotent, professionalism can serve as a disciplinary mechanism, allowing for control at a distance.

Weeks (2011) explains that once the term conveyed the mastery of a skill; today, the mastery one should possess is over what C. Wright Mills called "the personality". Virno and Henninger (2007) argue that professionalism does not consist of an objective set of requirements, such as "specialization" that refers to technical expertise; instead, it is a "subjective property", consisting of certain character traits.

In her study of professionalism as value and ideology, Evetts (2013) notices the extensive deployment of the "professionalism discourse" in a variety of communicational contexts such as in recruitment campaigns, company mission statements that set out to motivate employees, and training manuals. Tracing distinct conceptualizations of the word, she identifies the ideal-type of "organizational professionalism" as "a discourse of control used increasingly by managers in work organizations" (p. 787). Opposing it to professionalism demanded "from within", or "occupational professionalism", whose terms are negotiated by the members of the occupational communities, Evetts maintains that professionalism imposed "from above" is used as a way to align employees' behaviour with the company's standards of efficiency.

Granted that post-Fordist organizational model is moulded by flexibility and the desired self is "flexible, self-directed and nimbly adaptive to constant change" (Davies et al., as cited in Aronson & Smith, 2011, p. 435), professionalism is currently proposed as "the art of being in the world, of negotiating the most varied situations, of responding to the blows of chance" (Virno & Henninger, 2007, p. 44). A "chameleon self" (Sennett, 1998) is therefore

desired, with opportunism featuring as a pivotal quality. In effect, empirical studies have shown (e.g., Gabriel, Gray, & Goregaokar, 2013) that frequent distressing experiences such as job loss result easier to handle when managed with a significant dose of opportunism and flexibility.

This brings us back to the figure of homo entrepreneur – although we never really left it behind –, if we take into consideration that opportunism is the most typical characteristic of the entrepreneur (Williamson, as cited in Virno & Henninger, 2007). And as a responsible and rational individual she/he has to be able to make his/her own way through the instable labour market, making the right investments that will enhance her/his employability. Once again, salaried work stands out as the center of existence, since investment on one's self, literally one's whole life, is not guided by what he/she may be really passionate about, but by what would look more "catchy" on his/her CV. Individualism and competition inevitably arise from such a worldview which casts every opportunity as "my opportunity" (Virno & Henninger, 2007, p. 43).

The "employability discourse", interwoven with the flexibilisation of employment relations and the downsizing and outsourcing practices that constitute, more than a threat, an everyday situation, projects the model of the firm to the subject itself. Richard Sennett (2006) paralleled the organizational structure of the modern company to an MP3 player, in that in every moment it can make use of only some of its various available functions, whilst it is task-oriented, replacing linear development "by a mind-set willing to jump around" (p. 48). We would like to take his argument a step further and claim that the same architecture is to be adopted by individuals, who are animated to multiply their potential capacities and to easily abandon identities in the search for new stimuli. Sennett recognizes this growing easiness to give up goods that have been used, something that we could assume that is extended to identities and social relations; however, rather than just "consuming" them, subjects capitalize on them, reproducing their commodification.

The corporate practices that follow closely the market trends, implying that highly qualified workforce may be "restructured" or simply laid off at any moment, solidifies this kind of subjectivity, which dictates that one should be loyal only to one's self rather than the company (Deal & Kennedy, 1999). In turn, companies trade the emphasis on organizational loyalty which is mainly linked to normative models of control with a type of management built on diversity and instrumentality (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009), counting on "self-policed" professionals. In fact, what Grote and Raeder (as cited in Smith, 2010) point out is a transition

"from long-term loyalty and employer-managed careers to a focus on competence development, employability, and self managed careers" (p. 280).

Moreover, the culture of risk, profoundly influencing modern lifestyles (Beck, 1992), alongside the anxiety produced by the "impermanence discourses" that supplement it (Kuhn et al., 2008), both heavily promoted by the Media, although in part contradictory, coincide in that they render the need to remain employable central to a person's life.

In order to meet this imperative demand, individuals engage in a wide range of embodied and interactional strategies, constructing themselves and directing their behaviour accordingly so as to fit the mould of the "employable" worker. Smith (2010) discusses three types of practices that can be undertaken simultaneously to enhance employability: The first one consists of identity work, referring to the efforts people make to "reinvent their characters" (Hughs, as cited in Smith, 2010, p. 285), gathering information on what the "most wanted employee" is like, and channeling their aspirations towards this direction. Smith draws attention to the part that labour-market intermediaries play in this practice, providing "expertise" on how one should look, present one's self, and act in order to satisfy the entrepreneurial prototype. Emphasizing on mental flexibility, they encourage views of the self as a "personal brand"; even if we are no longer surprised by the very existence and proliferation of career consultant companies, we should at least reflect on their slogans and courses, such as "Invest in yourself" and "Tools for building your personal brand" (CVexperts, 2013).

The second group of activities has as a goal to maintain and extend technical skills as well as social connections that could grant a competitive advantage in the face of the precarious world of employment. Smith (2010), making reference to previous studies (Adams & Demaiter, 2008; Benner, 2002) claims that corporate training often falls short and employees are held responsible to avoid skill and knowledge obsolescence, investing considerable time and money in finding and attending educational programs, even altering "the contours of their living space and their leisure activities to optimize their ability to learn" (Barley and Kunda, as cited in Smith, 2010, p. 288). As for the networking which permits the socialization and the building of social relationships within certain professional circles, it is considered vital when looking for a job, clearly favouring those who have higher levels of social dexterity and access to more powerful members of their professional community.

Finally, the third category of strategies used in order to multiply their capital stocks involves taking up volunteer, unpaid or temporary posts, a kind of "ticket" one has to pay on the way to "normal" employment. Apart from gaining capacities and contacts, individuals

construct themselves as assiduous workers that are willing to compromise with little in material terms as long as they enrich their cultural and social capital. Smith (2010) asserts that pursuing a continuous professional trajectory that would prove devotion to work no matter its nature requires active emotional management, while inculcating subjects with the principles of flexible economy. Obviously, persons who do not dispose of "safety nets" such as an affluent family backdrop (Atkinson, 2010) cannot "afford this luxury" and are deprived of whatever benefits such practices may confer, reproducing and exacerbating existing inequalities.

As the subject positions issued by professionalism and employability discourses are being bodily enacted inside and outside the workplace, they are being naturalized and perpetuated – and together the values of individualism and flexibility – obfuscating the inequalities and exploitation that wage labour entails, legitimating its central position in life and normalizing its conceptualization as a private affair.

Even though up to now we focused mostly on discourses and practices linked to the professional milieu, we should not ignore how everyday communicational contexts impact identity formation processes endorsing the market rationale; in fact, this is why corporations can afford to exercise control demanding: "Just be yourself!" (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009). Colloquial communication is dispersed with expressions which prescribe and perpetuate schemas of thought and behaviour concerning work; the most typical example is of course the question that every one of us has heard, and probably posed, at least once in her/his life: "What do you want to be when you grow up?".

Lair and Wieland (2012), building on Cheney, Zorn, Planalp, and Lair's work (2008) according to which the working subjects are largely constructed through colloquial discourse, investigated how the everyday question "What are you going to do with that major?" functions as a "productive site" of meanings on work. Their research with students showed that education is directly related to the labour market and it is valued on the basis of the professional perspectives it offers: The participants felt that their answer would be acceptable if they presented their academic career as one leading to a job, and particularly one promising economic success and social recognition. They felt judged only by the fact of being asked, sensing that the answer was embedded in the question: One should see education as merely an investment and choose his/her studies according to what would look more attractive to the potential employer. A lot of students expected that if their education was only loosely linked to a professional future, or if it implicated an unstable occupation, of an artistic nature for example, their answer would be considered irrational and unacceptable. As they explained, an

"irrational" professional plan unavoidably pointed to an "irrational" man – for the connection between work and the self was felt to be that strong – and this was an "accusation" that they could not bear.

Popular discourses invoke certain assumptions about how individuals should structure their social lives and what they should desire, influencing their choices and indicating the "viable" alternatives. By encouraging people "to conceive of their identities quite narrowly, equating self with work" (Lair & Wieland, 2012, p. 446), they reproduce the dominant understanding of employment as the central axis of life, around which everything should revolve. More importantly, they also imply the existence of what the writers call "linear career model"; it seems that the question, and other similar phrases, constructs an image of the job market as a place of equal opportunities, suggesting that the possibilities of stability and success are out there depending only on the selection of the right formation.

Despite the fact that they don't emanate from the neoliberal logic, they do entwine with it, exalting the exhortation for personal responsibilization, reinforcing the professionalism and employability discourses we examined earlier. Adapting Rasmussen's argumentation (2013) on the construction of risk and the "risky worker", we could say that if behaviour-based success is held as "true", the arguments about behaviour being the most frequent cause of failure "do not have to face so much opposition" (p. 91).

Nevertheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that "[a]lthough certain "grand narratives" of management may frame interpretive possibilities, the struggle over meaning is always open-ended, always characterized by an excess of signification that makes available possibilities for constructing alternative, resistant, counter-hegemonic accounts of organizing" (Mumby, 2005, p. 33). In the remainder of this chapter we will explore how the struggle over meanings is articulated in corporate and colloquial situations.

### *3.3.2. Resistance(s)*

Sørensen (2002) maps the fields of employees' autonomy and resistance through time, locating them in the "union" for the early industrial worker and in the welfare state for the late mass worker. As for the contemporary social worker, the field of autonomy is immanent to control, since, as we already illustrated, control is exercised through the regulation of subjectivity, the expropriation of the transindividual, and the "conduct of conduct", more than ever before. The theoretical construction of a bipolar schema featuring power on the one side and resistance on the other is thus eschewed, moving towards an

understanding of the two notions in "a reciprocal concatenation" (Foucault, 2012, p. 108). The manichaeistic division between a "diabolic world of power" grounded in a unique site, and a "liberating world of resistance" (Fleming & Spicer, 2008, p. 304) is dissolved once we understand resistance, just like power, as a socially constructed category, something that is not "out there" (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994), as a discursive practice of a contingent meaning (Mumby, 2005).

Hence resistance does not constitute the "outside" of power relations, emanating from a single source; instead, as Foucault (2011) puts it,

> there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations (p. 113).

Framing power and resistance in this way we are able to decipher the inextricable bonds between them, their dynamic entanglement. Weber (as cited in Fleming & Spicer, 2008) even seems to grant it an ontological priority, defining power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance" (p. 304). So resistance appears to have an existence prior to power, the latter coming as a response to the former. Even more explicitly, Foucault (1997b) claims that "if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. […] Resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the other forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think that resistance is the main word, the keyword, in this dynamic" (p. 167).

That being said, the preoccupations of some theorists over the suitability of the word "resistance" seem justified. Hardt and Negri (2009) suggest the Marxist term "counterpower", expressing nonetheless reservations for it may imply two homologous powers. They prefer the notion of "biopolitics" which, according to their reading of Foucault, captures the "alternative production of subjectivity, which not only resists power but also seeks autonomy from it" (p. 56). In spite of recognizing that it grasps life being "at the heart of new political battles and new economic strategies" (Lazzarato, 2002, p. 99), we understand biopolitics mainly as the administration of populations, and find the description "biopower from below" that Hardt has used in earlier writings (e.g., 1999) more appropriate.

In an attempt to overcome this view that may retain some traces of essentialism, we consider that power relations are best described by the concept of "agonism" which Foucault

(1982) deploys in order to illustrate that the "relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit cannot be separated" (p. 790). In the same vein, Fleming and Spicer (2008) propose the term "struggle" in order to encapsulate the "multidimensional dynamic that animates the interface between power and resistance" (p. 305) and comprehend the ambivalence and ambiguity that characterizes modern workplaces, where the two often become indistinguishable. Against this backdrop, we believe that the description "counter-hegemonic power" best fits our intention to deal with the employees' efforts to challenge the subject positions issued by the dominant discourses and imagine and embody "arts of living" that target the crystallized states of domination, generating alternatives.

Nevertheless, the term "resistance" will be employed in order to be in line with the body of research that constitutes our theoretical base but it will be done so bearing in mind the discussion presented here. We will therefore intend to avoid a dualistic framing of the notion, recognizing both its inherent contradictions and its creative nature, as the carving out of spaces of autonomy where alternative subjectivities are fashioned and made possible.

Accepting that resistance is inscribed in the strategic power relations may bring forth issues of agency and, relatedly, "efficacy". Knights and Vurdubakis (1994) formulate the first set of critiques in a three-folded question, namely, "the where, the who and why of resistance" (p. 175): If there is nothing outside power, if subjectivity is a result of power, it seems that there are no spaces that permit autonomy, since what is constituted as an "obedient subject" in reality does not have any reasons to resist. Objections of this kind tend to originate from an essentialist notion of resistance "treating it as an established set of actions or behaviors" (Prasad & Prasad, as cited in Mumby, 2005, p. 21). As Knights and Vurdubakis acutely point out, construction does not signify the opposite of agency, on the contrary, it indicates active participation; individuals are not mere bearers of subject positions ascribed to them structurally, but rather engage creatively with the available discourses. On the one hand, the incoherence and ambiguity of discourses render possible and open-ended the struggle over meaning (Mumby, 2005), whilst different sets of discourses function as resources for the identity formation process; subjects strategically position themselves in diverse discursive matrixes, building on what Foucault (2003) called "tactical polyvalence of discourse".

As a number of authors observe (e.g., Collinson, 2003; Contu, 2008; Thomas & Davies, 2005), organization theory research has taken a discursive, poststructuralist turn, broadening the frame of what counts as resistance. Scholars in this line of work explore the mundane, creative, often unobtrusive practices that operate on an unofficial organizational level, through which employees "attempt to 'fix' meanings in ways that resist and/or

reproduce extant relations of power" (Mumby, 2005, p. 24). Loosening the definitional conditions of the concept and investigating offstage, everyday, and sometimes ambiguous ways in which social agents resist, appropriate, alter, produce, and affirm subject positions brings to light covert and quotidian oppositional strategies.

Within this theoretical framework, a number of studies (see Mumby, 2005) have brought into relief various discursive techniques that are used by employees as they intent to craft fields of autonomy: irony, humor, cynicism, discursive distancing, but also whistle-blowing, are cast as strategies of resistance, and conceptualized as "identity work". Despite possible limitations (see Thomas & Davies, 2005) this body of research presupposes an understanding of power as a multidimensional, context dependent relation, functioning on the level of identity construction. And this is where resistance should be sought.

However, extending our view and deepening our focus in this way, we run the risk of "reducing resistance to the most banal and innocuous everyday actions" (Fleming & Spicer, 2008, p. 303). And the preoccupations over the "efficacy" of what is taken to constitute an act of resistance become all the more prominent, taking into consideration the neoliberal demand for "subversive" and "unconventional" personalities in organizations that we previously discussed; the fact that managers would easily trade a loyal worker with a pragmatist, cynical one seems to practically deprive of any subversive meaning practices like cynicism and irony. Similarly, the obsession with flexibility and change effectively nullifies the oppositional potential of strategies like "exit", which further reinforce the individualistic rescriptions of workers; as Gabriel (2008) maintains, exit, "in contrast to voice, represents a take-it-or-leave-it attitude, an attitude that does not seek to confront or challenge social reality but places the highest value on individuals' freedom to act as they please".

In the same vein, Contu (2008) does not hesitate to discard these types of struggle, describing them as "decaf resistance": As agents are not willing to assume risks that would profoundly change them and their surroundings, they do not pose a real threat for the dominant status quo. On the contrary, she argues, they function as an illusion of autonomy, a secure outlet of discontent, which ends up supporting the system rather than challenging it. We do share the view that this type of transgressions may have unpredictable and actually opposite to the desired results; for example, reflecting on the forms that opposition takes nowadays, which are most of the times individualistic and ephemeral as Gabriel (2008) notices, what we see is the reaffirmation of the fundamental principles of neoliberalism, against which they are supposedly articulated.

On the other hand, we would not reject with such an ease practices of this sort just because they, supposedly, do not involve "the risk of dying symbolically and perhaps also physically" (Contu, 2008, p. 375). In any case, taking into consideration its contingency and ambiguity, we would rather stay clear of "essentialistic" accounts of what is "real" when talking about resistance, given that we prefer to view it as "a socially constructed category emerging out of the multiple interpretations of both workplace actors and academic researchers" (Prasad & Prasad, 1998, p. 251).

Nonetheless, even though they may provoke "low levels of disturbance", we feel that "clandestine" or "guerilla-like" tactics, as they have often been named, can lead to the proliferation of incoherencies and the destabilizing of dominant discourses, facilitating the production of subversive dynamics, enabling alternative subjectivities as well as different forms of relating with one another to be engineered (Thomas & Davies, 2005). Drawing on her professional environment, Ashcraft (2008), albeit cautious about the romanticization of forms of resistance such as cynicism, reports that "collective cynicism could nourish not only communal vocabularies of critique but also tangible support systems that prepare us for greater risks and costs" (p. 383).

Bearing in mind that it can be never be found outside of power relations, "resistance relies upon the situation against which it struggles" (Foucault, 1997a, p. 168) tracing lines of flight, experimenting with and transforming their mechanisms, imbuing them with an immanent reversibility (Lazzarato & Henninger, 2007). Everyday life has shown that the identities invented "from below" have been expropriated and exploited by hegemonic practices, like the organizational trend of the "industrialization of bohemia and anticapitalist sentiments" reflects (Fleming & Spicer, 2008, p. 303); this however does not mean that we are trapped in power relations; we never run out of possibilities of altering the context (Foucault, 1997a).

Recurring to alternative discourses has proved an indispensible tool: Fleming and Sturdy's (2008) research participants resisted the challenging corporate invitation to "be themselves" with a resourcing to a form of cynicism and to alternative discourses that emphasized solidarity and uniformity. Similarly, exploring the "microphysics of resistance", Thomas and Davies (2005) witnessed how individuals drew on alternative subject positions critically reflecting on themselves, confirming the "generative" nature of identity work as a political project marked by internal contradictions aiming to unsettle the predominant imperatives, rather than a merely individual response to protect the self.

Colloquial discursive practices are also contested: In Lair and Wieland's (2012) study that we presented earlier, appeared students who engaged in different form of resistance when asked about their educational-professional future. Some chose to ignore the question and avoid participating in an in-depth communication, a technique paralleled by the authors to the "organizational exit". The authors, citing Lutgen-Sandvik who claims that such reaction actually reproduces hegemonic understandings of things, express their doubts about the efficacy of this strain of resistance; nevertheless, we believe that refraining from engaging communicational contexts that take for granted states of domination, saying "no", may be a minimum, but decisive form of resistance (Foucault, 1997a). A second variant took the form of rejecting the premises of the question; participants suggested alternative meanings of the work-education relationship, without passively subscribing to the subject positions issued by it.

Overall, one should be aware of the fact that "we cannot jump outside the situation" (Foucault, 1997a, p. 167); even the more organized, coordinated, and pronounced forms of resistance are encompassed by the power relations which structure the social. Similarly, we do not consider resistance as a means to an end, that end being a predefined subjectivity, a predefined set of relations that, when achieved and institutionalized all of our problems will be resolved. As we see it, resistance is rather a constant "state of becoming", the creation of new subjectivities through an ethical reflexivity that would permit their subversion once they begin to solidify and take the shape of states of domination; a way of life that is embodied in our everyday choices, driven by an imaginary of utopia that is not waiting for us at the end of the street but orients our actions in the present, demanding to be effectuated in the "here and now".

Nor does it mean that we should abandon once and for all more pronounced and organized kinds of struggle. Weeks (2011) brings to the forefront the history of the disobedient working subjects like the "zoot suiters" and "hipsters" who, "refusing to be good proletarians pursued a different mode of race rebellion, seeking meaning and pleasure in the times and spaces of non-work (Robin Kelley, as cited in Weeks); or like the second-wave feminists who insisted that work "was not something to which women should aspire but rather something they should try to escape" (p. 163).

We could expand this "history of subversion of the working ethos" adding the various working collectives that proliferate in Greece, as well as the companies that were taken over by their employees after being led to distraction under the management of their

owners, ventures that also pose a serious threat to the neoliberal ethos, and function as a rich source of alternative subject positions and interpretations of the concept of labour.

In this chapter we discussed the ways in which neoliberal power is encapsulated in individual control mechanisms that are dispersed across the entirety of social relations and embodied by subjects through discursive practices; we also explored the meaning and forms of resistance in this context. In the chapter that follows we will make an effort to comprehend how this interplay translates in terms of a collective identity, in pursuit of a vocabulary that grasps the multiple and intertwined dimensions of its configuration; subsequently we will explore how hegemonic conceptualizations of work and the labouring subject are formulated through discursive and non discursive practices on a state level, against the background of the latest socioeconomic developments in Greece.

## 4. On the Political Subject: Reclaiming the Right to Produce Subjectivity

Critical studies have, to a great extent, equipped their theoretical arsenal building on Marxian thought and its rich legacy of analytical and hermeneutical tools, interpreting and employing them in remarkably distinct ways. The concept of "class" is the one that will concern us here, in our venture to understand the political subject that emerges from the contemporary mode of production and the wage labour relationship, as well as the forms of its constitution as such.

Far from aspiring to elaborate a thorough mapping of the term's adventures "in the hands" of theorists through time, we will rather examine its relevance for the exploration of the world of salaried employment in its present-day articulation and the construction of subjectivities which incarnate the power relations that substantiate it. In other words, what we need to find out is whether it serves the purposes of this study to talk in terms of "class" or we need to deploy or invent a new vocabulary in order to illuminate the subjectification processes, without neither undermining nor romanticizing employees' agency and resistance. What we ought to avoid is what Mumby (2005) addresses as the tendency of critical approaches to represent the capital-labour relationship as a binary opposition, reifying one pole and subsuming the other beneath the privileged one.

### 4.1. Reinvigorating the collective subject; towards the extinction or the reinvention of "class"?

What constitutes a class? Marx himself poses this very question in the third volume of the *Capital* (1894/1999) and though, according to him, "the answer comes naturally from the reply to another question, namely: What makes wage-labourers, capitalists and landlords constitute the three great social classes?" (p. 610), even today it generates heated debates. The powerful opening of the first chapter of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848/1998), where, together with Engels, he equates "[t]he history of all hitherto existing society" with "the history of class struggles" (p. 14) is, among many, indicative of the centrality attributed to the class factor by the emblematic authors.

Nevertheless, the view that it is necessary to restructure our sociological dictionary in order to understand the contemporary setting is supported by a number of theorists, such as Ulrich Beck, who refers to "class" as a "zombie category" (Slater & Ritzer, 2001), dissolved by the individualization of a "capitalism without classes". In the post-industrial scenery, with the end of the hegemony of the "factory-worker prototype" of the 19th century, the concept of social class has been seriously "injured": Its relevance has been called into question by the radical transformation of the mode of production as well as by the neoliberal employment policies which have had a pronounced impact on the ways in which employees relate, understand their common interests, and form a collective identity – supposing that they do so. The increasing differentiation among occupations, concerning both the working conditions and the worker qualifications casts serious doubts on the ability of "class" to function as the epicenter of construction of collective meaning as well as on its analytic capacity (Offe, 1985).

As we discussed in detail in the introduction of this thesis, we do identify the difficulties posed by the internal fragmentation of the labour market and the immaterial nature of work when it comes to talk about collective identification. Nevertheless, what we are looking for at this point is not another sociological category that would help us classify our participants according to economic criteria, occupation or working conditions; we are trying to find a political concept that can capture the antagonism that characterizes wage labour and the political in general, eschewing the element of determinism that haunts certain Marxist conceptualizations of class.

Envisioning it as an element of the political and not as a sociological tool, open Marxism tradition (e.g., Bonefeld, Gunn, & Psychopedis, 1992; Holloway, 2004), conceives of class not as a group of individuals, a social category of an established definition by virtue

of the possibility to access the means of production, but as a social relation; rather than taking for granted the constitution of the classes, it sees in it class struggle itself (Gunn, 2004; Holloway, 2004). In turn, class struggle is not reserved to workers, but is conceptualized as "an incessant and everyday antagonism between alienation and des-alienation, definition and anti-definition", a struggle against classification per se (Holloway, 2004, p. 79).

And it is precisely because we share their argumentation that we don't agree with their proposition to adopt the term "class"; it is because we believe that what is at stake here is "the control or autonomy over the production of subjectivity" (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p. x) that we need to deploy different language in order to talk about subjectivities and understand social struggle today.

### 4.2. The precarious multitude.

Partly following Badiou, according to whom the name of the political subject today is suspended, Read (2010) attributes the difficulty to name the agent of the political of our time to the fact that all concepts used hitherto have lost their original meaning: Among them, the "worker" has been replaced by "the investor of his or her own human capital" (p. 113). Putting forward the issue of the production of subjectivity, he subscribes to the Marxist emphasis on the link between production and politics but stresses the need to perceive of the first in a broader sense, one that transcends the limited space of the workplace: As he argues, the constitution of ideas and desires on the one hand and the production of things on the other are not bound in a hierarchical relation but are inseparable from one another, happening simultaneously at the very same sites. As a result, as capitalism grows incorporating socially produced knowledge, affects, and relationships, exploitation is extended to the entire society (Hardt & Negri, 1994).

This being the case, our understanding of the emerging collective subject should be encompassed by multiple criteria, namely the need: to pay particular attention to the immaterial and affective nature of labour and its qualitative domination in the present day; to accentuate the significance of collaboration and the commons, as well as their exploitation by the capital; confront the distinction between production, reproduction, and consumption, escaping the limits of waged labour[9]; as well as to endow individuals with a certain level of agency that, without predetermining their "historic destination", would allow them to grasp

[9] Although our research project involves individuals currently implicated in wage relationship, we prefer to think of them in the broader matrix of production in order to capture the complexity and the different levels of the production of subjectivity.

and transform the conditions that form their subjectivity, supporting the political project of tracing "the fault lines between subjection and liberation" (Read, 2010, p. 131).

### *4.2.1. The multitude as a "political project"*

Fuchs (2010) constructed a typology of the readings of class in the era of informational capitalism, each one focusing on a different aspect of the field of production. Although we do not embrace wholeheartedly any of them, and seriously doubt the existence of rigorous dividing lines between them, we tend to identify more with the perspective of "the multitude" as conceptualized mostly by Hardt & Negri (2000, 2004, 2009); at the same time though, we are creatively inspired by the other approaches and intend to engage critically with the notion that was elaborated by the tradition of autonomist Marxism building on Spinoza's ideas.

Doing away with the exclusive logic and the deterministic teleology that privilege the working class, "[t]he multitude gives the concept of the proletariat its fullest definition as all those who labor and produce under the rule of capital" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 103). Opposing it to other forms of collectives such as the "people", the crowd, the masses, and the mob, who cannot act on their own and need a leader, the multitude "is an internally different, multiple social subject whose constitution and action is based not on identity or unity (or, much less, indifference) but on what it has in common" (p. 100). Using Spinoza and the decision-making capacity that he assigns to his version of the "multitude", Hardt and Negri talk about an agent that at least potentially can rule itself, emphasizing the difference with Hobbes, for whom the multitude's unity is achieved through representation.

Central axis of this line of thought and the element that binds the multitude together is the pivotal role of communication and cooperation, through which the individual actors overcome their fragmentation (Hardt & Negri, 2004). The figures that comprise this social being are industrial, immaterial and agricultural workers, the unemployed, migrants, and so forth, singular figures who "do not remain fragmented and dispersed but tend through communication and collaboration to converge toward a common social being" (p. 159). Self-determination and horizontalism emanate from the fact that the multitude is itself the subject of biopolitical production, of the production of the common, and hence of its own subjectivity.

The plane of immanence is therefore considered as the only possible terrain for the articulation of political relations, which, albeit the radical heterogeneity of the social field, do

not need for a transcendental hegemonic figure to take charge and represent the multiplicity of singularities. Nevertheless, this does not imply some kind of faith in the spontaneity inherent to society: "The multitude is not a spontaneous political subject but a project of political organization" (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 169). In this sense, one should not talk about the multitude as a state of "being" but as a state of "becoming", as a result of constitutive political processes. We could therefore suggest that the multitude "is based not so much on the current empirical existence of the class but rather on its conditions of possibility" namely, the "singularity" and the "common" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 105).

As we will discuss in the next part of this thesis[10], we do acknowledge that no social objectivity can ever be fixed once and for all, insofar as radical negativity does not leave room for an entirely inclusive consensus (Mouffe, 2011). However, we do concur with those who see in the multitude an element that, if integrated into hegemonic political processes as a "horizon of ongoing struggle" (Kioupkiolis, 2014, p. 164) for self-determination could "fuel the relentless subversion of hierarchies, closures and new patterns of domination from within, holding out the prospect of a world beyond hegemony in a universe still bridled with it" (p. 166).

According to Hardt and Negri (2009), in the era of biopolitical production, class struggle involves resistance to the capitalist mandate, but also requires an exodus from the wage-labour relation; this does not entail "a refusal of the productivity of biopolitical labor-power but rather a refusal of the increasingly restrictive fetters placed on its productive capacities by capital" (p. 152). The writers insist that resistance always constitutes a possibility for the workers, given that they can at any time stop providing their labour to capital and obstruct the production process. On the other hand, they continue, the possibility of exodus is not so immediately available: It can be achieved only on the basis of the common, and capitalist society often manages to mask the common, by privatizing the means of its production.

At the same time, the common also appears in a corrupted form in the framework of various institutions: the family, the nation, and the corporation are indicated by the theorists (Hardt & Negri, 2009) as the most significant ones in this respect. Regarding the workplace, which is the one that interests us here, they emphasize the fact that capitalist organization privatizes the fruits of social cooperation and communication while corporations encourage

[10] It was deemed more opportune to incorporate Laclau and Mouffe's approach towards the construction of social identities in the methodological section rather than expose them here, given that they guided significantly the configuration of our research design.

workers to attribute the satisfaction experienced from collaborative production to the corporation itself. Nonetheless, it is not just that what is produced is immediately privatized; the productive procedure itself is corrupted by the imposition of capitalist hierarchy and control (p. 162).

Thus the exodus should be understood as a productive process, as an active engagement that involves "not only preserving the common but also struggling over the conditions of producing it, as well as selecting among its qualities, promoting its beneficial forms, and fleeing its detrimental, corrupt forms" (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 171). Although we share their views about the need and the positive aspect of the exodus and the refusal of work, we do not rule out the possibility of carving out spaces of resistance within the framework of institutions such as the workplace, like we discussed in previous chapters. We also doubt about the accessibility to the forms of resistance described by Hardt and Negri (2009) and their certainty that "workers always have the power to say no" (p. 153) thanks to the increased self-determination granted by immaterial labour. As these authors also suggest, the prevalence of the neoliberal significations of work and the working subject as well as the imposition of precarity set barriers to the autonomous production of subjectivity, in the framework of a governmental rationality wherein welfare policies are considered a burden.

### *4.2.2. Precarity: At the intersection between post-industrialism and neoliberalism*

Therefore, although the structural characteristics of post-industrialism create the possibilities for an autonomous production on the part of the multitude this does not seem to be happening. Instead, the emancipatory promises of flexibility and immaterial labour translate in growing precarity on both an ontological and social level. We argue that precarity is instituted were autonomy should be when capitalism is in charge and arranges according to its benefit these conditions; it is the fruit of the encounter between post-industrialism and neoliberal socioeconomic organization.

Transformations on a global level together with the related collapse of the Keynsian model have to a great extent contributed to the intensification of the precarization of work, since international competition brings forth the need for increased flexibility and the reduction of labour cost, interfering with national welfare schemes. Unwilling to accept the inevitability of precarity as a mechanical byproduct of an agentless globalization though, we concur with Lee and Kofman (2012) who maintain that especially in the "global south" the exacerbation of precarity often forms part of national development strategies, pointing to states, corporation

and international financial institutions as its principle generators. As we already stressed, power in the framework of the neoliberal art of government is exercised upon the actions of others, guiding their conduct, marking the possible exits, and setting their alternatives (Foucault, 1982): According to Weidner (2009), in order to obtain the productive subject that meets the demands of contemporary capitalism, a general condition of precarity is being created by the intense flexibilization of employment structures and the dissolution of any certainties offered during the Fordist era.

Precarity is often defined in relation to income levels and security, access to social benefits, working time, continuity and schedule, and is usually opposed to a "standard" employment relationship, mostly within an extensive body of research deriving from the fields of industrial relations, sociology of work, and ILO studies (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2012). Although some of these studies take into consideration the configuration of the sociopolitical context and the interplay of factors such as gender relations and citizenship, (e.g. Vosko, 2010), they merely provide sociological descriptions and categorizations that do not help us comprehend the subjectification processes in post-industrial economies. Within both the French and the Anglo-Saxon scholarships which have developed different approaches towards the concept, precarity has been incorporated in the vocabulary of social sciences and has been studied with the use of macro-sociological quantitative research designs (Kesisoglou, 2014); thusly the voices of the people are excluded from the social debate, while the political implications of the term are limited in discussions about potential top-down reforms and regulations.

On the other hand, activist and academic literature which has engaged with the notion of precarity drawing mostly on post-operaist thought has adopted a different perspective towards it. Of particular interest is the approach that understands precarity as an "embodied experience" (Papadopoulos, Stephenson & Tsianos, 2008; Tsianos & Papadopoulos, 2006, 2014), initiating a debate within the autonomist strand. Tsianos and Papadopoulos (2006) center their thinking on the body and biopolitics. They suggest that it is not immateriality per se what is constitutive of the emerging political subject but rather the embodiment of the new arrangements of exploitation; according to these theorists, "precarity constitutes this new arrangement of exploitation of living labour in advanced post-Fordism" (para. 4).

Hence subjectivity is addressed as the outcome of the encounter between immaterial production and its inconsistencies, the forms of oppression, and orders of exploitation that are pertinent to post-Fordist societies (Tsianos & Papadopoulos, 2006). These theorists challenges

the view that subjectivity is assembled merely by the elements that make up immaterial labour such as cooperation, creativity, affectivity, etcetera; as they suggest, "the emergent subjectivities exceed the conditions of production of immaterial labour when immaterial workers are confronted with the impasses in their life situation, the micro-oppressions and exploitation. In other words, subjectivity is produced when the contemporary regime of labour becomes embodied experience" (para 3).

Moreover, these writers also move beyond the contention that value in post-industrial capitalism is created by the appropriation of social life itself and of worker's subjectivity in its entirety. As they argue (Tsianos & Papadopoulos, 2014), what is really appropriated is a de-individualised recombination of qualities, as contemporary capitalism tends to "dissect and dissolve the working subject and recombine it into new effective virtual compositions" (p. 129). Concomitantly, there is an excess of sociability and subjectivity produced which cannot be regulated by and is inappropriate to the regime of precarity, what Trinh T. Min-ha (as cited by Tsianos & Papadopoulos, 2014) has called "inappropriate/d sociabilities". These materialize in informal webs of relations, social cooperation, and the fabrication of socio-material artefacts, "that challenge the process of postliberal control as such" (p. 135).

Precarity politics, not always sharing the exact same ontological or theoretical bearings, has encompassed a variety of struggles and activist interventions, addressing issues such as migration, ecology, and gender, transforming precarity to a more open instrument of struggle, "enabling resistance and the re- imagination of contemporary politics, lives and subjectivities" (Andall et al., as cited in Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 10). This is manifested by the most recent social movements, from the "Occupy Wall Street" to the Spanish "Indignados" and the Greek "Movements of the squares": They do not merely express economic demands or the return to the security of the Fordist systems but rather reclaim the right to set themselves the terms of the construction of subjectivity; it is what the initiative "Precarias a la deriva" (2002) powerfully expressed by seeking to enable the collective construction of other life possibilities through the configuration of common creative struggles.

Here, the distinction made by Judith Butler (2011) between precarization, precarity, and precariousness results extremely useful: The abovementioned struggles, as we understand them, are not solely about the precarization of labour, reflected in flexible and unstable employment conditions; they target the precarity that supplements it, which can be described as the "heightened sense of expendability or disposability that is differentially distributed throughout society", or in other words, the "embodied experience" of the new orders of exploitation that Tsianos and Papadopoulos (2006, 2014) talked about; and what they seek is

the reclamation of the right to what Butler (2011) defines as “precariousness”, meaning the ontological vulnerability common to every being, which is a feature of “the various relationships that establish our interdependency”, and more precisely the right to build these relationships outside the “entrepreneurial modalities [that are] supported by fierce ideologies of individual responsibility” (p. 13).

So, if affective and cognitive communication and collaboration form the basis for the production of the subjectivity of the multitude, precarity, as the embodied experience of post-industrial capitalism constitutes its social condition, while precariousness its ontological one. As it has been made clear though, precarity is by no means unique to cognitive capitalism; the fact that in all of its forms the dependence on a relationship of exploitation is given as the only way possible for one to make a living is indicative of the fact that precarity is part and parcel of capitalism in all times. In fact, we completely agree with Neilson and Rossiter (2008) who insist on the fact that in a historical perspective, the application of Keynsian politics has been the exception whereas precarity the essential condition.

Nonetheless, the neoliberal art of government has undeniably brought to the foreground the experience of being “precarious” in an exceptionally pronounced manner: a “differential of fear” cuts across all occupational statuses (Lazzarato, 2009, p. 120). Since precarity has become a natural state of affairs, risk-taking has come to constitute the natural and only response and way of life. Subjects are interpellated as constantly alert in order to claim or to hang on to their position within the world of employment, constantly re-discovering their professional and personal (im)possibilities. Paid work and the precarious market are thus rendered the ultimate biopolitical governmental tools for the multiplication of the enterprise form in society, governing not only the bodies but the minds and souls of the subjects as well.

All that being said, embodied capitalism should not be regarded as “inescapable”. As we already pointed out, the dominant discourses, through self-disciplinary modes of control, attempt to immobilize potentially “fleeing” subjectivities within “productive” positions; nonetheless, instances and spaces of resistance can be created, just like the movements that we talked about demonstrate. In this way, the precarious multitude functions as a permanent menace to the contingent fixations of hegemonic meanings that determine its precarious condition, undermining any political process attempting to hegemonize the symbolic, threatening to disrupt hegemony by overcoming itself.

In this chapter we set out to find the vocabulary that could help us comprehend social struggles within the current economic and productive regime. The term “precarious

multitude" was adopted, as it captures the biopolitical yet still precarious mode of labour, availing the possibility for self-determination. In the next chapter we will focus on Greece and explore the ways in which precarity and other biopolitical governmental apparatuses, such as debt, are deployed by hegemonic discourses, forming the "appropriate" working subjectivities.

## 5. The Greek Case

"Greeks work harder than Germans. Who knew?", entitles her article for the Washington Post Gail Sullivan (2014) who, drawing on a recent study conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, asserts that Greeks work more than everyone else in Europe, outdoing even Americans. The statistical findings belie the Greek's fame for being lazy, cultivated largely by Media and politicians during the "crisis" (Morales, Gendron, & Guénin-Paracini, 2014) even though, as the journalist rushes to add, working long hours does not necessarily equate to high productivity or competitiveness.

What is worth noting, however, is the wayin which productivity and competitiveness both as collective and individual qualities are conceptualized and granted pivotal position within neoliberal governmentality, as it is modeled in Greece. Articulated in state policies and discourses, they are bread and butter to the neoliberal project which, although rooted in a certain economic rationale, its ramifications entwine, permeate, and cast individuals and all facets of the social as business-oriented. In this framework, the working relation structured around the principles of individualism and self-reliance is postulated as the exclusive way not only to biological survival, but also to social protection and incorporation.

The aim of this chapter is to denaturalize the dominant discourses on paid work, scrutinize them under the light of the analysis of the market-inspired biopolitical government, and probe into the way the productive subjectivity is sculpted. Our case is that for the productivist ethic to become dominant, a certain model of citizen needs to be engineered, the neoliberal undemocratic citizen, characterized by indifference or even aversion towards the democratic practices, interested only in maximizing his or her own human capital.

In order to investigate this hypothesis, we will examine in historical perspective the geoeconomic fabric into which neoliberal discourses and policies were interwoven, aiming to outline the local aspect of a global nexus, its "path-dependency" and the contextually variegated forms of subjectification it entails (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010). After

engaging into a brief but critical overview of Greek employment and social policies of the last three decades, marked by the incorporation to the European Economic Community and later to the Euro area, we will concentrate on the present day and sustain that what has been broadly named "Greek crisis" is just another step of a process of neoliberalization; key element is the engineering of the undemocratic society, of one that embodies the entrepreneurial spirit and is thus more interested in complying with the axioms of free market than in safeguarding and exercising its right to autonomous expression and institutionalization. Through state policies and state organization, the productive subject is constituted not only as the only deserving of physical and social existence, but as the only viable choice.

In other words, our venture will consist in tracing neoliberalization and the instillation of the work ethos in a twofold procedure: In the first place, social policies are designed in such a way so as to promote particular attitudes and punish others; setting the rules of the game, the official discourses on work get materialized in mundane procedures and are bodily enacted by individuals in their everyday lives. On a second level, the state itself adopts the organizational norms and moral values of a private corporation; when privatization stretches well beyond the selling off public assets to the way the public sector is administered, favouring efficacy over justice and valuing more the confidence of financial agents than of its own citizens, the business ethos is bound to prevail.

### 5.1. Simulacra of democracy, or when the content does not match the form.

It is very tempting to attempt to attribute all sorts of weaknesses with which Greek institutions are charged to the historical particularities of the country, which, combined with its geopolitical position on the crossroad of "East" and "West", never allowed it to fully identify with neither. It is true that Greece followed a rather distinct socio-political trajectory from its Western European partners, whose imprint and residues still affect to a certain extent modern society, the institutions and the relations that shape it. We will not embark on a discussion over the challenges that the Greek state faced during the Ottoman occupation and following its independence from the Ottoman Empire on 1830, the solutions it endorsed and intended to apply; there is a plethora of thorough, extensive and well documented studies on the subject (e.g., Kostis, 2014; Veremis & Koliopoulos, 2006). However, it is worth reflecting on a few key elements of its development in order to situate the reader and add to a better understanding of the current production of discursive and non discursive state practices.

By no means though do we intend to present the Greek case as a unique exception, the hideous monster in the European fairy-tale; it has been repeatedly argued (e.g., Kioupkiolis, 2013; Markantonatou, 2013; Morales, Gendron, & Guénin-Paracini, 2014) that the course the country followed in the modern era and the present economic situation is inextricably interrelated with the globalization processes and the configuration and operation of supranational institutional formations.

Taking a quick glance at the constitutional history of Greece (e.g., Alivizatos, 1981) one assumes that democracy has deep roots. In fact, already with the Constitution of 1864 the right to vote was granted to the entire adult male population, while in 1875, the introduction of the principle that the government needs to have the declared confidence of the Parliament consolidated the democratic base of the political system. Nevertheless, even though the democratic structures were put into play from the first steps of the newly born state, it was the terms under which they operated that failed to capture the essence of democracy.

Charalampis (1996) underscores this incompatibility between form and content observing that although structurally coherent, the democratic political system as it was constituted in Greece of the 19th century lacked one foundational component: the dualism in which the social struggle is translated, its double function as a sovereignty mechanism and a mechanism of limiting the sovereign. According to his analysis, the institutional framework was not borne out of the substantiation of internal social procedures that would have been possible had the capitalistic relations been fully developed. The form of the economy that was based on small agricultural property combined with the fact that the industrialization of the country begun to evolve systematically relatively late, only in the last decades of the 19th century, account for the slow proletarization of the population.

In this context, the wage-labour relationship presented merely a secondary and occasional option for most and it was consolidated during the first decades of the 20th century (Athanasiadis, 2008). Moreover, immigration grew into a massive social phenomenon, serving as a release valve of the social tensions, deviating the consequences of an imminent proletarization (Tsoukalas, 2005).

So, the democratic formation was not a product, at least primarily, of internal social processes and antagonisms. Instead, the parliamentary organization, Charalampis (1996) insists, was applied as the means to settle the tensions between central and local authority, resulting into a unilateral system of domination rather than the expression of the political confrontation and composition of social forces; the consent and the legitimation of state rule was not achieved within the institutional framework, but extra-institutionally through the

development of clientelistic networks. This kind of relations provided the space for claiming rights, depriving the democratic structures of their content, leaving them hollow and ineffective.

The patron-client bonds, ensuring and simultaneously plaguing democracy, were built and expanded mostly through public sector recruitment; offering employment in the public services, among other public resources, served as a means to gain electoral support, fetishized occupation in the public institutions, and underpinned the fortification of the petty bourgeoisie. Apart from sabotaging the transformation of party followers into active political agents (Papathanasopoulos, 2004), it promoted a "do ut des" mentality that bolstered and perpetuated institutional perversion.

In this framework, waged labour constituted a very efficient biopolitical device, especially after the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) that ended with the defeat of the communists: Tsoukalas (2005) notes that functioning as the main employee, the state rewarded the like-minded, granting them access to an income as well as prospects for social mobility, punishing political dissents, who were condemned to economic and social exclusion.

Consequently, a distinct kind of individualism was promoted, one that did not stem from the operation of the market, but rather from the personal efforts to obtain more privileges and powerful contacts on the detriment of others, undermining any sense of social solidarity outside the frame of the family (Charalampis, 1996). At the same time, the gap between form and content gave rise to distrust towards the parliamentary function and the instrumentalization of its procedures. According to Charalampis, even during the 20th century, when the social stratification begun to reflect the expansion of capital-labour relations and patronage was relatively moderated, the statism generated by the breach between appearance and substance still accompanied the Greek political system, only to be converted into a modern technocratic statism.

Kioupkiolis (2013) also points out this mismatch between the name of the regime and its application nowadays; he argues that during the last quarter of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st the country experienced the installation of a liberal democratic state, characterized by a stable political life and a free market economy. Certainly, the economic development and the social transformations that took place during the post-war era as well as the incorporation in the European Union that established a tighter alignment with the "Western" world did not eliminate the phenomena of corruption, the administrational deficiencies, clientelism, or the shortcomings in delivering justice on various levels, far from it; however, the electoral system ran smoothly whilst the bases of a welfare state were set.

Gradually, from the 1980's onwards, the argument goes on, "key developments in Greek political culture featured also the wide diffusion of utilitarian individualism and the eventual eclipse of collective concerns" (Kioupkiolis, 2013, p.145). Lyrintzis (2011) identifies an "apolitical discourse" spawn by populism, incubating atomization and indifference towards politics. The two decades that followed saw the consolidation of a post-democratic condition where the programmatic convergence between center-right and center-left parties was accompanied by the increasing influence of experts, as matters were formulated in technical market terms, requiring thus market, rather than political solutions. While the formal traits of democracy still survived, social agents were practically excluded from the decision making processes and "sovereign power slip[ped] into the hands of corporate and political elites as in non-democratic polities" (Kioupkiolis, 2013, p.145).

What changed since 2010[11], Kioupkiolis (2013) continues, is that this post-democratic condition has been transformed into a state of post-political biopower. Paraphrasing Žižek and his "post-political biopolitics" (as quoted in Kioupkiolis, 2013, p. 146), Kioupkiolis describes this regime as violating even the procedural formalities of post-democracy, combining technocratic pragmatism with the establishment of a state of exception; as a biopower exercised over the naked body of individuals, consolidating a "society of control". Propagating neoliberalism as the only regime of truth, a coalition of economists and bureaucrats with Media support have assigned to the state not the part of the nightwatch but the one of the watchdog of the market's interests, relying on police coercion to impose itself (Douzinas, 2010).

Before proceeding to a more thorough analysis of the contemporary scenery and identifying how neoliberal governmentality is being substantiated by constructing and exploiting "crises", we will concisely review the developments concerning employment and social policies from the 1980's onwards, concentrating on the spirit that pervades them; this will allow us to confront superficial or deliberately naïve interpretations of the current socioeconomic situation and understand it not as an exceptional condition but as the latest phase of a course of events. The increasing contempt with which the democratic institutions were treated, expressed in policy formulation and in state administration could be interpreted as part of a strategy for the shaping of the undemocratic individual.

[11]On 2010 the Greek government signed a three-year Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies with the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund-the first out of three financial pacts-committing to a package of unprecedented austerity measures in return for a 110 billion loan, whose political, economic and social implications will be further discussed below.

### 5.2. Welcome to Greece, Chicago boys!

On an international level, the 1980's saw the transnational circulation of neoliberal policy templates that soon came to be considered panacea, thanks to the proliferating influence of market "gurus", as well as the "transnationally orchestrated formation of mutually recursive, inter-referential policy reform strategies" (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010, p. 338). According to Brenner and colleagues, during the next decade, the global neoliberalization project was consolidated through the market-oriented restructuring of supranational bodies such as the OECD and the European Union which aims to ensure that national institutions adhere to their guidelines.

Morales and colleagues (2014) also see in the European "integration" an effective weapon against the political or cultural elements that impede the social mutation according to the neoliberal paradigm. Greece's introduction to the EU in 1981 indicated a gradual but notable shift towards the neoliberal canon. Mitropoulos (1993), among others, called attention to the aftermath of the neoliberal turn, palpable already in the early '90's. Arguing that it was used as an ideological pretext so that the masses could accept extensive privatization and the dismantling of the welfare state, he seems to anticipate contemporary scholars like Laskos and Tsakalotos (2013) who recognize that the neoliberal "therapy" is a "class project", aimed to mutilate the working class in favour of the capital.

Rather than considering it merely as an ideological smokescreen deployed to justify an assault on the constituted rights of the employees, rather than conceptualizing it as a capitalist scheme to ravage the workforce – albeit without denying this aspect – we prefer to think of neoliberalism as a biopolitical governmentality that engenders self-regulated identities revolving around entrepreneurialism. This constructive power was articulated through discursive practices and institutional remodelation, which during the 1990's multiplied. More specifically, the welfare and employment legislation has since undergone a number of "parameterizing" interventions[12], reflecting precisely the intensification of the neoliberal mutation.

Flexibility constitutes the backbone of the reforms that institutionalized and encouraged precarious employment, in the pursuit of high productivity and competitiveness. At the same time, by lowering the levels of social protection and conditioning it upon paid work, its universal status is being stripped of and subjects need to prove they deserve it by following the rules of the game (Lazzarato, 2009); a certain model of citizenry has been

[12] For a detailed map of the reforms, Kouzis, 2012.

thusly promoted, on the basis of the equation of economic productivity to social value (MacLeavy, 2008).

The individualistic approach to waged work echoes the European Union guidelines which regard social protection as a "financial burden" (Bouget, 2003); the four pillars of "flexicurity", as outlined by the European Comission (2007), are focused on flexibility rather than security; they promote employability and adaptability instead of social justice; and they promulgate policies that help employees to cope with unemployment and insecurity, rather than directly fighting social exclusion. In Greece the European guidelines were incorporated in the national legal order in the form of normative adjustments that, inter alia, facilitate massive layoffs and promote lifelong learning as a means to tackle unemployment (Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour - INE GSEE, 2011). To put it in another way, public action is directed not at correcting the inequalities produced by free market, but at formulating subjects, each one responsible for how to survive inside it; the prototype of human beings as self-sufficient and self-interested inspires policy making and is rewarded by it.

In this manner, public policies that individualize and thus depoliticize waged work naturalize minimum state protection (Gouvias, 2012), fomenting the "personal agency" repertoire, according to which, each one has to "commit forcefully to the improvement of his own human capital and position in the market" (Kiersey, 2009, p. 387). Additionally, privatization of responsibility places the blame for social issues on specific individual or collective subjects, leaving the system that produced them beyond reproach. It is an ingenious technique aimed at crippling any collective action (Read, 2009) aspiring to draw "lines of flight" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1999) within the ensemble of state apparatuses. Sometimes, depoliticization of this kind leads even to ridiculous statements, like the one coming from the socialist party MP Th. Pangalos (2010), vice-president of the government at the time[13]: At the peak of the crisis, in 2010, in the midst of a bombardment with austerity measures, he said in an official talk that "[W]e all gorged together", implicating that the entire Greek people was equally responsible for the economic crisis, and thus deserved to be punished.

Simultaneously, the state increasingly adopts the form of a private company: Vatikiotis (2008) quotes the Greek Minister of Finance of the socialist government in 1988 who openly declared that the privatization of public organizations formed a fundamental

[13] It is interesting that similar statements were made by politicians in other countries that also implemented austerity measures in order to receive funding from the "Troika", such as Ireland: Minister of Finance Brian Lenihan declared in a prime-time news interview that "we all partied" (cited in Kiersey, 2014).

coordinate of the scheduled reforms. A declaration that materialized in dozens of privatizations in the course of the years that followed.

In other words, not only have state policies been increasingly imbued with the business ethics, state organization has been modified in such a way so as to comply with the market demands, operating with market tools, and obeying to the market rational. Normative transformations that introduced part-time employment in the public sector in the name of "rationalization", as well as the endorsement of financial techniques used by private firms, cast governments primarily as financial actors (Morales, Gendron, & Guénin-Paracini, 2014). A striking example was the way that Greece managed to enter the Economic and Monetary Union in 2001: The government in power at the time turned to Goldman Sachs which, on an outrageous fee and using complex banking products, achieved to present acceptable debt indexes for the country.

The influence of international formations such as the European Union once more proved critical: The target set by the European Council for the EU to become "the most competitive and dynamic" economy of the world(as cited in Gouvias, 2012, p. 297), unavoidably forces national bodies to regulate and be regulated according to the demands of the market. Besides, financial discipline on behalf of governments was one of the basic objectives of the monetary union (Fernandez-Villaverde, Garicano, & Santos, 2013).

Such a reconfiguration of the state operation so that it echoes the latest business manuals legitimates a political culture dominated by economic calculus, justifying the marginalization of the public debate in the name of good management (Brown, 2006; Morales, Gendron, & Guénin-Paracini, 2014). Morales and colleagues present an indicative example, a document published by the IMF and the World Bank directed at the Greek government which stated: "Risks of government losses from inadequate operational controls should be managed according to sound business practices'' (p. 18). As Brown (2006) argues, effectivity and profitability set aside legality and accountability, sanctioning arrogations of power. Or, to be more accurate, the transparency that was once promised to the electorate body is now an obligation towards investors and economic entities.

At the present moment, this kind of utilitarianism finds the ideal field of application, in a socioeconomic setting that is being defined as a "crisis". We believe that we succeeded in showing that the current situation is nothing but the expected outcome of the neoliberal recalibration of Greek politics. We will now address one of its pivotal functions, the production of the undemocratic citizen as a central facet of the neoliberal "productive subject".

### 5.3. The production of the undemocratic citizen.

There is no need to recur to abundant academic literature in order to prove that the austerity measures that are being taken in order to confront the "economic crisis", or so we are told, are unfair and magnify social inequalities, without resolving any type of problem –apart from those of big financial interests. We do not wish, and partly we are not able, to exhaustively analyze the economic dimension, although we will go over the neoliberal prescription; what we are mostly interested in are the subject positions it engenders, the underlying assumptions, and the rules of the game it imposes, that we consider equally important as, and with even longer-lasting consequences than the actual policies (MacLeavy, 2008).

We maintain that the fiscal and sovereign debt "crisis"[14] has been presented as a "state of emergency" produced by excessive and mishandled state intervention, calling therefore for neoliberal readjustments; constructed in such a way so as to provoke recurring shocks to the Greek people, in its context, the dissolution of the democratic institutions under the weight of market forces has been justified and normalized. Individually charged with the "national tragedy", constituted as "indebted men" (Lazzarato, 2012), but at the same time excluded from the political for being ignorant or just too weak to act and react, subjects are expected to prove that they deserve to be "saved" embracing the productive model dictated by the will of the globalized finance.

#### *5.3.1. Accelerating the de-democratization of the subject vol.1; the "exceptional" nature of the crisis*

In this context, what is the function of the recent "crisis" that has brought Greece in the international spotlight? In which ways does it enrich and fortify the neoliberal governmentality and the configuration of the productive subject? Bursting out after three decades of largely applying the neoliberal canon, its trajectory was closely watched over and contoured by transnational financial and political institutions, the same ones that preach the neoliberal canon, the same ones that today declare the country it as a state of emergency; as a "state of exception", not at all exceptional, since (bitter) international experience had shown that it was the only plausible finale.

[14]Other countries in Europe and the world present indexes similar to or even worse than the Greek ones regarding for example debt, deficit, or public expenditure, without their situations being considered as "crises" (see for example Sakellaropoulos, 2010).

Framing the socioeconomic context as an exceptional condition, public resistance and legal impediments are easier to tackle and the neoliberal reform agenda can be implemented unobstructedly (Laskos & Tsakalotos, 2013). Balibar (2010) is not the only one who sees a dictatorial process in the application of technocratic measures, which lacks the element of a previous social dialogue, pointing to interrelated crises of democracy on a national and a supranational level that feed from one another. This kind of administration that so overtly places the rule of the global finance over the democratic order on the pretext of attending an extraordinary situation, presupposes and consequently breeds citizens that would trade established rights for, supposedly, enhanced competitiveness and productivity.

To be more specific, Greek governments over the last years have often crossed the line between legality and illegality; decisions concerning pension and wage cuts, tax imposition, and the employment status of civil servants were ruled unconstitutional by Greek supreme courts. The cynicism with which court decisions were met by high rank officials was presented as justified, even brave and praiseworthy, given the "unprecedented anomaly" in which "unexpectedly" the country had found itself in.

The most eloquent expression of the neoliberal defiance of the democratic procedures is the abusive promulgation of acts of legislative content[15], a constitutional provision for "extraordinary circumstances of an urgent and unforeseeable need" (art. 44, §1). Ascribing an exceptional nature to topics that would bring about popular rage, governments stick to the letter of the law that gives the government the power to practically elude parliamentary control and impose bills in no time and without previous discussion. Several jurists (e.g., Dimitropoulos, cited in Triantis, 2013; Katrougalos, cited in tvxs.gr, 2012) call attention to the instrumentalization of the constitution and its deployment in such a way so as to degrade democracy, which is also disparaged since it is thought to provide legal cover for power arrogation. Thus apart from unilaterally inflicting their will, governments prioritize the attainment of economic goals over the respect of the legal order, and create a climate of instability and anxiety that has a shocking impact as we shall see briefly, attributing the character of a crisis to a specific condition merely by treating it as such.

[15] Article 44, paragraph 1 of the Greek Constitution states: "Under extraordinary circumstances of an urgent and unforeseeable need, the President of the Republic may, upon the proposal of the Cabinet, issue acts of legislative content. Such acts shall be submitted to Parliament for ratification, as specified in the provisions of article 72 paragraph 1, within forty days of their issuance or within forty days from the convocation of a parliamentary session. Should such acts not be submitted to Parliament within the above time-limits or if they should not be ratified by Parliament within three months of their submission, they will henceforth cease to be in force".

Functioning as the perfect alibi for the establishment of a state of exception and the deviation not only from the spirit but also from the letter of the law, what was named "Greek crisis" created the conditions for the employment of the state of exception as a normal paradigm of government (Agamben, 2007). Agamben drawing on Schmitt shows that with the voluntary creation of a "state of emergency" exception can be transformed into the rule: Enjoying "pleins pouvoirs" and the ability to generate the legal space and extort social acceptance for the implementation of the harshest neoliberal doctrines, suspending or abrogating the law becomes a normalized practice. Suffice it to say that while in 2008 only one act of legislative content was issued as opposed to 103 laws, in 2012 only 67 laws were voted as opposed to 28 acts of legislative content (Naïdos, 2013).

This is why we hesitate to dispense with the quotation marks when referring to the so-called "crisis[16]": If we adopt the definition of the extant condition as a crisis we would have to consent to the imposition of "exceptional" measures, ignore its actual and rhetorical construction, and overlook its conversion into a mundane governmental technique. Instead, we are in line with those who suggest that sovereign debt, claimed to be the main cause of the financial meltdown, constitutes a form of control of the country's economic and social policies (e.g., Klein, 2007; Lazzarato, 2012), in an era when organizing a successful coup-d'état is harder to accomplish, or rather less profitable.

### *5.3.2. Accelerating the de-democratization of the subject vol.2; the "shocking" nature of the crisis*

In other words, the "crisis" constituted the catalyst that enabled the discursive configuration of the "Greek version of 'TINA', i.e. of 'no alternative', other than the Memoranda reform" (Markantonatou, 2013, p. 4). It was the "traumatic moment" that neoliberalism, in order to take a step further, did not miss the opportunity to exploit (Klein, 2007). And this is no secret: Milton Friedman (as cited in Klein, 2008) as early as the 1960's was rather explicit about it claiming that "only a crisis –actual or subjectively perceived- can produce a real change. And when a crisis is produced, the actions taken depend on the ideas that are lying around" (p. 28).

With Klein (2007) and her notions of "disaster capitalism" and "shock doctrine" we can challenge the mainstream assumptions about the causes of the "crisis" which tend to

[16] On the abuse of the term "crisis" see also Lyrintzis, 2011.

frame it as emanating from improper public administration, requiring thus neoliberal solutions (Morales, Gendron, and Guénin-Paracini, 2014). The discursive reservoir of the rent-seeking society, the unproductive society whose members merely compete for existing wealth instead of producing more (Congleton, Hillman, & Konrad, as cited in Markantonatou, 2013), was heavily drawn upon: The country's economic meltdown was attributed to intrinsic characteristics of the Greek political culture such as clientelism and state profligacy, calling into question state interventions. However, not all of them; only the ones related to wealth redistribution, preserving those that consolidate the rule of the market.

Indeed we can discern all three stages of shock that Klein (2007) describes: Firstly, the financial situation itself as well as the way it was presented constituted a violent shock to the Greek people; they watched the international status of their country being wrecked, its options delimited and dictated by invisible but almighty financial and supranational formations, their own access to and weight on the decisions making processes minimized if not eliminated.

In the same vein, politicians' repeated statements declaring their disagreement with the measures they were "forced" to vote (Lyrintzis, 2011), apart from an attempt to reduce the political cost of their decisions had two implications: On the one hand, the consent to give up public administration to supranational bodies whose only objectives and criteria are economic indexes and efficiency amounted to accepting their adequacy at the wheel of the country, and their priorities as the organizational priorities of the social. When the Prime Minister explicitly acknowledges that many of the reforms are "unfair" though "necessary" in order to conform to the norms of the global markets and be accepted in their circles once again (Samaras, Plenary Session, 2012) obviously the scales are tipped in favour of a pragmatic prototype, lending legitimacy to the economic rationale even if it is overtly unjust.

On the other hand and closely related to the first point, official political agents admitted their weakness to confront the financial institutions that appeared to decide for the fate of the country. At this point, every trace of national sovereignty seemed eliminated, carrying away any sense of popular control over political choices (Kouvelakis, 2010). In this way, governments were portrayed as being relatively passive and powerless while supranational agencies reaffirmed and normalized their assignment to monitor, evaluate, and discipline public policies (Morales, Gendron, & Guénin-Paracini, 2014).

However, it is not just that "something bad" happened; the people suffered a loss of narrative, with every orienting certainty being fiercely smashed. On a communicational level, new terms were devised and the vocabulary used in public discussion was strictly "technical",

replete with complex economic terms, previously unheard of. As Morales and colleagues (2014) stress, articulated through sophisticated tools and procedures completely unfamiliar to the broad public, neoliberalism builds its naturalization, scaring off people and impeding social debates that could generate alternatives.

In terms of content, the insecurity generated by the possibility that the country would lose its place among developed countries by exiting the eurozone was intensively nourished, provoking to Greeks the experience of loss of context, making it hard for them to locate their position in time and space (Klein, 2007). At the same time, the state of shock was intensified by the pace at which regulatory redesign and groundbreaking events were taking place, leaving no time for them to be explained and understood. As Kouzis (2012) asserts, even though it was not the first time that this kind of legislative measures were being taken, the velocity with which followed one another was hitherto unheard of.

Mass Media played a crucial part in this procedure that extended in two dimensions; primarily, they bombarded readers with highly distressing messages, equivalent to losses, leaving them no time to neither think nor mourn (Nikolopoulou, Psyllakou, & Tsachli, 2013). Not being able to do so, Anagnostopoulos and Soumaki (2012) sustain that the subject "remains suspended between the familiar past and the menacing future in a paranoid position, implementing mechanisms of denial, cancellation and splitting into good and evil others" (p. 77).

On another level, Media heavily invested on the "capital of fear" (Bauman, 2006), lending legitimacy to the second stage of shock, the one that Klein (2007) defines as "shock-therapy": Exploiting the disorientation provoked by the first shock, and taking the diffuse sense of uncertainty and precarity to its maximum, the political agents in charge of managing what was defined as an "exceptional situation" engaged in a rhetoric of fear (e.g., Choupis, 2011) in order to pave the way for any solution they, or the markets, approved. Besides, having diagnosed the country with cancer, any treatment was justified and lifesaving (Klein, 2013).

The third phase of shock according to Klein (2007) comes from the state repression mechanisms and the way they are ordered to operate: The unprecedented expressions of popular resistance that surprised and alarmed authorities on a national and European level was met by police violence, preventive detentions, and massive recording of the personal data of the participants. Often intending rather to impress in terms of size and brutality, the repressive interventions aimed to shock once again the Greek society, demonstrating the insignificance

not only of the democratic rule, but of human life and dignity, when compared to the imperatives of the market.

The overwhelming strokes to which subjects were being systematically exposed combined with the attempts to devocalize them and exclude them from the decision making procedures, eliminated the sense of control over their social surroundings, essential for mental health. Davou and Armenakis (2000) drawing on Selingman's theory on learned helplessness linked the uncontrollability of events to political behaviour and argued that it can lead to dependence on presumably powerful actors and to abstention from any action, even if there are possibilities for it to prove effective.

### 5.4. Sites and instances of resistance.

In the course of this section we scrutinized the governmental strategies as outlined in relative literature, pointing out the subjectivities that are enshrined, how are the rule of the games set, and the ways in which the "productive subject" is being fashioned by the neoliberal governmentality. Colonizing the social by organizing and valuing its every aspect with market standards, neoliberal biopower actively constructs what it claims is natural, conceptualizing individuals as self-regulated entrepreneurs; investing on themselves in order to enhance the innate and acquired elements of their human capital, they compete with each other through adaptive strategies, seeking to make the most out of their investment.

Nevertheless, freedom and power find themselves in a condition of permanent provocation and agonism (Foucault, 1982): "At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (p. 790), enabling the production of alternative subjectivities. Although in hegemonic position and working hard to naturalize itself, neoliberalism has not managed to subjugate all alternative discourses which are materialized in subjectivities that defy the dominant paradigm.

The current "crisis" can be viewed as a "dislocation", as a process or a series of events that has disrupted discourses and identities, creating a traumatic lack of meaning (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). Nevertheless, Laclau (1997) asserts that dislocations have also productive effects, insofar as they serve as the foundation of the constitution of new identities and discursive formations that arise to fill this gap. Recent studies (e.g., Contu, Palpacuer, & Balas, 2013; van Bommel & Spicer, 2011) confirm this view and have

documented the importance of dislocation events for the emergence or reconfiguration of strategies of resistance.

In Greece, popular mobilizations during the last years have been motivated not only by the need to stand up against and prevent reductions in financial revenues; the way they were convoked, organized, and evolved suggests the counter-proposal of an identity that is not contoured by the business ethos, ruled by the double-bind of the productivist-consumerist rationale. On the contrary, the unmediated and leaderless initiatives triggered by the ideals of solidarity and social justice defied conventional social classification, reclaiming the right to collective self-constitution.

Work collectives and cooperative ventures sprung up from the adverse and distressing socioeconomic scenery, against its cannibalistic morality and confronting the presumable inevitability of the dominant organization of labour: Embracing the ontological precariousness of existence and the interdependency it entails (Butler, 2011) groups of people opted for negating the managerial prescriptions on hierarchy or business choices that would probably result more profitable. An eloquent example are the workers of the metallurgical industry BIOME: After the business went bankrupt and abandoned by the owners, the workers decided to collectively organize production and rule the factory on their own. Similarly, journalists faced with unemployment or payment delays took the initiative to create an independent newspaper. Initially fully owned by those who worked in it, the paper looked for investors among its readers, although no shareholder could hold more than 1%; in an era when the oligopolies[17] of the Press rule the Greek market, their move was risky but, fortunately, successful. In the same direction, collective endeavors towards the establishment of networks of social economy, for example through the operation of social groceries and pharmacies, belied the neoliberal premise that every action is ruled by "(a tautologically defined) rational economic interest" (Markantonatou, 2013, p. 6).

Moreover, the "Movements of the Squares" that gained momentum especially in 2011, forming part of an uprising puzzle that extended in Europe, Africa, and Middle East, signaled the existence of a "biopower from below" (Hardt, 1999), of a multitude that does not fit in the established subject positions and reclaims the public space in every aspect: On a first level, in the sense of the geographical urban space that is being organized to serve the needs of a privatized social life; and on a second level regarding the political structure and

[17] In 2010, four conglomerates (*Lambrakis Press Group*, *Pegasus Group*, *Tegopoulos AE* and *Kathimerini AE*) controlled 71% of the national newspaper market. They all have interests in the broadcast media and most of them also engage in other economic activities, such as shipping, construction, and telecommunications (Psychogiopoulou, Anagnostou, & Kandyla, 2011).

governance, asserting itself “as the collective subject of a real and direct democracy to be enacted here and now” (Kioupkiolis, 2013, p. 153).

Thus the counter-hegemonic power expressed by the multitude seems to “re-politicize” the aspects of the social that in the era of post-politics are being depoliticized, privatized, and subjected to monetary criteria, such as the use of space and time, the government, decision making, and responsibility.

Certainly, social movements in all their expressions were characterized by contradictions, weaknesses, and ambivalences. Yet they carved out spheres of autonomy where alternative subjectivities could be imagined and embodied, cracking and denaturalizing the totalizing neoliberal discourses, “re-politicizing” what the latter try to privitize. And this is exactly what we intended to accomplish with this thesis; to strip the ideal of homo-oeconomicus of its cloak of normality and commonsensical value showing how that the neoliberal productive subject does not form part of the natural state of affairs, but it is rather configured through quotidian communicative practices.

# PART 2: RESEARCH DESIGN

**1. The discursive construction of the social**

**2. Discourse analysis**

**3. Our multiperspectival package**

- 3.1. Discourse theory
- 3.2. Critical discourse analysis
- 3.3. Critical discursive psychology

**4. Accessing the field**

- 4.1. Working with words
- 4.2. Working with photos

**5. The participants**

**6. The research procedure**

**7. The analytic procedure**

**8. Ethical considerations**

**9. Evaluating the produced knowledge**

**10. Research questions**

# RESEARCH DESIGN

> "The question is", said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things". "The question is", said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master – that's all".
>
> –Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

This section presents the method and techniques that were employed for the purposes of the present study. Our goal was to conduct a critical investigation engaging in discourse analysis; so here we feel the need to clarify what the terms "critical" and "discourse analysis" stand for. Accepting that philosophical, axiological, and ethical premises underlie each research project and largely determine the methodological paths to be followed, we expound the assumptions on knowledge and social reality that underpin ours, drawing upon social constructionism.

In the first part we explain our choice for a critical stance and argue why discourse analysis was deemed the most appropriate method of analysis. Subsequently, we take a closer look at the approaches towards discourse analysis that principally inform our methodological perspective. Having unfolded our multiperspectival position, we turn to the techniques used for the collection of the research material: in depth semi-structured interviews and an adapted version of photo-interviewing. Finally, we navigate through the entire adventure of the investigation process, presenting its protagonists, its particularities, its steep uphills, and its rewarding surprises.

## 1. The Discursive Construction of the Social

Our ontological starting point is that social reality does not have an objective meaning, but meaning is rather assigned to it through social antagonisms. The various descriptions of the social world are never neutral, and even though they try to obscure their constitutive contingency establishing themselves as natural, each one of them is merely one of the various possibilities that the cultural and historical setting affords. This presumption positions us within the social constructionist epistemology.

Social constructionism (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985) founds itself in the "radical doubt of taken-for-granted world" inviting one to challenge commonly accepted categories and the objectivity of knowledge (Gergen, 1985, p. 267). Identities, social relationships, and the social world in its entirety are considered "artifact[s] of communal interchange" (p. 266): They are discursively constructed and historically and culturally framed. Social interchange and its

mechanisms, such as communication, negotiation, and rhetoric evaluate something as true or not and attach to it a particular definition. Hence, everything pertaining to the social is regarded as discursive, inasmuch it is instituted in the sphere of the symbolic (Ibáñez, 1997).

Understanding knowledge not as "something people possess in their heads, but rather [as] something people do together" and languages as "shared activities" (Gergen, 1985, p. 270) has two implications that particularly interest us here: To begin with, it breaks with the essentialism that both empiricism and rationalism stand for (p. 266); it emphasizes the contingency of the social, recognizing its cultural and historical nature as well as its discursive formation, against any aprioristic determination that would entail a necessary and inevitable course of events. This opens the way for critique; since we assert on the one hand that the current state of affairs is only one of the many possible alternatives and, on the other, that the production of knowledge affects it, either reinforcing it or challenging it, critique is actually made possible. We actually agree with those who argue that social inquiry should be oriented towards problematizing what is viewed as natural and objective (e.g., Fairclough, 1995; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

In line with the premises of social constructionism, we do not sustain that the academic discourse possesses truth; scientific research only suggests another way of understanding and giving meaning to the social surroundings, while deconstructing taken-for-granted discourses, stripping them of their supposedly inevitable character. Of course, being him/herself part of the same picture that he/she wants to understand, the researcher needs to adopt a reflexive posture, even though one can never avoid – and we think that it would not even be desirable, were it possible – having a particular outlook. We thus do not make any positivist claims for value-free research that collects value-free facts; on the contrary we intend to escape the object/subject dualism, critically monitoring our own implication in every stage of the investigation.

The second implication concerns the focus of the investigation: If everything gains meaning through discourse, albeit contingent and relative, then it is discourse itself that should be the object of analysis; if identities and social relationships are shaped and maintained through our positioning in various discourses, it is those discourses that one should scrutinize in order to understand in which ways they produce certain fixations of meanings, which meanings they exclude, as well as the different modes of articulation of their elements that would result in alternative views of the world. This is why we position ourselves within the cadre of discourse analysis, which treats discourse as "a reality in its own

right", without being at the same time a pathway to a pre-existing external or internal reality – as is the case with grounded theory for example (Charmaz, 2011, p. 308).

## 2. Discourse analysis.

Although rooted in linguistics, discourse analysis has been enriched by and at the same time radically transformed disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, social psychology, political theory etc. As a result of precisely this diversity of disciplines which have influenced the field, there have been generated different practical and theoretical traditions that may treat discourse as the focal point of analysis, entailing however distinct presuppositions regarding its character and effects.

On our part, we conceive of discourses as transindividual articulations of signs that invest with meaning the social world; therefore discourse analysis aims at examining the ways in which these articulations manage to maintain and consolidate their own meanings through different practices. Throughout this study the word "discourse" is employed to refer both to particular texts produced by individuals within a specific context and to more or less coherent sets of practices, of linguistic or non-linguistic nature, that make up the social, hoping that it is every time clear which one is in use. These two conceptualizations of the term share the paramount quality of intertextuality that will be discussed later on. What we need to stress here is that no discourse exists on its own; they are all borne within a specific cultural and temporal context, referring to other discourses, intending to fix meanings in certain ways. Hence, they provide us with particular viewpoints, forms of talk, and values, affecting our experience and the way of enacting social identities (Gil-Juárez & Vitóres Gonzáles, 2011).

We will not examine the linguistic and philosophical origins of discourse analysis in the works of Saussure, Frege, Russell, or Wittgenstein, which, inspiring a "linguistic turn", shed new light on the part that language plays in the construction of the social and introduced new ways of conceptualizing "reality" (Ibáñez, 2006); nor will we contribute with an overview of the different traditions that fall under the umbrella of discourse analysis (see Schiffrin, 1994). We will only address the strands that our methodological mix builds on, namely, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, and critical discursive psychology.

## 3. Our Multiperspectival Package

Let us now present the approaches that inform our methodological design and outline the ways in which they were articulated for the purposes of this study. All three of them embrace the social constructionist epistemology, with a more or less post-structuralist orientation, understanding discursive struggle as the means of constitution, reproduction and change of the social universe. In addition, they are in line with the Foucauldian notion of the decentered, created in discourses, subject, as well as with the also Foucauldian conceptualization of power as both productive and constraining (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

The selection of these particular approaches draws heavily on Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) and was guided by our theoretical position regarding the constitutive role of discourse in social relations and social change, our perception of social research as critical action, as well as the needs of this particular study, that requires the investigation of the creative articulation of discursive elements by individuals in everyday talk. The careful incorporation of components that belong to different perspectives permits us to compensate the weaknesses of one with the strong points of the other, as well as to achieve a broader understanding of the discursive construction of the meaning of work by Greek employees.

### 3.1. Discourse theory.

Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (1985; Laclau, 1997), radicalizing the Granscian and Althusserian thought, provides a very helpful theoretical platform. Discourse theory adopts a post-sructuralist angle and conceives of the social as a discursive space; it rejects any essentialist determinism arguing that all objects, actions, identities, etcetera, gain meaning within discourse, within a socially constructed system of differential positions. Antagonism is hence constitutive of the social, inasmuch as antagonistic discourses intent to fix meanings by articulating signifying elements. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), articulation is defined as "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (p. 105). Thus discourse is considered "the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call moments. By contrast, we will call element any difference that is not discursively articulated" (p. 105).

The totality represented by a discourse is established on the basis of exclusion, of the exclusion of the rest of the possible meanings and the ways that elements could be associated

to one another. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) put it, “discourse is a reduction of possibilities. It is an attempt to stop the sliding of the signs in relation to one another and hence to create a unified system of meaning” (p. 27). These possible meanings that stay out, constitute the “the surplus of meaning”, “the field of discursivity”, as Laclau and Mouffe (1985) define it and “determines at the same time the necessarily discursive character of any object, and the impossibility of any given discourse to implement a final suture” (p. 111). This manifests the “precarious and relational character of every identity” (p. 99), pointing to the decentering of the subject, which is in this framework conceived of as “subject positions” that are discursively conditioned. In this sense, we agree with Mouffe (1992) in that we

> conceive the social agent as constituted by an ensemble of “subject positions” that can never be totally fixed in a closed system of differences, constructed by a diversity of discourses, among which there is no necessary relation, but a constant movement of over-determination and displacement. The “identity” of such a multiple and contradictory subject is therefore always contingent and precarious, temporarily fixed at the intersection of those subject positions and dependent on specific forms of identification. It is therefore impossible to speak of the social agent as if we were dealing with a unified, homogeneous entity. We have rather to approach it as a plurality, dependent on the various subject positions through which it is constituted within various discursive formations (p. 372).

Although an absolute fixity is not possible due to the constitutive contingency of every social form, partial fixity is; discourse theory, drawing on Lacan, uses the concept of “nodal points” of privileged signifiers, around which various elements are articulated and invested with meaning in a “signifying chain” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 112). In this sense, discourses provide a temporal and conditional closure attempting to structure a terrain that inherently does not afford to be sutured. In a Husserlian vocabulary, the sedimentation of successfully institutionalized social practices is accompanied with the concealment of the field of possibilities that were excluded, obscuring the fundamental contingency. Laclau (1997) identifies the sedimented forms of objectivity as the “social”. Accordingly, “the moment of antagonism, when the undecidable nature of the alternatives and their resolution through power relations becomes fully visible, constitutes the space of the ‘political’” (p. 100).

It is in the field of the “political” that hegemony emerges, “the field where the “elements” have not crystallized into “moments”” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 134), where antagonistic articulatory practices are confronted. Hegemonic interventions seek to reify

certain significations, crystallizing the meanings of as many "floating" elements – polysemic and contested signifiers – as possible. In other words, hegemony is the path that leads from the political antagonism to the objectivity of the social (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). However, the reverse procedure is also possible, and the Derridian notion of "deconstruction" is employed to capture it; the objective can recover its status of political. The ontological primacy of politics and the constitutive role of antagonisms as the "limit of any objectivity" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 122) reveal the impossibility of an absolute closure.

The very contingency of the discursive structures that are drawn upon during identification processes is precisely what induces them in the first place. This presupposes the category of "dislocation" which "refers to the general condition that all identity is constructed by excluding a constitutive outside, which in turn always threatens to subvert any identity's fixity" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 59). As Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000) put it,

> if dislocations disrupt identities and discourses, they also create a lack at the level of meaning that stimulates new discursive constructions, which attempt to suture the dislocated structure. In short, it is the "failure" of the structure, and as we have seen of those subject positions which are part of such a structure, that "compels" the subject to act, to assert anew its subjectivity (p. 20).

It is towards this direction that discourse analysis is oriented: Towards the dissolution of the commonsensical guise of hegemonic constellations of meanings, by visualizing the counter-hegemonic practices and by illuminating them as only one part of the political struggle for the configuration of the social arena. Our research project is encompassed by this objective; even though Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory focuses on discourses in their abstract dimension (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), their conceptual devices can prove really useful.

The relevant literature as we reviewed it in the previous chapter has identified the neoliberal discourse as one of the hegemonic within the order of discourse[18] of work, and has showed that the meaning allocated to labour by the neoliberal articulatory practices has acquired the condition of objectivity. Bound with nodal points such as "entrepreneurship", other floating signifiers such as "freedom", "flexibility", "state", or even "democracy" are contoured and signified according to the individualistic and economic oriented meaning of the enterprise. Talking to Greek employees we intended to examine to which extent they follow

[18] Following Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) we incorporate the term introduced by critical discourse analysis, defined as "a complex configuration of discourses and genres within the same social field or institution" (p. 141).

the hegemonic webs of meanings, and in which ways, if so, they disarticulate them, experimenting with alternative chains of signification. In the same vein, we examined how they understand themselves in relation to the subject positions enshrined by the neoliberal discourse – the individualistic productive subject – and if other discursive resources are used in order to claim countervailing subject worlds.

### 3.2. Critical discourse analysis.

Discourse theory has not systematically developed a practical toolkit for textual analysis, so inquirers often reinforce their methodological blend with other perspectives, such as critical discourse analysis (e.g., Phillips, 2000; Rear & Jones, 2013). Although critical discourse analysis (CDA)[19] and discourse theory could both be listed under the social constructionist paradigm, they do diverge in various points. The one that would generate doubt on the possibility of combining them is on an ontological level, regarding the extent to which the discursive constitutes reality: Laclau and Mouffe leave no space for the non-discursive, while CDA recognizes social practices and structures that work in conjuncture with discourse (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough argues that the "social component" consists of reified practices and relations that were once formulated in discourse; so, from our point of view, it does not differ so radically from what discourse theory calls the "social", i.e. the objectified articulatory practices that have masked their political nature. In any case we tend to follow more Laclau and Mouffe on this aspect, and for that reason we tried to "translate" into discursive terms what others would prefer to analyze using pure sociological approaches.

On the other hand, they do coincide on the contingency of discourse as well as the fundamentality of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, which CDA, drawing on Kristeva (1986) and Bakhtin (1986), particularly stresses. For some (e.g., Sjolander & Payne, 2011) they represent the bridge that links the two outlooks; the orders of discourse are understood as "unstable configurations of elements" and the production and consumption of texts is based on their rearticulation or disarticulation, in other words on the creative use of "prior texts and conventions", being itself a facet of the hegemonic struggle (Fairclough, 1992). And this is a consideration that, as we have already explained, is at the heart of our study. Although critical discourse analysts tend to leave out the part of consumption and interpretation (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), for us it constitutes the center of attention.

[19] By "critical discourse analysis" we specifically refer to the approach principally devised by Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995), as opposed to the broader movement which includes various perspectives.

Fairclough (1992) takes as his starting point Halliday's (1978) systemic theory of language according to which texts have a dynamic presence in the social world and act upon it on an identity, relational, and ideational level; they have conservative or subversive effects on subject positions, social relationships, and systems of knowledge and belief. In order to explore their impact, Fairclough constructed a three-dimension model representing the facets of language use: that of text, discursive practice, and social practice. Apparently, it is an analytical distinction and the analysis of each one should take into consideration the analysis of the rest.

The text dimension involves linguistic analysis and examines the use of vocabulary, wording, metaphors, grammar (e.g., choices of voice and transitivity, nominalization, modality, i.e., degree of affinity with a proposition expresses, etc.), cohesion, i.e., "the argumentative structure of the text", (Fairclough, 1992, p. 77), and text structure, i.e., what elements and in which ways are used. We principally concentrate on elements of word use and meaning, grammatical features that indicate the attribution of responsibility such as the selection of active or passive voice and nominalization, as well as on modality, in order to examine the level of commitment and the speaker's attitude towards their statements.

However, we are more attentive to the second dimension, the one that Fairclough (1992) defines as discursive practice. Here, the focus is on which discursive resources are drawn upon and in which ways they are integrated in the production and interpretation of content. On this level, CDA largely converges with discourse theory and its concern for the creative articulation of discursive elements in the process of constructing the self and social reality. Integrating the linguistic, or micro-scope and being determined by the macro-level of the social practice, discursive practice mediates the relationship between the two (Fairclough, 1992, p. 86). When analyzing discourse as social practice, CDA is looking to explain how texts impact power relations and place themselves within the hegemonic struggle. And this is something that we aspired to reflect in our text: The extent to which the ways that individuals (inter-)discursively engineer the social universe contributes to its unquestionable reproduction or opens new paths of discursive change.

### 3.3. Critical discursive psychology.

Finally, critical discursive psychology is chosen for its focus on specific instances of language use and its function, always with a critical perspective (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 1998). Often, objections have been expressed (e.g., Parker, 1997) on the

compatibility between approaches that view individuals primordially as subjects of discourse – such as discourse theory – and discursive psychology, which understands them as active agents producing discourse. Nonetheless, we are in line with analysts that believe that "it is possible to attend both to the ways in which speakers deploy discursive resources in particular situations and to the broader social and institutional contexts that shape such deployment" (McMullen, 2011, p. 207; Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Moreover, we find it usefully complementary to CDA in that it does not approach language linguistically, but instead rhetorically, considering the alternative versions of reality with which the speaker is in dialogue (Gil-Juárez & Vitores González, 2011).

Through the analytical lens of critical discursive psychology, we seek to highlight the discursive patterns and repetitions that participants mobilize within the meso-level of the interview, which are tightly interconnected to the macro-level and the struggles over meaning that take place in the social field. In this sense, we follow the strand of discursive psychology that mixes a post-structuralist perspective on the construction of the social and the subjectification processes with the contribution of conversation analysis and the focus on discourse's orientation to action, according to the specifics of the interaction (e.g. Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 2007). Adopting this standing point we aim to tackle issues of agency, sharing Roland Barthe's (1982) conceptualization of speaking subjects, as both masters and slaves of discourse. In fact, we would like to take this thought a step further and dare to say that subjects are both creators and creations of discourse.

We refrain from the use of the term "psycho-discursive practices", as "recognizable, conventional, collective and social procedures through which character, self, identity, the psychological, the emotional, motives, intentions and beliefs are performed, formulated and constituted" (Wetherell, 2007, p. 80). We believe that all social practices are discursive and all discursive practices "implicate a psychology or implicate an identity" (p. 80). At the same time, "the constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 46). With that in mind, the analytical tools that proved most useful for a thorough analysis of our research material were "positioning" and "interpretative repertoires".

### *3.3.1. Interpretative repertoires*

Originally defined as "recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 149),

interpretative repertoires constitute one of the most prominent analytic tools of Discursive Psychology. Even though, as Potter (2007) observed, current work in the framework of Discursive Psychology does not focus that much on them, they do remain a key-element for a lot of studies in the field. According to, probably, the most sophisticated and oft-cited definition, interpretative repertoires constitute

> broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images. In more structuralist language we can talk of these things as systems of signification and as the building blocks used for manufacturing versions of actions, self and social structures in talk. They are some of the resources for making evaluations, constructing factual versions and performing particular actions (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 90).

Emphasizing flexibility, the concept of interpretative repertoires avoids the reification of discourses, foregrounding the situated character of talk and their analysis provides insight on "how discourse is constructed in relation to social action, how people construct their understandings of the world in social interaction, and how these understandings work ideologically to support forms of social organisation based on unequal relations of power" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 106-107).

In other words, interpretative repertoires provide the means of intelligibility of the social world, serving as the commonsensical discursive patterns that are used by individuals in their efforts to make sense of the self and the social, although some may become culturally dominant, and hence more readily accessible and others marginalized (Edley, 2001; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Serving as the fabric of situated human interaction, used for the manufacturing of versions of the subjectivity and its surroundings, their availability varies according to the historical and sociocultural background, while their selection depends on the rhetorical concerns of the interlocutors (Kesisoglou, 2014). Organizing accountability, they are creatively drawn upon in order to realize locally managed positions in various communication practices (Wetherell, 1998).

Within the context of the interviews that we conducted for the purposes of this study, the participants were intepellated as working subjects and called upon to negotiate their working identities, legitimizing or challenging certain discursive formulations; focusing on the discursive practices and patterns that were mobilized locally we intend to explore the representational technologies that are available for the configuration of identity and social reality, permitting or obstructing particular conceptualizations of subjectivity, rationalizing or questioning certain worldviews. Far from being entirely autonomous, the separation of the

interpretative repertoires is attempted for analytical purposes, aiming to bring to light the forms in which they impact peoples' understandings about themselves and the social structures and, in turn, which are the reflections of quotidian communication strategies on the sedimentation of certain understandings of the social universe.

### *3.3.2. The analytical tool of "positioning"*

The concept of "positioning" (Davies & Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1998) is informed by post-structuralist assumptions about the subject, and the undecidable and contingent nature of its "identity". As we have already made clear, we do not view subjectivity as a stable constellation of internal attributes and beliefs. Social agents are subjectified by discourses that provide certain subject positions; these in turn, prescribe what can be said and done, as well as "how things should be acted upon, thought, and felt about" (Fougère & Skålén, 2012, p. 16). As Davies and Harré (1990) put it: "Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned" (p. 46).

The analysis of such "self-formative" practices allows us to investigate the active positioning of the subject within culturally available discourses, the attribution of identities to the self and others, as well as the broader conditions of intelligibility that make possible such positioning. The cultural slots that individuals can occupy are used as flexible discursive resources, depending on what speakers need to accomplish in talk. Within each one of them, making justifications, attributing responsibility or motives (Edwards & Potter, 1992), or building facts (Potter, 1996), differ significantly, depending on what each takes for granted regarding the social.

The process of positioning oneself and the others forms part of the antagonistic construction of the social, since people place themselves within different discourses and rhetorically negotiate the social identities they claim for themselves and others in order to establish them in the context of each encounter. At a crossroad between the meso- and the macro-level, the analytic tool of positioning permits us to explore the participants' interactional identity concerns, as well as the socio-historical matrix within which those interactions are imbued with meaning.

## 4. Accessing the Field

When the field is so complex, one needs to find openings that allow exploring it in profundity. In order to succeed in that, rather than applying a "single-lens" perspective, we see ourselves as "bricoleurs" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966), combining and inventing tools and strategies. We assumed that stance on a methodological level and we continue in the same direction on the technical one. The resulting "bricolage" is a construction founded on our understandings of the world, our past and present, the positions we claim within the discursive material that structures the social. From this standpoint, the participant is also seen as bricoleur: Strategically assembling images and words, furnishing with meaning aspects of the self and social relations. Pursuing a deeper understanding of how the signification of paid labour is engineered, we tried to explore these everyday miniature odysseys of "self-invention" through interviews based on a researcher-generated guide and on participant-generated photographs.

### 4.1. Working with words.

We really like Rubin and Rubin's (1995) metaphor for qualitative interview study. They explain:

> Metaphorically, designing a qualitative interview study is like planning a vacation. You have an overall idea of what you want to see and do, but you are not locked into a fixed itinerary. You allow sufficient flexibility to explore what you see along the way. You know which guidebooks and maps to take but are not sure what parts of each will prove useful. You change plans as new adventures entice you, but you keep the final destination in mind (p. 42).

It is not deemed necessary to dedicate much space on qualitative interviewing; it is one of the most common instruments for data collection within social psychology and the social sciences in general. Along the lines of critical social psychology, we concur with Tangaard (2009) who argues that in an interview "[t]he central analytical unit is not a bounded and static self but rather the diverse discursive repertories spoken by persons within particular social settings; that is, interviewing provides a context for revealing how language "makes" people, produces and changes social life" (p. 1499). Hence through such an encounter we do not seek to reveal a reality that is hidden behind or manifested through language; we try to trace the different voices that cross participants' texts and illuminate the way each one constructs the social, aiming to identify the socially embedded subjective

positions that are adopted at every point of the interaction, their local function, and macro-social origin and implications.

Aspiring to explore how Greek employees construct the meaning of work, as well as to identify the discourses they draw upon and how they do so, we considered the semi-structured interviews as the ideal means: The dense descriptions in thematic areas principally chosen by the researcher, offer rich material for a profound analysis; moreover, the particular format allows focusing on aspects of special interest of the inquirer, paving the way for follow-up, more precise questions, prompted by what seems to matter more to the interviewee.

Thus, flexibility is pivotal for an interview study; we tried to listen to our participants really carefully and rework our initial interview guide when topics we had not foreseen kept reappearing. The original guide was made up of open-ended questions, developed mostly on the basis of the relevant academic literature, in an order that rather than being strictly followed, permitted modifications for the sake of an unforced flow of the conversation. Thanks to a pilot testing, the questions and the transitions from one topic to the next were refined, while we reformulated some of them in order to make clearer what we meant to say.

One of the trickiest features is always the "human factor", or, in other words, how to create rapport. Some have talked about the "commodification" of rapport: pretending to connect with the interviewee in "exchange" for more and more intimate information (Duncombe & Jessop, as cited in Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008). Faking interest to gain access to more data, first and foremost does not fit in the notion that we have of "doing science" and secondly was unnecessary, because the stories I heard were actually much more captivating that I expected. I will not deny, however, that there were times that I found it hard to build rapport, and following all the instructions I had read in manuals and studies – maintain eye-contact, provide encouraging but not directive feedback, avoid judgmental comments, etcetera – hardly helped.

Many researchers have made the point that the traditional interview protocol perpetuates a hierarchical gap between participant and investigator and suggest more collaborative approaches to the interview (e.g., Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). For epistemological reasons related to the nature of the produced knowledge that we will address shortly, we decided to open or close the interview sessions with the discussion of participant-generated visual material and ask them to guide us through their texts.

### 4.2. Working with photos.

The use of photography and visual data has had a long but rather turbulent voyage within social sciences. Granted protagonism principally within anthropology, the incorporation of visual content in sociological work was encouraged at times and abandoned at others (see for e.g., Henny, 2012; Stanczak, 2007). Prosser and Loxley (2008) observe that these fluctuations were contoured by the technological advances, the methodological preferences, and the epistemological trends that encompassed scientific investigation; although sometimes integrated in positivist research designs, the fact that the revitalization of the visual mode in sociology took place during the '70's (Henny, 2012), an era characterized as "the interpretative turn" (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979) or "the qualitative revolution" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), says a lot about the epistemological orientation to which it is linked.

In the context of our inquiry, we decided to use participant generated visual material, asking individuals to take us out of the living room where the interview was taking place, lend us their look, and lead us to the crossroad where they stood when reflecting on "paid work". Apparently, no image holds the key of its interpretation in the form of an inherent value; its meaning resides in how participants themselves make sense of it (Stanczak, 2007), and it is their signification that interests us here.

Thus the function of the participant generated visual material lies in the creation of a space under the direction of the participants, where they have the opportunity to bring to the table topics that particularly interest them and engage with them. A tailor-made version of photo-interviewing (Hurworth, 2003) was devised and applied, combining "autodriving", "reflexive photography", and "photo voice". These techniques are usually listed under the broad category of "photo-elicitation", a technique introduced by anthropologist John Collier in the second half of the past century, who integrated the use of images in the traditional interview protocol (Prosser & Loxley, 2008).

For the purposes of this analysis, participants were asked to decide themselves on the visual content and photograph whatever and however they wanted, following only one external direction: the image should answer to the question "what does being an employee mean to you?". Used as opening prompts or whenever judged necessary, open-ended questions regarding the picture were expected to elicitate narrations on the topic and help talking about abstract concepts by "anchoring" them on the material world (Warren, 2005).

Autodriving provides the possibility to respondents to "drive" the interview by producing visual material. Although the option for the use of researcher-generated content as

stimuli within the interview process also exists, autodriving's significant advantage is that it may offer the investigator the "a-ha moment", bringing her/him in contact with elements of the field, which, although important to the participants, she/ he had not previously consider (Stanczak, 2007). Reflexive photography extends autodriving and, putting the photograph at the center of the conversation, encourages both participant and researcher to be more reflexive and engage with the conceptual as it is captured in concrete instances (Warren, 2005). Finally, photo-voice, or photo-novella, sometimes described as belonging to reflexive photo-participation (e.g., Prosser & Loxley, 2008), requires from the interviewee to take a photo "that tells a story of everyday life" and then explain it verbally in the context of the interview (Warren, 2005). It is often deployed with people whose voice is traditionally muted, promoting dialogue and social change.

Similarly, Cantera Espinosa (2009) has developed the photointervention technique, which "articulates photography as medium of visualization of problematic social realities with the principles of investigation and intervention of community social psychology, committed to the change of these realities" (p. 21). Its principal aim is to visualize the contingency of currently taken-for-granted aspects of the social, awaken a participative and active attitude, and invite reflection on facets of everyday life that the researcher considers unjust. However, photointervention seeks to take a step further and puts social intervention in the heart of its practice; before the deconstruction of the hegemonic discourses, people are encouraged to rearticulate the signs and imagine ways to produce change.

Ultimately, photographs served as a supporting ground for the researcher-guided interview; they fueled it with extra material, spaces for reflection on particular or broader matters, as well as opportunities to take the spotlight away from the interviewee, when considered necessary (Parker, 2009).

## 5. The Participants

Twenty-two people, 11 men and 11 women, aged 23 to 43 participated in the present study. They all have higher education and are currently in a paid-work relationship, one of them with fixed term contract, one on a part-time basis, and most of them (18) in small-medium companies of the private tertiary sector. In Greece, 72% of the employees work at the private tertiary sector, while 87% work for a business of 0-250 employees (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2015). Moreover, the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2013) documents that those who were more severely struck by the consequences of the "crisis" were the ones belonging

to the age group 25-44, giving room for the hypothesis that they experience a harsher disruption of narrative; for this reason, we thought that it would be interesting to examine how, under these conditions, draw upon the hegemonic discourses.

However, the statistical data served only as the backdrop of the selection procedure, which did not intend to "cover" the entire category "Greek employee"; instead of aiming for a representative sample that would stand for the sociological category of the "employed", we focused on the worker as a "political process, not as sociological identity" (Read, 2007, p. 125). Recognizing in paid labour a form of subjectification, we attempted to unveil the discursive matrixes that configure the working subjects and the ways in which the latter position themselves inside them when negotiating the meanings of work. Our design aimed for a balanced sample of the population category selected, in terms of gender and age, and for this reason a snowball sampling technique was deployed.

**6. The Research Procedure**

All of the participants received a letter by electronic mail (see Appendix 2) introducing the researchers and explaining the motives of the investigation, the part that the participant was called to play, as well as her/his "rights" during her/his participation. The letter was written in Greek, mother tongue of all participants and defined the aim of the research as the investigation of the construction of the meaning of paid work in modern Greece. It asked them to take one to three photos capturing "what does being an employee mean to you" and subsequently to have an interview session with myself where their pictures would be discussed, if they wanted to.

I had contacted most of the individuals by phone prior to sending the abovementioned e-mail, or had invited them in person to contribute to the study. These contacts posed some challenges, especially regarding the photograph-taking procedure. People were puzzled as to whether they had to portray their current employment or think of work in general, if they had to feature themselves in the photographs, and mostly, what should their object be. At first, I explained that they could both represent their general idea of work and that of their current employment and even gave examples of possible themes, trying to be as neutral as possible, or so I thought, repeating the same objects to the first three who asked: a lamp, flowers, a desk and a store sign. However, I made note of it in my diary and decided to refrain from doing it. Henceforth I answered to their queries by asking them: "What do you think that a photo like that could portray" and then reassuring them that we are not looking for

anything in particular and that whatever would come to their minds was good enough for the research.

The interviews were held at quiet places, mostly at the participants' houses or quite cafés in order to ensure unobstructed recording, in a course of two months (January-March, 2015). The first two interviews were used mostly as pilots, resulting into serious remodeling of the interview guide; however, the guide itself was not strictly followed as participants were free to direct our talk towards their own subjects of concern. Of course, I sought to avoid letting the discussion range too far from the research point of interest, although I realized that our questions could be answered by following the discursive paths that the participants wanted to follow.

The conversations lasted between 35 and 81 minutes, with an average duration of 59 minutes, and an effort was made to transcribe each one before proceeding to the next one, even though it was not always possible. It was not considered necessary to follow a transcription model (e.g., Jefferson, 2004), first and foremost due to lack of time and secondly because the interview setting was not expected to host as many alternatives as a natural setting. Furthermore, we share Parker's considerations (as cited in Tangaard, 2009, p. 1508) that overly focusing on the textual features and deploying a complex transcription system may add to the analysis in terms of appearance but it may be reduced in "textual empiricism", with the researcher overlooking elements related to power-discourse networks that are not directly discussed in the interview.

However, I capture important features of speech, such as pauses, emphases, and extension of sounds. Those are represented using an adaptation of Wetherell's (1998, p. 406-407) version of the Jeffersonian system as follows: Pauses are marked by numbers in parentheses that indicate their duration in seconds, while (.) indicates a micropause, of less than one second; emphasis is shown by underlining the words or parts of them that were stressed; and extension of sound is marked by colons, their number corresponding roughly to the length of the extension. Other elements of the interaction are also mentioned, as for example when the interlocutors laugh, or when turn their attention to irrelevant to the interview subjects, such as when a telephone rings, or when the participant lights a cigarette; this kind of explanations are given in double parentheses, (()).

## 7. The Analytic Procedure

We intended to undertake an integrative analysis, seeking to examine the relation between broader questions of social practice and power with local communicative practices. Using the toolkit of critical discourse analysis and critical discursive psychology as explained in detail above we sought to identify repetitive patterns that serve as discursive resources available to participants, providing ways to construct the world and the self. The variation of ways in which participants positioned themselves and other social agents when talking allowed us to recognize recurring patterns that are flexibly used in speech and that legitimize or problematize certain attitudes towards labour. Following their rhetorical maneuvers and the creative organization of discursive resources in the processes of negotiating different accounts of the world and attributions of responsibility, we tried to understand how they reproduce or contest the chains of signification that compete over the hegemonization of the meaning of work.

After reading and rereading the transcriptions, we moved on to a first codification of the recurring themes concerning paid work. The initial codes were gradually converted to broader categories, being very careful not to overshadow their subtle differences or to leave out diverging positionings.

Having registered the main themes and categorized the material according to them, we begun a second codification according to the rhetoric goals the participants intended to accomplish. This implied a focus on the linguistic dimension and exploration of features such as grammar, transitivity, wording, metaphor, etc. (Fairclough, 1992). At the same time, we turned our attention to discursive practices such as positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1998), making justifications and attributions (Edwards & Potter, 1992), or building facts (Potter, 1996). At this point, we took a closer look to the systems of knowledge and belief that were drawn upon (Fairclough, 1992), examining the relation between the positions chosen by the participants and the ones offered by hegemonic or counter-hegemonic discourses.

The analytic procedure was an iterative one, as we found ourselves repeatedly turning to the corpus and back again to the pieces of analysis. At all levels we were alert for accounts and formulations that did not match what emerged as hegemonic pattern(s), trying to reveal the "why" of their use in the particular context, their social premises and social repercussions. In the same line, we kept in mind to look for what was left outside discourse, given that many times this kind of omissions "speak louder" than what is actually said (Spears, 1997).

## 8. Ethical Considerations

When one is involved in a scientific inquiry she/he should bear in mind its ethical dimension from the outset. Scientific discourse, just like any other, is not uttered from some Archimedean point and has material consequences on the way that the social universe is shaped; so the researcher should seriously think about what will be studied and how, the ends and the means, as Brinkmann and Kvale (2008) put it.

So, embarking on this voyage of scientific discovery, we had in mind two points of interest: the scientific contribution of our work in conjuncture with its impact on the field studied and the society in general. Situated within the critical tradition, we consider it our moral responsibility to orient our project towards the denaturalization of reified social relationships and the deconstruction of discourses that have come to be presented as objective reality. In this sense, our study is aimed at raising the volume of under-represented groups' voice, nourishing political dialogue, and reinvigorating social antagonisms over issues of social justice and equality.

Turning to the practical design of the project, we considered really important to inform the potential participants about the overall purpose of our study since the initial contact with them and explain in detail the procedure and their part in it. Without meaning to deceive individuals, we did not disclose all details on what we were looking for, in order to ensure the maximum level of spontaneity; we did, though, provide more information to those who wanted to have it. What we did insist on, both in written form and orally, was that participation is voluntary, that individuals reserve the right not to answer the questions they do not wish to, and of course that they can withdraw from the research at any time.

Apart from being explicit with individual's rights, we were particularly attentive to possible consequences of the interview interaction (Kvale, 2007). Although treating an issue with no emotional charge, prima vista, we modified our interview guide or we invented a reason for a brief pause when sensing that our interlocutor was being stressed. Moreover, we intended to close our sessions treating the dimension of "change", eliciting imaginative approaches to the topic of labour, awakening or reinforcing the transformative potential of different kinds of social action. Finally, before leaving the scene, we held a brief talk with the participants, addressing issues that interested them concerning the investigation or over irrelevant subjects in order to dissolve any tension generated during the procedure.

One more central ethical issue is the one of confidentiality. Preserving the anonymity of the participants was of paramount importance, given that the publication of their views could have repercussions for them, especially on a professional level. This is why they are

referred to under pseudonyms that they chose for themselves, and all the information that could possibly give their identity away has been similarly "masked".

In general, we believe that regardless of the extent to which more or less formal normative guidelines are followed, the ethical character of a scientific research is principally guaranteed by the integrity of the researchers; it is them who come across dilemmas throughout their journey and no handbook nor review committee can ever be in position to provide an indisputable solution. Nevertheless, they are not alone: The participants are present in all the stages of this experience and there is a growing number of researchers who suggest that when ethical issues emerge they should be addressed collaboratively among all the parties involved in an ongoing process (Wertz et al., 2011a). When removing the scientist from the epicenter for the sake of a more democratic way of conducting research, a series of questions arise, concerning which knowledge counts as valid, and if there are any objective criteria according to which the quality of knowledge can be measured. The next section discusses these matters.

## 9. Evaluating the Produced Knowledge

Our theoretical and methodological choices, both for gaining insight in the field of the construction of working subjectivities and for analyzing the material, foster a dialogical stance towards making science; this stance reflects our conviction that knowledge is collectively produced, and subsequently, action should be taken in order to narrow the relational asymmetry between researcher and participant, accentuated by certain research designs. Prosser and Loxley (2008) observe an increasing number of researchers within the social sciences who intend to apply more equitable investigation designs, a shift accelerated by the joint influence of civil rights movements, postmodern, and feminist approaches.

In this direction, some researchers attempt to circumvent the dualism researcher-participant by implicating them in decisive phases of the study, such as the design or the analysis, or even enlisting them as co-researchers (e.g., Montero, 2009; Silka, 2009). On our part, we did not seek such a break; incorporating techniques that foster the active collaboration of the participant is not enough to counterbalance the fact that the overall control and the key decisions were made by us – and the "us" and "them" division is one that we cannot eliminate. Since the object of the research and its methodological planning was in our hands from the first minute, even our motives to "strengthen their voices" or "hand them over control" give away an asymmetry that we did not seek to eradicate entirely.

Thus adopting a more collaborative posture echoes an essential presupposition that the "data", in a rather positivist vocabulary, is not something external to the researcher, waiting to be collected with some objectively devised technology. In social sciences, the material analyzed, i.e. the social, or an aspect of it, is a collective production, outcome of an ongoing conversation between the inquirer and the participant, as well as "among multiple, mutually critical perspectives from different subjectivities" (Wertz et al., 2011b, p. 399).

This does not imply that the development of scientific knowledge should not follow rules; in every context, getting to know something supposes a chain of actions that always comply with certain norms. By no means do we deny that the systematic application of a methodology in human sciences is of paramount importance when making scientificity claims; nonetheless, we argue that "what" scientific texts do is inextricably interrelated to "how" they do it, insofar as they actively construct their object of study. With that in mind, we believe that the methodology applied should acknowledge the contingency of the social, as well as the effect that the scientific text has on it; therefore it should be moulded by theoretical materials that question the extant state of affairs and include practical instruments that permit subversive interventions.

Making such assumptions about social reality and the way we get to know it, renouncing the idea of its tangible nature and rejecting the possibility of its objective representation inevitably opens up the discussion over the established norms for the quality control of scientific production; inasmuch as the latter is a fruit of social construction, its evaluation should not depend on the pursuit of objectivity, as is the case of the positivist tradition. Indeed, the poststructuralist thinking has casted doubt upon the notion of epistemological validity as an a priori definable benchmark that measures the truthfulness of findings (Altheide & Johnson, 1994) and recent reconceptualizations of validity reveal a noticeable turn towards the introduction of criteria set on "values and politics" (Lincoln & Denzin, 1998, p. 415). Under this prism, critical researchers renounce the transcendental character of the established criteria, arguing that grounding a social study externally, in the rigorous application of an objective methodology, should not equal to a validity certificate (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998; Lincoln & Denzin, 1998).

In line with Wolcott (1990), we value more the degree to which an inquiry contributes to understanding and critically interpreting how meaning is fashioned by social agents. In this sense, we do not aim to convince the reader by making claims of truth; techniques such as prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation, negative case analysis, or member checking (Creswell, 2013) are not treated as a secure path to validity, but are applied

here as frail openings to a deeper comprehension of the subject under scrutiny. On the other hand, demonstrating sensitivity towards the actors involved in the research and respecting the ethical guidelines that we already discussed are essential to the quality of research and have served for us – as for other researchers as well (e.g., Lincoln, 1995; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001) – as undisputable validity standards.

Along the same lines, the "coherence" of the scientific text that Potter and Wetherell (1987) propose as a validity feature is also something we aimed for; the production of a transparent analysis, offering plenty of data and illuminating their connections was undoubtedly among our principal goals. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that causality or different kinds of relations between textual elements are not to be thought of as generally accepted realities; their interpretation depends on the subjective position that is adopted each time by the reader.

Finally, as is easily deduced from our argumentation until now, among our highest priorities has been to make a fruitful contribution (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), being greatly concerned about the impact of our study on both the participants and the readers, aspiring to incite novel ways of looking at things and foster transformative action.

## 10. Research Questions

Having exposed the methodological paths we followed, the tools and techniques deployed, as well as our epistemological and ethical preoccupations, we now move on to present and discuss our findings. The chapters that follow, providing excerpts from the interviews we conducted and analyzing them against the backdrop of the relevant literature are intended to answer our research questions, namely:

1. Which subjective positions do Greek employees adopt when they talk about their working identities?

2. Which are the discursive resources that they mobilize in order to construe the meaning of work and how is the latter configured?

3. Which are the points of convergence and disjuncture with the discourses we identified through the review of the relevant literature as hegemonic?

4. Upon which discourses do they draw in order to conceptualize alternative imaginaries of work?

# PART 3: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**1. The self as an employee**

- 1.1. “The entrepreneur of the self”
- 1.2. “Socioeconomically determined self”
- 1.3. “Occupation-oriented self”

**2. The meaning of work**

- 2.1. The “school” motif
- 2.2. The “journey” motif
- 2.3. The “slavery” motif

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter we bring forward the participants' words, looking for answers to our research questions. In previous sections we identified the neoliberal discourse as hegemonic, both in Greece and a great part of the world, and analyzed the ways in which it has come to institute its explanations of the social and the subject as common sense. As we have already discussed in detail, neoliberalism, regarded primarily as discourse nourishing a certain type of governmentality and subjectification techniques instead of, merely, an economic program, induces subjects to elaborate social identities based on the market form and to view their social relationships from an entrepreneurial prism.

However, the sense-making process is an active one and individuals fashion themselves through everyday social action, through discourse, rather than simply depending on normative models unilaterally imposed on them. It is those mundane discursive strategies that we wish to give prominence to, in order to comprehend how working identities are shaped, which are the discursive apparatuses mobilized for the construction of the meaning of work, and which are the wider implications of such symbolic choices.

In this direction, we devised two broad categories in order to systematize our findings; they emerge from our research questions but are "furnished" according to the themes that arose during the interviews. We named the first category "the self as an employee" focusing on the discursive configuration of the working selfhood. More specifically, we examine the meaning-making devices deployed by the interviewees when they author versions of themselves as employees. Our analysis identified three patterns for the construction of the self as an employee, that we named the "entrepreneur of the self", the "socioeconomically determined", and the "occupation-oriented" self, which presuppose different conceptualizations of the self and the social.

The second category is entitled the "meaning of work" and sheds light to the discursive pores drawn upon by the respondents when negotiating their interpretations of wage labour. The "school" repertoire, the "journey" repertoire and the "slavery" repertoire were the three motifs that we identified, each one availing distinct subjective positions based on different assumptions about the social universe and consequently legitimizing or challenging the hegemonic fixations of meaning.

The modes of being and the sense-making apparatuses preferred by the participants are interwoven in culturally available discursive matrixes that form the social debates on paid labour and the working self at the particular historical and geographical context; they do not

constitute crystallized categories but rather contextually enacted discursive formulations, their use depending on the rhetoric concerns of the speaker. Their creative articulations and mobilization manifest their flexibility as well as the contingency of the constituted identities. Their separate examination serves only analytical purposes since they all form part of the intricate discursive fabric that is used for the construction of the self and social relations. As we discussed in the previous chapter, accountability and participants' orientations to the conversational setting fuel positioning, which is thus highly situated (Wetherell, 1998). However, by identifying patterns of talk on the local level, we also intend to shed light on the broader networks of knowledge and power that render these argumentative practices intelligible.

This chapter is organized as follows: First, we deal with the category the "self as an employee" and subsequently we examine the category "the meaning of work". Each time we provide fragments of the interviews, present our findings, and discuss the micro- and macro-social implications of the symbolic choices of the participants against the relevant literature and previous studies. In the next chapter, the "Conclusions", we will attempt a synthesis, aiming at a more profound comprehension of the discursive configuration of the self as an employee and of paid work.

**1. The Self as an Employee**

Within the context of the interview, the individuals were interpellated as working subjects and called upon to discuss how they understand themselves in the framework of paid labour, to explain their choices and behaviours regarding their professional life, reflect on their emotional responses in relation to their professional activity, and ascribe responsibilities for their working status and course. When negotiating their working identities, the participants focused mostly on three themes: professionalism, agency, and predicaments.

Professionalism" has to do with the values that encompass professional activity and in particular issues of loyalty and accountability for everyday performance. "Agency" refers to the degree that the interviewees thought they could control their professional course and to whom they hold accountable for their current status, accomplishments and failures. Finally, "predicaments" deals with accounts of distress caused by labour, examining the ways in which the participants made sense of it as part of their working biographies.

Against the abovementioned themes and depending on the rhetorical goals that the interviewees meant to accomplish, they constituted the working self in different ways,

positioning themselves within socially available discursive formations. What we explore here is what is accomplished by each construction on a micro- and a macro-level as well as the discursive resources that inform them. We identified three discursive constructions of the working self: as an "entrepreneur of the self", as "socioeconomically determined", and as "occupation-oriented".

Our findings largely coincide with those of Stecher (2012) who investigated the identity profiles of workers of big retail companies in Santiago, Chile. However, we do not share his epistemological approach and do not consider our three patterns of self perception as a typology meant to categorize the employees according to their biography or workplace, or as sedimented, coherent identities. Instead, we regard them as versions of selfhood contextually enacted, as subjective positions that individuals draw upon, sometimes interchangeably, when reflecting on their experience as employees, in the context of the interview. Our analysis also shares Vallas and Cummins' (2015) conclusion that the impact of entrepreneurial discourse on working identities is pervasive, without however remaining uncontested. Furthermore, we also concur with Kesisoglou's (2014) findings, regarding the banalization of precarity and the preference for "effortful" and active subjectivities.

Table 1 briefly illustrates these findings. Once again, we would like to emphasize that we have not classified each participant under one single "category". Instead, we witnessed that each one of them, in different parts of the research procedure, chose to entertain different modes of being, rescripting her/himself either as "entrepreneur of the self", "socioeconomically determined", or "occupation-oriented". Definitely, some subject-worlds were more popular among the interviewees, while others were not preferred often. In the sections that follow we discuss precisely those discursive modes of subjection.

This chapter is organized as follows: We present each construction of selfhood separately, analyzing how the participants made sense of the three themes which we recognized, namely professionalism, agency, and predicaments, in three distinct sections. In the beginning of each sub-chapter we present briefly the main characteristics of the discursive pattern in question and then we analyze a fragment from the interviews that we believe captures it best. Afterwards we deal with the three themes one by one, discussing two or three extracts from the interviews that shed light to the ways the respondents chose to position themselves against them. We close the presentation of each pattern by providing a brief summary of our observations and main conclusions.

Table 1. Category 1: The self as an employee.

| **Category 1: The self as an employee** | **Sub-categories** | **Elements of analysis** |
|---|---|---|
| | 1.1. The "entrepreneur of the self" | 1.1.1. Loyalty to the self<br>1.1.2. Individualization of responsibility<br>1.1.3. Normalization of predicaments as part of a strategy |
| | 1. 2. "Socioeconomically determined" self<br>. | 1.2.1. "Do the job"<br>1.2.2. Socioeconomically determined choices<br>1.2.3. Between normalization and resistance |
| | 1.3. "Occupation-oriented" self | 1.3.1. Loyalty to profession<br>1.3.2. Remaining within the occupation<br>1.3.3. Professional particularity |

### 1.1. "The entrepreneur of the self".

The position that was most frequently preferred by the participants when talking about themselves as employees, was the one of an economically rational subject, individually responsible for her/his professional and social course, valuing personal choice and investing on her/his human capital. In the framework of this pattern, there are two aspects that we should draw attention to: Firstly, the self is understood as an "entrepreneur", as an autonomous, active agent, attracted more to risk than to security, casting society as a field of opportunity. Secondly, the self is portrayed also as an enterprise to be managed, or a "brand". Therefore, all of its facets and expressions – education, social relationships, affective dispositions – stand as part of the investments that one must make in order to multiply her/his "human capital". The self is not just "traded" as labour power, it is "invested upon", in a market that is not ruled by the "equality of exchange" but rather by the inequality and competition between enterprises.

> Interviewer: *So how do you react towards all those things that you don't like?*
> Nefeli: *I don't react. I don't react.*
> I: *Have you ever thought of making, either officially or extra-officially, some move…*
> N: *Yes, a lot of times, but because as a person I'm afr, so because I'm afraid, I don't have risk inside me, I do nothing. That's the problem.* […] *I mean I haven't gotten into the process to see, as some of my colleagues say, to brand myself.*

I: *Ok. Do you feel that you could do::, you could change some characteristics of yourself in order to move up hierarchically or in terms of salary, or something? Have you made any effort to::: change?*
N: *Yes. Yes I have.*
I: *On what level?*
N: *I thi:::nk I have to address everything together. I mean, if I am to be more dynamic, more extroverted, all that can't change anything if I go to work in sweatpants. So I try to wear dresses and hardly ever jeans, even though our company does not impose a dress code.* […] *And another thing I've changed is the way I treat my boss. I try to smile more to him and talk to him more. Because before I didn't even want to run into him by chance!*

Nefeli, a 28-year-old woman, was talking about the things that make her unhappy with her job, among others being the unfair treatment and the lack of recognition of her hard work and her potential on behalf of her employer. In my question about how she reacts towards all that, she automatically targets herself, identifying – what she casts as – an inherent fault, a personal "disability", that has to be fixed. More specifically, her current unsatisfactory position and her feelings of frustration and discontent are attributed to her "fearful personality" and the lack of an important element: risk. Risk is ascribed here a pivotal role, portrayed as an indispensible characteristic for a successful professional course, as a positive personal trait rather than a socially engendered propensity, that each and every employee should have, in order to achieve her/his goals.

More specifically, Nefeli establishes a direct casual relationship between "job satisfaction" and the "self". At first, she hesitates to complete the sentence, and "cuts" the word "afraid", manifesting that feelings of fear, linked to weakness, generate shame and are hard to express. However, she claims a sincere persona who recognizes her "weaknesses" and says the word. Thusly she fully takes the blame for her status, making a direct link between the "professional wellbeing" and the "way of being". Turning to the coherence of her talk, we identify a series of implicit presuppositions, a set of explanations of the social world that are so commonsensical that do not need elaboration: Relying on your own strengths and taking risks are the only means to achieve professional success, while certain emotional states, such as sentiments of fear or insecurity, are impediments to one's career. Risk-taking, individualism and self-reliance are recognized by a number of studies (e.g., da Costa & Silva Saraiva, 2012; Webb, 2004) as key themes of the contemporary enterprise culture; their

mobilization in quotidian argumentation manifests the expansion of the entrepreneurial mentality to individual social actors, who come to understand themselves as managers of their own brand.

And this is exactly what Nefeli contends: That the only solution for improving one's working status is to focus on one's personality and embrace the qualities required by the market, to "brand oneself". In this way personal branding is forged as an indispensable practice, a finding that concurs with Vallas and Cummins' research (2015), whereby participants, in a great degree, portrayed "branding as a form of identity work that is incumbent on anyone who wants to succeed" (p. 311). By invoking her colleagues, people who have found their place in the labour market, the speaker achieves various goals: firstly, she establishes authority around the claim that one needs to "brand oneself", since the "advice" does not come directly from herself, a fearful individual, but from the authoritative voice of absent Others (Potter, 1996), who we may assume that enjoy more prosperous careers. Secondly, she accounts for her timid stance suggesting that she was not aware of the "proper" way of conduct in the professional setting, assuming the position of an inexperienced and even naïve individual. However, and thirdly, she also comes forward as someone who listens and is willing to change in order to adapt to the exigencies of the working environment.

The specific wording, "*brand myself*", echoes the entrepreneurial discourse that invites individuals to internalize corporate practices, treating the self as an asset "whose value must be maximized, using all of the branding tactics for which large corporations are infamous" (Vallas & Prener, 2012, p. 346). At this point we could draw an interesting analogy: Businesses nowadays are concerned more with the cultivation of brands, which are linked to lifestyles and feelings, rather than products that cover certain needs (Lazzarato, 2007). In the same way, employees seem to understand themselves not merely as working hands that can do a certain job, but as "human capital", as managers of their own brand, something that involves subjecting their whole personality, behaviour, and life choices to the rationality of the market.

In the extract cited above, the participant assumes the position of a rational subject that follows the rules as posed by the business environment, and as an active agent, completely responsible for her success or failure in the market, ready to make the necessary changes on herself in order to produce a brand that is more attractive to employers, even though her fears have hold her back for some time. Furthermore, she posits individual choices as the only manageable variable, constructing hence the labour market as an unquestioned

objective reality that one has to comply with, implying at the same time that it is a site on which individual agency can freely unfold.

So, which are the traits that this "brand" should have? Dynamism and extroversion are cast as indispensable by the speaker, despite the fact that they are not linked to her job description – Nefeli uploads texts to the website of a publishing company. Nevertheless she takes for granted that conducting herself in a particular manner can be more rewarding, implicitly arguing that those who do not comply with the prescribed "formulas of being" (Weeks, 2011) are punished by being excluded or marginalized. Indeed, the participant uses the verb "to be", making clear that she aspires to cultivate the "desired" characteristics. Once again, the problem lies in "who she is", rather than the institutionalized criteria.

At the same time, the corporal experience is also brought to light. The body should not indulge in the comfort of the sweatpants; it should be confined in the strict cuts of business outfits in order to manifest a "business-oriented interior". In fact, Nefeli, is not talking about a dress code indicative of a particular profession, attached to an occupational culture and semiotics. Rather, she refers to a "generic" style, one that should be adopted by anyone who wants to be respected in the corporate world, no matter what their job or personal preferences are.

What is more striking is that appearance is cast as even more important than character, given that the participant argues that by just being more sociable or active she will not be able to attain her goals. The concept of "branding" is very useful at this point: Brands are visual devices that communicate values and assurances to customers, helping them identify their favoured products (Wood & Ball, 2013), sometimes being the only factor that differentiates two products. Apparel and style provide the symbolic means that employees deploy in order to manufacture their one brand; the labour market and the employers play the part of the "customer", while the worker constitutes both the brand and its manager. And as Marcos de Quinto, chief marketing officer at Coca-Cola, stated referring to the new branding strategy of probably the most (in)famous brand, "Packaging is our most visible and valuable asset" (Moye, 2016).

What is even more striking is that getting in all that trouble is not imposed by any corporate norm; "*the company does not have a dress code*", allowing to its employees to wear whatever they please. Nonetheless, Nefeli takes the responsibility to discipline herself and comply with an unspoken rule. In spite of the fact that no limitation is explicitly set, the individual seems to have interiorized the "rules of the game" that recompense those who

"brand themselves" properly and modifies accordingly her conduct and aspects of her personality.

Finally, a crucial investment of one's human capital lies in developing a certain kind of relationship with their superiors, and more importantly their employers. Traditional organizational structures provided a more or less rigid communication and relational model, by establishing rigorous lines between the different levels of hierarchy, applying protocols that provided a safe guide for the members of the stuff in their interactions with their managers or bosses. Today, the hierarchical boundaries are blurred and authoritative hierarchies are being restructured and, at least in part, replaced by work teams that integrate employees of different ranks. Apart from the colossal emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) that this kind of cooperation entails, we should also note the conceptualization of relationships as strategic means of shaping the working identity; the employee is expected to cultivate a more personal bond with her boss ("*I try to smile more to him*") as a token of her social skills and dynamic personality. Hence the class antagonism inherent in the wage-labour relation is being dimed down, through the perspective that casts both workers and employers as independent business agents.

### *1.1.1. Loyalty to the self*

When the participants engaged in discussion about their day to day performance at work and the expectations they have from themselves, they frequently positioned themselves as being their own employers, accountable only to their personal standards and their inherent desire to excel, defining paid labour as a route to self-realization.

> A. Interviewer: *What do you demand from yourself when you are at work?*
> Thanos: *I am very hard on myself. I don't forgi:::ve ts I mean maybe the manager, my boss, he may… he may forgive something or tell me "it's ok, it doesn't matter" if I do something wrong. I, even if it is something very small, something stupid and insignificant eh:: I get very sad. I am very hard on myself. It may be making photocopies, or talking on the phone with a client. It is not my job to do any of those. But this is what I demand from myself. This is what professionalism is about, to do the job as you should. Now, who determines how it should be done is another issue.*
> I: *Who determines that?*

T: *It could be determined by the employer, and according to him it may be right, but you may see it wrong. So when I say that I want to do my job professionally eh:: I believe that I myself have developed certain criteria to judge how my own work should be done and how it shouldn't.* […]
I: *Apart from that you say that it is important to you to be "by the book". However you are not just "by the book", you are more than that… very polite, very cooperative, very sociable, even though it is not demanded by your job.*
T: *Yes but it is demanded by myself, as a person, and by my own standards that I have set for my work, to do it professionally.*

B: Interviewer: *What do you demand from yourself on the level of work? What do you demand from Klio?*
Klio: *To become better every time. To learn from what she does and to become better, to stay informed and to be as good and competitive as possible in the service she offers.*
I: *Competitive in what sense?*
K: *Competitive… I mean to offer to the client something tha::t will make a difference for his business. I mean to go to a company that has a problem and offer something that will help improve the situation. What will you get out of it? You'll say "look what I accomplished!". This is important to us, because they usually think that we go there to fire them.[…] And at the end of the day, you know, you say "I did it"!*
*I: So how does this make you feel, at the end of the day?*
*K:Accomplished* ((she uses the English word))*! I don't remember the Greek word! I mean the only word, what they tell us at work basically, which is the work-motto, you are effective* ((she uses the English word)) *and efficient* ((she uses the English word)). *So you will do something, you will do it adequately, so you w:ll achieve something that day.*

C. Interviewer: *What do you like most about your job?*
Tina: *What do I like most about my job* (.) *I like getting exclusive news for the magazine!* ((laughter))
I: ((laughter)) *In what way do you find that satisfying?*
T: *I find that satisfying because for me it incarnates the essence of our work. It is a piece of unique work, a unique service that you can offer. Ts almost everything else*

*is something that more or less everyone can do. This particular thing needs a specia::l knowledge, experience, practice etc. and it is also very appreciated by the market itself. I mean, that's what they basically expect from you. Your articles may be fine, your interviews may be fine, your anything may be fine, but mostly this is a unique little piece that is ts somehow precious so to speak, so it therefore has a higher moral reward, to say it in a way.*

My question to Thanos, an accountant at the age of 31, "*What do you demand from yourself when you are at work*", implies a "dual" self, one that demands and marks the guidelines, and another that should follow them and deliver. He contributes to this construction by assuming himself a double role, choosing to use the voice of the "commander", of the one who sets the rules, rather than of the one who obeys, as a different syntactic structure would permit.

More specifically, the participant responds to the question not by actually naming what he tries to accomplish in his everyday realization of tasks. He replies by giving a description of himself as a "manager" of the "self-employee": he is very strict and does not forgive mistakes. He is portrayed as a subject committed to perfection, displaying industrious effort and "professionalism" when conducting any task, even if it is considered tedious or trivial, and even if it does not typically fall under his responsibility. The actual requirements do not seem to be as important as the individual attitude, given that the speaker devotes his entire answer talking about his commitment to perfection on every level. What is primarily foregrounded by the interviewee is not the expertise at a particular domain, or the precise realization of the duties one has been hired to carry out; it is a certain kind of personality that one should bring to the workplace, one that is inherently inclined to apply the most rigid criteria.

By implicating the psychological factor the participant makes the challenge to live up to his own high standards all too personal. The speaker casts himself as profoundly involved in his work, affected by it on an emotional level, mentioning that he experiences feelings of "sadness" and distress when he fails to meet his own expectations.

Thanos enhances the facticity of his account of himself as a severe judge of performance by a number of rhetorical devices. The most powerful, in our point of view, is the juxtaposition he sketches between himself and a figure that canonically embodies the norms and their implementation: the manager. The comparison to a referent that is de jure and de facto linked to evaluating workers using high standards because of his own stake in the

final outcome, is strategically deployed in order to construct the speaker as a responsible subject, that has earned the right to obey only to his "personal criteria" of how work should be done, thanks to his compulsion to excellence. "Active-voicing" (Wooffitt, 1992) his manager and citing two concrete examples of tasks that get his full attention even if formally they don't deserve it contribute to a vivid description, rich in contextual detail, and hence objective and true (Edwards and Potter, 1992). By "beating" his "opponent", i.e., the boss, in terms of reliability and perfectionism, he is in a position to rightfully take his place as a manager of himself and disobey the official authority, only to comply with his own.

In this excerpt we can discern three possible "sources of authority" that could be entitled to impose their criteria and see to their fulfillment: the self, the manager, and the job description. The self emerges as the best judge of performance, as the most adequate agent to set the standards; of course only when commitment to excellence is established. "Professionalism" is therefore disconnected both from the occupation per se and the requirements of each company; the self-regulation that is linked to it emanates directly from the employee. Thanos undertakes the position of an autonomous and self-disciplined individual becoming his "own expert, own employer, own inventor, and own entrepreneur" in search for "excellence and zero defects" (Dardot & Laval, 2014, p. 5), incarnating the neoliberal dogma.

Traditional identities seem to have lost their prevalence and individuals are free and at the same time obliged to constantly invent themselves in the working settings. Indeed, Thanos attributes his motivation to excel as an employee not to his identification with a professional or social group, much less to coercion as we already saw. He credits his personality, that is innately inclined to do things right, "*as a person*". The "personal nature" motif came up often during the interviews, placing the individual at the centre of all action, creating a direct causal link between personality and result, marginalizing the impact of social factors. In this way, the world is represented in a dichotomous manner, made up of two kinds of people: the effortful and responsible on the one hand and the ones that fall short on the other. Therefore, both failure and success are ascribed to individual characteristics instead of the systemic structures or modes of functioning, legitimizing the institutionalized individualism.

One more issue that we should examine regarding this interpretation of professionalism, is "going the extra mile". During our talk, Thanos claimed the position of an effortful subject (Gibson, 2009, 2011; Kesisoglou, 2014) that, not only carries out his duties meticulously, but, voluntarily, takes a step further and exceeds the expectations set by his job

description. In order to address the matter within the interview setting I recurred to an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) – "*very polite, very cooperative, very sociable*" - in order to construct it as an exceptional case. The interviewee responds to my comment once again by drawing a contrast between the official authority and himself – "*yes, but*". The personal criteria prevail, without the speaker feeling the need to explain why; it is configured as common knowledge. In addition, "going the extra mile" is represented as something inherent to professionalism, something owed to the self, not to the employer. Failing to do it would imply betraying the self, not the loyalty to the company. By moulding professionalism in such a way, doing more than what one is paid for is being reified, as part of the "professional attitude".

Accounts like the one of Thanos which was presented here abounded in our research: In most cases, participants claimed for themselves the position of effortful subjects, who do not conform to their official assignments, but exceed expectations, invoking "professionalism". Professionalism is hence casted as an individual ethical code that entails loyalty to the self and the personal standards. The "discourse of excellence", central to the entrepreneurial culture (du Gay, 1996), is being embodied by individuals in the contemporary workplace, transforming into a "contractual" obligation the responsibility to exceed one's contractual obligations, since the company has hired a "professional". As McCabe's (2008) empirical research has demonstrated, "[a]s enterprising individuals [the employees] are expected to embrace increasing work demands and so must provide an example of doing "more than is expected to solve a problem for a customer"" (p. 376).

Such discursive matrixes, enshrining excellence and constant self-improvement, were also drawn upon by Klio, a 32-year-old woman, who works as an auditor for a multinational company. When asked what she demands from herself at work, possible objectives such as serving the interests of the corporation she works for or her profession do not even appear in her answer. Instead, her response is centered on the self and the need to excel. Experience and knowledge are being instrumentalized and are constructed as resources not so much for personal growth but for becoming competitive in the service market. The word "service" is indicative of the "whole package" that one should deliver, involving not only the particular job tasks, but the "professional attitude" as well, as we already saw with Thanos.

The attribute of competitiveness is hence cast as primordial, as a feature that differentiates good from bad employees; the objective is not just to get the job done, but to offer a service that stands out from competition, "*makes a difference*". Assuming the position

of an active subject, self-motivated, loyal to the enrichment of her human capital, the speaker builds her professional identity on discursive reservoirs that promote competiveness, promulgating subjectivities that adhere to the market ethos and act as a one-person enterprise. Actually, Klio, when talking about "offering her services", does not refer to the company that employs her; she refers to the clients of her employing firm, as if they were here own, and she treats them not as an employee of a multinational corporation, but as an autonomous businesswoman.

At this point, we should take into consideration the wide circulation of the "competitiveness discourses", not only in the context of paid labour, but also on a national and state level, especially against the backdrop of the so-called "Greek crisis", where the "lack of competitiveness" has been hegemonically represented as the source of all bad, portraying Greeks as lazy and financially irresponsible (Kioupkiolis, 2013; Markantonatou, 2013). The narrative tactics followed by the participants are inscribed in this discursive network and the identity inferences sought to be disavowed on the local level of the interview certainly have to do with the ones that have been incriminated on the macro-social one by neoliberal accounts. We will further explore their mutual reinforcement later on in this study.

All that being said, the shift from the "I" to the "We" that we observe in excerpt B is rather noteworthy. After having talked about herself as a competitive employee who wishes to offer a unique service, Klio takes up a collective identity, referring to a particular group ("*it is important for us*"), obviously her fellow auditors. Invoking a collectivity, even implicitly, and expressing concern about its image, manifests a sense of belonging that challenges the individualistic subjective modes entertained in her response.

Rather impressive is the reward that appears to be most valued by the interviewee. Klio positions herself as a subject that seeks "*accomplishment*" through labour, resonating with the ""enterprise discourse" which conjures the labor market as an arena in which individual freedom and self-fulfillment can be won" (Vallas & Prener, 2012, p. 339). Paid work is cast as a path to self-realization, as something that individuals owe to themselves, a means to a personal end. What we should note is that "accomplishment" appears in the same chain of signification (Laclau, 1990; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) with the twin goals of "*efficiency*" and "*effectiveness*", or, in one word, productivity, as well as "customerism", "a form of governmental rationality that, through prescribing certain practices and technologies, aims to establish customer needs and demands as the point of reference for management, organizational behavior, the design and development of organizational forms and the products and services that organizations offer" (Skålén, Fougère, & Fellesson, 2008, p. 152).

Although Klio acknowledges that being efficient and effective is a norm set by the company, she claims for herself the same entrepreneurial orientation with the firm. The use of business vocabulary – the words "efficient", "effective" and "accomplished" were used in English during the interview and in Greece they are used in English mostly within business settings – is indicative of the entrepreneurial spirit mobilized by the speaker; the deployment of a business lexicon in lay conversations normalizes the entrepreneurial culture and facilitates its further expansion and reproduction.

Tina, in excerpt C, also equips her working self with the attributes of competitiveness and excellence; she wants to offer a "*unique* service", a "*precious*" piece of work that no one else can produce. Achieving that is the route to earn the "moral reward" which seems to be what the interviewee seeks. Once again, the labour market is engineered as a space where moral compensations and self-realization can be attained, exceeding the narrow boundaries of "making ends meet". Nevertheless, one has to desire and be satisfied by doing what "*they expect you to do*"; emotional dispositions and personal preferences are thus restructured and tuned to the market needs, so that the person finds gratification when delivering the service which is considered more valuable by the market.

The construction of a three-part list (*Your articles may be fine, your interviews may be fine, your anything may be fine*) is rhetorically used by Tina in order to stress the exceptional significance of the particular service, while the use of the second person singular implies that this line of thought is actually commonsense: the essence of one's work lies in what the market demands; this is what provides the immaterial compensation, which constitutes the greatest source of satisfaction from labour. It is not only "accomplishment" that comes as a result from being efficient, effective, and competitive; "satisfaction" is also equated with delivering what is considered "precious" by the clientele. One is rewarded only when she/he gets to desire what the market does.

To sum up, we would like to observe that such narratives seem to echo the neoliberal mandates for responsibilization, enjoining employees "to assume the obligation of perfecting themselves and of bringing out the full value of their human capital" (Vallas & Prener, 2012, p. 343). Fougère and Skålén (2012) have pointed out the subjectifying potential of marketing ideology, contending that "the most powerful intraorganizational form that marketing ideology takes lies in the coupling of customerism (which establishes the centrality of customer needs and demands) with managerialism (which establishes the primacy of efficiency and effectiveness)" (p. 14). By attaching themselves to competitive identities seeking self-realization through enhanced productivity, subjects confirm the success of the

neoliberal governmentality, bringing to life docile self-managed employees. Docility is no longer obtained thanks to normative control, demanding loyalty to the firm, but invoking loyalty to the self and appealing to professionalism (Flemming & Sturdy, 2009). As Fournier (1996) put it, professionalism has become a disciplinary logic, which inculcates the "appropriate" work identities, governing professional conduct at a distance. Individuals appear willing to unfold their full potential within the occupational setting, construing the latter as a site that enjoins personal development, obfuscating its coercive nature and the structural inequalities that compose it.

As a result, employees "subject themselves to the whims of market forces by always striving to offer the best terms of "useful" knowledge, continuing education, flexibility, adaptability and endless hard work, competing from the outset with all other individuals in the labour force, lacking any collective bonds" (Kioupkiolis, 2013, p. 149). At the same time, paid work is stripped of its structural injustice and the antagonistic boundaries between working hands and capital is blurred. Subjects seem to reproduce the contemporary management discourse which "characterizes work not as a painful obligation imposed upon individuals, nor as an activity only undertaken by people for instrumental purposes, but as a vital means to self-fulfilment and self-realization" (du Gay, 1994, p. 662).

### *1.1.2. Individualizing responsibility*

When tackling issues of agency and individual responsibility over their working trajectories, interviewees most frequently chose to align with a profile of an agentic actor, who is, or should be, on top of her/his social course.

> A. Nefeli: *Maybe, if I worked for the same company being five years older and with a different amount of experience I would be different and choose to make things better I myself. Because it is definitely also my fault. Because I don't have the bravery to go and say, boss, I've been here all these years, you haven't given me a raise, you haven't acknowledged all the things I have been doing, ehm, to demand in a word.*

> B. Irene: *Always, I think I was always anxious eh:: about how to fill my CV and I thought that I would go to interviews and I wouldn't know what to say. So, I seized any chance, you know, I looked for anything to do in order to fill it. I mean I did two*

*internships during university, instead of one that was obligatory, one at a radio station and another at a Media Institution, and one month after I finished the second one I got a job as a flight attendant. But then I stopped for a while for my Master's degree. When I was working on my Master´s thesis I was looking for a job and I couldn´t find anything, anything, there was nothing. But thankfully I found the job at the bookstore I'm working at now. They were expanding the business and opened that branch, so it was a great opportunity.*

C. Kastoras: *The fact that I invested on time on some certifications and on a Master's degree, I think tha::t I have an ace up my sleeve in order to say, ok, you can hire someone with a University degree, but ok man, I have invested 15.000 euros in my education in the last three years. I think I ha::ve… But you know what? I mean, not long ago, a big company published a job ad looking for mechanics. But the mechanics should be able to do everything, to know everything, I mean, networks, data bases, speak English, ts, I mean they should know everything. Ok! I mean if they found someone who knew all that… what can I say*! ((laughter))
Interviewer: ((laughter)) *Do you feel that you enter this procedure, to learn a bit of everything eh:: to become, what you said before, indispensable to the labour market*?
K: *Yes, I have. A::nd actually::: after the last interview I gave, I did very well at the skills tests that had to do with networks, because I know this part, but I didn't do well at another part, that has to do with infrastructure, servers, and stuff like that. And I begun to think about it because I have noticed that it is something they ask for a lot in the market, eh: and I entered a procedure to think, maybe I should do something about it. And the truth is that after that interview I bought a book and I have started to study something different, outside my own field.*

All interview fragments cited above share a common thread: the participants choose to craft themselves as effortful subjects (Gibson, 2009; Kesisoglou, 2014) who actively and incessantly strive to achieve something better for themselves in spite of the adversities, depending only on their own human capital and its marketization. Thusly, the navigation through the universe of paid employment is defined as a matter that lies within the reach of individual agency, rationalizing the precarity and inequalities that are indeed acknowledged. However, as we are about to illustrate, success is conditioned upon the endorsement of

particular characteristics, which encompass personality traits, desires and dispositions, as well as professional skills and assets.

In the first extract, Nefeli blames herself for the unjust – as she describes it – treatment she receives, attributing it to the lack of two features. In the first place, the young age and the ensuing limited working experience are represented as impediments to undertaking a certain course of action that can ensure a more desirable status. Knowledge and experience are hence depicted as assets one should have in order to claim a better position within the arena of waged labour, resonating with entrepreneurial discourses which conjure "human capital" as a primordial source of human agency and empowerment (Vallas & Cummins, 2015).

In other words, if someone possesses the "right" credits, one can "make things better by herself". This assumption is premised upon an instrumental approach to knowledge, which is cast as a resource or a bargaining chip, as well as an individualistic view of the struggle for change, whereby the enhancement and effective management of one's resources is the most appropriate, if not the only, way to achieve something better. Consequently, from this standing point, the working self is compelled to engage in the accumulation of the cognitive and experiential "provisions" that are "most wanted" by the market, normalizing and even legitimizing the unfair treatment of those who are not willing or able to do so, rendering the "employable worker" as the prototype of the labouring subjectivity.

Secondly, apart from her working experience, the participant also involves another aspect of the self as a determining factor for success; personal character itself, and "bravery" in particular, is mobilized as one more "asset" one "has", along with the degrees and the letters of recommendation. The speaker deploys a series of rhetorical devices in order to establish herself as a rational individual who is aware of the "rules of the game" and accepts them unquestionably, albeit her inherent "weakness". The use of the word "definitely" leaves no room for doubt or contestation that she personally has a great part of responsibility, engineering this point of view as an objective reality. In addition, by active voicing herself, in an imaginary dialogue with her boss, and by presenting her points in a three-part list (*I've been here all these years, you haven't given me a raise, you haven't acknowledged all the things*), she adds facticity to her account, contributing to her constitution as a subject who respects the function and the norms that govern the labour market. Once more, priming – only by treating "fairly" – those who display the "correct" attitude is naturalized, while the marginalization of those who are not "brave" enough becomes axiomatic and goes without

saying. In fact, Nefeli does not even bother to explain why she needs to obtain those characteristics, only for her to be "fairly" treated.

Irene, who holds a Media and Communication degree and currently works as a saleswoman for a chain of bookstores, assumes a similar position. She represents the labour market as a site dispersed with opportunities that one should be alert enough in order to seize; her biography takes the form of a CV and her life choices are reduced to "bullet points" of her curriculum. The "employer" and the context of the "job interview", where individuals have to present themselves in a certain way, serve as a compass that guides her navigation into the world of work. Even though the speaker constructs this experience as stressful, referring to feelings of anxiety, she casts as natural the fact that one should be able to present a rich and coherent working trajectory, and that she/he should account for it to a company manager.

In order to rhetorically reinforce the formulation of the self as persistent, active, and effortful, the speaker sets in front of us the setting of a job interview, where she is expected to answer for the potential "gaps" in her résumé to an employer. The repetition of the word "anything" further support the construction of a subjectivity that is consistent with the mandates of the market, which induces individuals "to be available for work and obliged to work upon themselves to be ready to accept any kind of work, under any conditions" (Lazzarato, 2009, p. 126).

Accounts of this kind point to the shift identified by McGee (as cited by Vallas and Prener, 2012), "from the "self-made man" to the "belabored self" (in which individuals are normatively pressured to enhance their personal strengths and labor market assets)" (p. 349). Focusing on the particular context of modern Greece, Papagaroufali (2013) links the relatively recent, for the country, development of the "CV industry" to the imposition of the neoliberal socioeconomic model, which propagates through public and corporate texts the prototype of "homo-entrepreneur". However, even though she stresses the growing importance of life-long learning at the expense of the "productive stage" of one's social trajectory, our interviews, without negating that, also point to the instrumentalization of employment, in the sense that "being employed" equates to "being employable". Indeed, the qualities that Irene wants to boast through a "lush" résumé are not attached to a particular occupation nor do they involve certain skills or fields of expertise; instead they reveal a normative work ethic, manifesting the subject's willingness, and capacity, to undertake any task, individually assuming the responsibility of compiling a productive biography.

In the last excerpt of this section Kastoras sketches a very eloquent picture, that of a poker game, between himself, a potential employer, and the others who compete for the same

post, among them holders of university degrees. His education, that cost him 15.000 euros, only the last few years, is depicted as an "*ace*" in his sleeve, a "unique" advantage thanks to which he can outperform his competitors and dissipate any hesitation on behalf of his employer. Kastoras holds a higher education degree, but from an entity that only recently was officially equated to Universities and many consider it inferior. He chose to "*invest*" on "upgrading" his educational profile, by pursuing one of the most expensive Master's degrees in a public university, as well as a series of certifications from Greek and international institutions.

By using the financial term "invest", the speaker draws upon the entrepreneurial discursive pool, forging selfhood as an enterprise to be managed. By embodying the self-regulated, employable subject, individuals embody "neoliberal rationality [that] encourages the ego to act to strengthen itself so as to survive competition. All its activities must be compared with a form of production, an investment, and a cost calculation" (Dardot & Laval, 2014, p. 5). As a matter of fact, the speaker showcases the economic worth of his "investment" rather than its object or the providing institutions, taking for granted that anything can be measured in terms of price. Additionally, it may be regarded as a token of a personality that prefers to spend this kind of amounts on education rather than on entertainment or anything else. Nonetheless, it is not construed as a mere "expenditure", but rather as an investment, strategically planned in order to return "profit". It is worth noting that in the imaginary dialogue between himself and a potential employer, the speaker does not use the formal form of address (in Greek it is formed by using the second person plural instead of the second person singular) and he also addresses him very casually, calling him "*man*", as if they were equals, two autonomous business agents.

Furthermore, the participant exalts the need for flexibility and adaptation to the market needs, being personally responsible for meeting even the most outrageous, as he seems to consider them, requirements. Kastoras recurring to rhetorical tools such as the construction of lists ("*networks, data bases, English*"), the repetition of words like "*everything*" once and again, as well as an adoption of a rather cynical stance, performed with laughter, constructs the demands of the company in question as extreme and illegitimate. However, claiming for himself the position of an employable subject, respecting the market rationale, legitimizes the disproportionate exigencies of the employers, by taking the course of action that they require.

Turning the employability and flexibility motifs into commonsensical through the quotidian communicative strategies and life choices, people reproduce and preserve the

hegemonic discourses that are, among other settings, incorporated in state laws. As Gouvias (2012) maintains, the recent legislation for the restructure of the Greek Higher Education system, heavily drew upon discursive pores revolving around the connection between schooling and the labour market, as well as life-long learning, adaptability, flexibility and employability.

In conclusion, the participants when negotiating matters of agency and interpreting their choices within the sphere of paid employment position themselves as individually responsible for their course and choices, assuming both the psychological and the financial costs of becoming competitive and indispensable to the market. Embracing calculative identities that do not count on collective action but are built upon rational choice and the incrimination of the personality traits that are not compatible with the entrepreneurial prototype, people consent to the inequalities that rule the capital-labour relationship, normalizing and thus perpetuating its terms and conditions.

*1.1.3. Normalizing predicaments as a part of a strategy*

Often during the interviews, the participants referred to aspects of their working experience that they found distressful, or to things they had to sacrifice at the altar of their incorporation, permanence, or success in the realm of labour. Frequently, these predicaments were naturalized or even not recognized as such at all, when the speakers adopted subject positions defined by self-discipline, responsibility, and strategic planning, or, simply put, entrepreneurial spirit.

> A. Sonia: *When I wa::s, well ok, when I was nineteen I just worked part time for a year at an accounting office, <u>whenever</u> they needed me, without being paid, just to, well they gave me some very little money, just to see if I like this part of Economics. I mean I had no insurance or anything, just for the experience. Because I was still a student, and there are a lot of professional exits when you study Economics, so I did it only to decide what to do after I finish university and to have some experience.*

> B. Klio: *So you think to yourself, very, this job is extremely important as a milestone. I mean you come, you do it, you know that you will have a hard time for five, six, seven years and then you will find a very good job. It makes a <u>very good</u> CV. And this is why they do it, the 80% of the people. Because in general it is very::: it has a*

*lot of stre::ss, a lot of pressu::re, you may see people with no reason smoking a cigarette and crying, out of the blue, eh, you have all kinds of stuff.*

C. Eva: *And necessarily now:: I fee::l that for some time now I am supporting this company with personal cost.*
Interviewer: *Why are you doing that?*
E.: *Eh::: because I think it is professional on my behalf to do it at this point. I mean the::: company is going through a:: a critical phase at this point. I mean if I leave and keep to my working hours, two people will stay behind that will have to carry out more work, that we could have split in three and get it over with. And do it better as well. So this is why I tell you that at this point I'm supporting the company, until more employees come, because it is not morally right for me to say no. Even though practically, maybe it would be a good chance to say, "you know what, I work extra hours, some tasks are not in my job description* ((the two last words originally in English)) *but I do them anyway, eh:: we have to readjust the salary".*
I.: *And how come you don't say that?*
E.: *Eh::: I intend to say it but not yet.*
I.: *What are you waiting for?*
E.: *Basically, I have asked for an evaluation* ((the word originally in English)) […]
I.: *But you don't ask for something more like that…*
E.: *No, but based on what they tell me I will be in a position to ask for something more. Because actually my salary is for a junior* ((the word originally in English)). *Ts, the other stuff I do are not on a junior-level. So::: that's the difference.*
I.: *So you are doing it kind of strategically…*
E.: *Eh::: I am doing it kind of strategically maybe, yes. I don't know if this is sneaky though…*
I.: *I didn't mean that it is sneaky…*
E.: *Well yes, I am doing it kind of strategically*

Sonia, in the first extract, is a 31-year-old woman who studied Economics, obtained a Master's degree in Human Resources, and currently holds a managerial position at a big company. When I asked her about her working history, she began her narration from what she framed as her first working experience, at an accounting office. She had no insurance, was rarely paid and only worked when the company had something for her to do. However,

having a pecuniary remuneration and an insurance program are cast as secondary or even unnecessary when there is something more important at stake: experience.

The interviewee constructs herself as an employable subject that prioritizes her preparation for the labour market, even if this entails giving up the most basic, institutionally established rights that derive from work, payment and insurance. Gaining experience and going out to the world of paid employment, ready to satisfy the market's needs, without losing precious time from one's working life only because working rights are not respected, is represented as something natural and logical by the speaker. By casting herself as a provident individual who prioritizes her working future to ensuring her social rights, Sonia banalizes exploitation turning it into a commonsensical condition. Billig (1995) introduced the concept of "banality" in order to explain how nationalistic ideas have turned into common sense through quotidian practices. Similarly, renouncing one's rights is constituted as a reasonable strategy, through the engineering of an employable subjectivity. Her argumentation points to a kind of an "exchange", freely accepted by the speaker, who chose to trade her working power for taking a glimpse at the labour market, and adding a "bullet point" to her curriculum. The narration is held predominantly in the first person singular, with no allusion to any type of negotiation, construing the course of action as a deliberate choice of an active agent, while it establishes a direct link between unpaid work and experience, ruling out any other alternatives.

Implicating the age factor as well as her still being a student serves a double rhetorical goal: Firstly, it helps build the profile of a responsible young woman who is concerned about her professional integration, regarding time as a precious resource and subjecting her life to careful planning. Secondly, it wards off any negative inferences about her "selling herself cheap", since being so young supposedly does not allow her to negotiate better terms. Assuming such a position, she reproduces the neoliberal prescriptions about effective time management and "investments" that lead to the attainment of features favoured by the market. At the same time, she normalizes and legitimizes the unfair treatment of younger workers, which was recently institutionalized through the establishment of lower salaries and less rights for them.

As we already discussed, working in unpaid positions looking for experience constitutes a common phenomenon within the matrix of activities that enable people to enhance their employability (Smith, 2010). Furthermore, academic life is forged as a "prelude" to working life, unequivocally linked to the acquisition of skills demanded by the business world, as it was also evidenced in previous excerpts. This finding concurs with Lair

and Wielend's (2012) empirical data about the relationship between work and higher education, as well as with da Costa and Silva Saraiva (2012) who found that individuals, assuming entrepreneurial identities, favoured the practical over the academic life, conceptualizing the conditions of "slavery" as a necessary sacrifice. Exploitation is thus being sanctioned as long as it constitutes part of a strategic "business plan".

This is the argumentative strategy that Klio seems to follow as well. The respondent fashions herself as a subject that makes highly reflective decisions ("*So you think to yourself*") concerning her professional future, responsibly taking up the load that the market-induced choices entail. The second person singular employed by the interviewee rhetorically fashions the rationale explained as common, shared by most, or at least by those who are preoccupied with their working career. Additionally, the statement "*this job is extremely important*", adds objectivity to her account, presenting a personal evaluation as a widely acknowledged fact. The speaker grants the job the position of a subject again, when she declares that "*it makes a very good CV*". One job is portrayed as having the capacity to "*make a CV*", to stand for ones entire professional biography, manifesting that she/he was able to meet extraordinary requirements.

The workers are thusly conceptualized as active agents who would voluntarily pick a highly stressful occupation, just because "*it makes a good CV*". However, there is a tension between the agency of the employee and the agency of the labour market, since they both seem to have a protagonistic role. The dilemma is resolved by using the criteria of the market in order to guide personal choice, individually pursuing a "good job", after having overcome a series of challenges.

Hence, working under extreme pressure and stressful conditions is normalized as a decisive prerequisite for a prosperous professional development, leaving us wondering what happens if one is not willing or able to endure that. Possible objections regarding loyalty to the firm are implicitly yet clearly overruled, as the speaker assumes a calculative posture, envisioning a linear trajectory, attainable on the condition that one sticks to the paths marked by the market. Just like Sonia, Klio also normalizes and even justifies the pain induced by work, given that it has the ability to drive you to a next level. Worth noticing is the antithesis that we can detect in Klio's response: The rationale behind legitimizing and actively deciding to sacrifice corporal and mental wellbeing is portrayed as commonsensical and thus reasonable, whereas the bodily reactions to the extreme pressure experienced within the working environment seem absurd, "*out of the blue*" and "*with no reason*".

In the third fragment, Eva, social media manager in her early thirties, when making sense of the sacrifices she makes for work, draws upon three different discursive motifs. Previously, the interviewee has complained about working very long hours and having extremely loaded schedule, without being paid adequately. When I ask her why she puts up with this she invokes professionalism, embracing a subject position of a self-disciplined employee, who has to carry out quite any task she is charged with, only in order to meet her own high standards. We already saw the implications of the mobilization of the "professionalism" repertoire by employees. Portraying the situation of the company as "*critical*" the speaker further supports her decision to put in extra effort, reproducing the oft-rehearsed speeches of many firms in Greece and the world, particularly during the period of the so-called "crisis", that asked their employees to demonstrate a "responsible stance", to be patient and work harder in order to ensure the wellbeing of the company.

The second discursive device mobilized in order to endorse an effortful and responsible subjectivity is "teamwork". Teamwork is represented as one of the values that comprises "professionalism" and was very frequently endorsed by respondents who eagerly defined themselves as "team players", ready to make sacrifices for the sake of their team or their co-workers. By fashioning themselves as offering more than they are supposed to in the context of teamwork, individuals seek to disavow identity inferences such as careerism or identification with an impersonal corporation.

Teamwork features among the most prominent traits promulgated by businesses, especially today, when organizations, in pursuit of flexibility, promote flatter structures and project teams (Webb, 2004). A number of previous studies (e.g., Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Barker, 1999; McCabe, 2008) have shown that "teamwork" has provided a discursive weapon in the business array, in the effort to achieve organizational control through the use of symbolic constructions, such as partnership, or being a teammate. Albeit promoting empathy as a cultural value, enterprise discourse promotes at the same time work intensification (McCabe, 2008), and being a member of a team may result in just another form of control (Barker, 1999). As Barker (as cited in Alvesson and Willmott, p. 630) puts it, "if [workers] want to resist their team's control, they must be willing to risk their human dignity, being made to feel unworthy as a "teammate"".

Finally, Eva constructs her choice to "*support the company with personal cost*" as a strategic choice, actually accepting my framing it as such. In line with the argumentation unfolded by Klio and Sonia, being exploited is justified in the framework of a premeditated plan which aims at obtaining an advantageous position within the organization or the labour

market in general in the future. Nonetheless we witness a struggle taking place within the narration of the speaker, who, having invoked the "higher values" of "professionalism" and "teamwork", now feels accused of being selfish and "*sneaky*" because her behaviour seems to be guided by individualistic motives. This kind of tensions, embodied by people in their everyday practices, generating doubts about their "real" identities, reveals the cracks of the enterprise discourse and the identity regulation that is exercised through its propagation, leaving room for its active contestation and acts of resistance.

### *1.1.4. Summary*

Daniel Pink, best-selling author of business, work and management books, in his work *Free Agent Nation* (2001) salutes "the new emblematic figure" of our times, "the free agent – the independent worker who operates on his or her own terms, untethered to a large organization, serving multiple clients and customers instead of a single boss" (as cited in Vallas & Prener, 2012, p. 344). As Webb (2004) contends drawing on Knights and Willmont "[s]uccessive generations of management consultants have advocated the value of entrepreneurialism, teamwork, orientation to customers and intensive use of information technologies to monitor performance" (p. 721). In this section we saw how these managerial imperatives are reproduced and conventionalized through mundane practices; power, at least to a certain degree, is exerted through the construction of the entrepreneurial subjectivity, through the colonization of the individual and the inculcation of the individualistic ethos of the enterprise. The self is thusly modeled after a prototype that we could call "responsible autonomy", borrowing Friedman's (1990) term, calling for responsibilization and individualism on every level.

In this context, our findings concur with previous empirical studies showing that in many cases in the contemporary workplaces, professionalism is used in order to indicate a certain work ethic revolving around customerism, instead of the possession of specific skills or expertise related to a particular occupation (Fournier, 1999). At the same time, labour is conjured as a path to continuous self-improvement empowering employees to achieve self-actualization through hard work. The respondents adopted competitive identities seeking self-realization through enhanced productivity, exemplifying the success of identity regulation through identity work (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Positioning themselves as individually responsible for their working trajectories, the participants drew upon discourses that rationalize the individualization of risk (Beck, 1992),

assuming both the psychological and the financial costs of becoming competitive and indispensable to the market, marginalizing behaviours and identities that do not embrace the entrepreneurial dogma. Normalizing sacrifices as part of a strategic plan which organizes their working lives, the intensification of labour becomes all the more natural, restraining the articulation of counter-hegemonic assemblages of work and identity. However, the internal tensions of the business discourse seem to give way to discursive non-closures, which were indeed visible through the contradictions traced within the interviewees' texts.

### 1.2. Socioeconomically determined self.

A different version of selfhood that emerged through the interviews was one defined by socioeconomic conditions. Mobilizing discursive themes such as economic hardship, no alternative to entering the labour market, the existence of a hostile economic environment, and luck, the participants sometimes chose to rescript themselves as part of a wider group, that of the "workers", clearly marking the difference between them and the "bosses". In this case, work was not cast as a path to self-realization, but rather as an obligatory routine imposed by necessity. Entrepreneurial characteristics such as "going the extra mile" or the "glorification of risk" seem to lose their appeal, when the working self is understood as merely "working hands".

> Interviewer: *The fact that you don't have an option but to work in order to make a living... what do you think about that?*
> Dionysis: *What is it there to think? Since it ain't going to change… And I'm not into gambling either… to win the lottery!* ((laughter)) *I'm telling you, Katerina, we're not among the privileged ones. You'll work your whole life, ok, the thing is to make it a bi::t, to feel somehow good at work. You'll have to work an entire life anyway, but if you manage to have four or five things, to make things better, to bring things closer to what you like… otherwise you will get nuts!*
> I.: *How is that possible? How do you manage that?*
> *D.: With luck. Unfortunately it needs luck. I'm telling you, if only you were in another situation and you didn't need the money we would be talking on a different basis. Ts… tha::t if I have my money, I told you, I would most probably be at university doing a PhD, with no pressure, without being paid, I don't care, ts, I would most probably be there.*

Dionysis is now 33 years old and works for a telecommunications company in the IT department. He abandoned his doctoral studies some years ago because he was not getting paid and because, in his words, "*the research we were doing would be applied in Greece in 50 years from now, so there was no point*". During the interview, he mentioned once or twice that even though he likes what he does he is in the labour market out of necessity. I asked him how he felt about not having an alternative to selling his labour power in order to survive, constituting the capitalist mode of production as the only reality. However, I left at least the margin of "reflection", as a window towards different interpretations and consequently a potential change.

Dionysis reinforces my construction and rejects the "window" I offered. For him the current condition is reified, with no prospects of transformation or subversion. The participant emphatically eliminates any opportunity to produce a different interpretation of that "fact", rendering it susceptible to alteration, by opening his reply with a rhetorical question; in this way he "marks a sense of inevitability" (Butler, 2005, p. 36), casting doubt on the argument (Angouri & Wodak, 2014) I implicitly made. The impersonal syntactic structure of the phrase "*it ain't going to change*", leaves no room for personal agency, neither on an individual nor on a collective level. The reproductive dynamics of waged work seem so powerful that give it a life of its own and is thusly placed by the respondent in a subject position.

An important coherence element in this fragment is that the speaker insinuates that the only "way out" of this condition is gambling. "Luck" was often mobilized by participants who authored themselves as obliged to work just because they had no other financial resources. Contrary to the "entrepreneur of the self" who primed individual determination forging an agentic subjectivity, the "socioeconomically determined" repertoire featured "luck" as a recurring motif, pointing to the supremacy of factors that cannot be controlled by the individual. This is what Dionysis argues in his next turn as well: The only way one can improve her/his working conditions or avoid entering the labour market is by being "lucky". The interviewee employs once again an impersonal syntactic structure, "*it* needs", which in Greek is formed with the use of passive voice ("*χρειάζεται*"), rhetorically discarding intentional efforts.

Another impersonal structure, the impersonal "you", is also deployed when the respondent explains what it means to be "non-privileged", a characterization to which we will return later. This syntactic choice banalizes paid employment, which is thusly implicitly defined as the only means of sustenance, "applicable" to anyone who belongs to the particular group. Addressing me by my first name, something that the participants almost never did

during the interviews, adds a touch of authenticity further reinforcing his account, as if we had exited the formal setting, and had a casual talk between friends.

We shall turn now to the construction of both himself and me as "non-privileged". Dionysis creates a bipolar version of the social field, whereby the first pole comprises of those who depend on a salary in order to get by and the second one of those who monopolize the resources and therefore do not need to enter the workforce. As opposed to the discourse of enterprise which segregates those who cannot survive competition from those who equip themselves adequately and manage it, the differentiation here is based on a distinct criterion, namely, the "privileges" enjoyed by some, attributed to them in the framework of the current socioeconomic regime. This type of argumentation echoes populist discourses that have the ability to construct a "popular subject" through a series of politico-discursive practices by building up "an internal frontier dividing the social space into two camps" (Laclau, 2005, p. 43).

In fact the word originally used by the interviewee, "*προνομιούχοι*", in Greek, i.e. "*privileged*", was extensively deployed especially during the 1980's by PASOK, the Greek Socialist Party, which articulated a populist rhetoric around the dichotomy "privileged vs non-privileged" (e.g., Babiniotis, 2000; Demertzis, 2004). Stavrakakis (2015), among others, detects the same rhetorical technique in the discourse of SYRIZA, the Coalition of Radical Left party, which rose in power in 2015. Such a conceptualization of the social matrix upon which individuals build selfhood when positioned as socioeconomically determined subjects, permits the re-politicization of work, throwing into sharp relief its social nature, since

> the representation of society that populism typically offers is predominantly antagonistic, dividing society into two blocs, two chains of equivalence: the establishment, the power bloc versus the underdog, "the people". This perspective stands in stark contrast to dominant, antipopulist political discourses that assert the continuity of the social fabric and prioritise non-antagonistic, technocratic solutions (p. 275).

In this sense, it constitutes a vantage point from which the inequalities that form and reproduce capitalist production are not attributed to the individual ability to incarnate the entrepreneurial paradigm, but instead, their deep social roots can be diagnosed and potentially contested. Furthermore, it challenges the "dignifying" aspect of earning one's living through selling her/his working power, giving prominence to activities that usually are not remunerated because they are not considered strictly "productive": Dionysis asserts that he would rather devote himself to academic research without earning an income from a paid job.

Nonetheless, no collective form of action is actually proposed; rather, luck is repeatedly prescribed as the only solution to one's plight.

What is of great interest however is that despite of the fact that Dionysis' approach to improving one's situation is rather individualistic, it does not consist of changing oneself by acquiring the qualities desired by the market, a strategy highly recommended in the "entrepreneurial pattern". The goal here is the transformation of the situation, not the transformation of the self, in an effort to "*bring things closer to what you like*", without having to move towards the things you do not like by adapting yourself.

Although the neoliberal model was not endorsed when the participants fashioned themselves as subjects defined by their socioeconomic status rather than their individual inherent or attained qualities, their rationale was inscribed in a capitalocentric discourse (Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2006), according to which capitalism is the only viable economic system. According to Gibson-Graham capitalocentric discourse is being naturalized by masking the social antagonisms on which it relies and has colonized the economic landscape, discrediting non-market economic practices. The diverse economic regimes on the basis of non-capitalist transactions are not seriously considered and to "*have my money*", as Dionysis argues, is an indispensable prerequisite in order to pursue a life outside the realm of paid labour. Nonetheless, identifying with a collectivity and holding "the system" accountable for the disparities it generates, may form a fertile ground for the proliferation of counter-hegemonic social (and economic) becomings. The cracks of the capitalocentric discourse appear to be more evident from this vantage point and docility seems to be attained through coherence rather than the effective internalization of the market values by individuals.

### *1.2.1. "Just do the job"*

Faced with issues of professionalism and performance at work, at many instances the participants based their argumentative strategies on discursive pores that foreground the antagonistic nature of the capital-labour relation and the instrumentality of labour. Within this discursive pattern the participants negotiate their everyday performance drawing on themes like financial remuneration as well as loyalty to their contractual obligations, crafting work as –probably the only – means of acquiring a necessary income.

A. Interviewer: *What do you demand from yourself as an employee?*
Artemis: *I think I should fulfill my obligations. I mean there is a chain, if I do my work properly and hand it over to the employer and the employer gives it to the client eh:: the client will be satisfied and satisfaction means economic remuneration. This is what is important to me. Because you never know if you can achieve client satisfaction because there are other factors that don´t depend on you. But that's it, it's just that I should be careful with some things, with some duties that are determined from the beginning. Because if you are not, and I'm telling you this because I had a talk with the employer who said that if someone is not careful and is late and stuff like that is basically in danger of losing his job. Ts, so that's the fear, that if you don't do what you are told you will basically find yourself out from one day to the other. That's a fear so to speak. When you know that you don't have an immediate alternative.*

B. Manoussos: […] *I demand nothing from my colleague, as long as my colleague does not drift me into doing his work. I don't want to leave my work for others to do. And because I don't like to get this attitude I don't do it either.*
Interviewer: *But this may imply that you may work a bit more, or to do something more than you are supposed to…*
M.: *No. I won't work more. I don't want to work more. I'm not <u>paid</u> to work more. I will just make sure not to leave anything behind that I should have taken care of. Why do more? I am hard working but there is a limit to it.*
I.: *A limit? Where is the limit?*
M.: *The limit is set by the* [employment] *contract. What does the contract say? That's what I'll do. Exactly that. Nothing more, nothing less either.*

Artemis is not permanently employed but works on-call for a private institution which undertakes the elaboration of university projects on behalf of students, such as Master's theses. At the age of 28, she holds a University degree in Environmental Studies and a relevant postgraduate title. My question to her, once again, implies a selfhood comprising two facets: one that demands and one that executes. Artemis chooses to embody the second one and refers to "fulfilling her obligations". She leaves no margin for personal initiative or for setting her own rules or standards. As she will explain later in her reply, her duties are "*determined*" from the beginning. The use of passive voice alludes to an impersonal authority,

without mentioning if the speaker herself got to have a say on the way they should be executed; however, now they are represented as a task that does not allow improvisation, at least not to a great extent.

In any case, having the capability to control how work should be done and to select the best way to do it does not seem to matter to the respondent. Being told what, how, and when to do it is forged as a reasonable given that cannot be, and does not need to be challenged. The specific wording, "*that's it, it's just*", points exactly to the existence of a commonsensical condition that is reified and therefore can only be respected. Furthermore, the speaker endorses the facticity of her account by deploying two more rhetorical devices. Initially, she paints a vivid picture of how "things work", describing a chain which links the employee, the employer, and the client, grounding her argumentation in the external world, instead of her own perception (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Subsequently, she recalls a real incident, a talk she had with her boss, the figure of authority par excellence, according to whom whoever does not comply is "*out*".

And this is the motive that according to the participant fuels discipline: fear. In fact Artemis mobilizes two interrelated discursive themes which she tightly attaches to the crafting of her working identity and her everyday performance: money and fear of unemployment. Let us examine them one by one. As we already discussed, the interviewee constructs the working relationship as part of a market exchange. It is worth noting that she considers herself accountable primarily to the employer and not directly to the client, as Klio did in section 3.2.1. Maybe that is why she regards client satisfaction as an important outcome only on the grounds that it equates to pecuniary reward, not as an end in itself ("*and satisfaction means economic remuneration*". *This is what is important to me*). The moral compensation afforded by a "happy customer" is by no means depicted as the principal objective of a day at work, whereas the achievement of financial goals is posited as the primordial, if not the only, reason to do the job. In addition, assuming a position in a chain of interrelated actors and not crafting herself as individually responsible for the success of her effort allows her to circumscribe her actions within a complex social matrix, where one cannot control each and every variable ("*Because you never know if you can achieve client satisfaction because there are other factors that don´t depend on you")*.

The second discursive resource that is drawn upon by Artemis is the fear of unemployment. However, the word "unemployment" is not articulated here. Instead, the speaker uses another powerful image in which the employment relation is portrayed as a closed space, from which one can find her/himself expelled rather easily, whereas it is

considered hard to get back inside. The speaker defines the working self in relation to the regime of production, in clear opposition to the employer, as a subject who seeks to attain the means of subsistence rather than as an autonomous individual in pursuit of self-realization through paid work. This is apparently not possible since you strictly "*have to do what you are told*".

Rescripting selfhood in social terms and the context of labour as a site of antagonism, suggests that capital "is in saddle" (Weber, 1905/1992) and that, apart from workplace control through identity regulation and the moulding of appropriate subjectivities, "sovereign power" (Foucault, 1980), which can decide over the life and death of subjects, both metaphorically and literally, has never gotten out of the picture. Instead of having been merely replaced by the "productive" discourse of enterprise, it coexists with it, together forming a complex network. When performance and efficiency cannot be earned by the management with the inculcation of a certain mentality and ethos, they are extorted through the induction of fear. Paraphrasing Marx, the "post-industrial reserve army" continues to function as a threat, unemployment serving as an effective disciplinary apparatus in a "micro-politics of insecurity" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1999).

Nonetheless, even though the subjective position adopted by the interviewee gives a clear view of the unjust nature of the capitalist mode of production, it does not resist the effects of a capitalocentric discursive formation. The company's right to unilaterally configure and to end at will the labour contract, especially in cases of precarious posts like the one of Artemis, is constructed as stressful and natural at the same time. In the same vein, not having an immediate alternative, the system of "forced labour", in Marxian terms, is also cast as a commonplace condition that goes without saying. Even though it is constituted as a permanent "fear", the employer's authority is never questioned within the participant's response; through the repetition of the adverb "basically", pointing to rather "basic" situations as opposed to extraordinary ones, and the shift to the second person singular which connotes a widely spread and accepted context, coercion to work is implicitly configured as a state of affairs that cannot be contested. Precarity is naturalized as an integrative element of the working relationship and they are both forged as commonsensical and banalized through the quotidian embodiment of their most prominent physical and psychological effect: fear.

In the second extract, Manoussos, a 33-year-old man who works as a technician for a telecommunications company, also authored a version of himself as an employee based on his position within the relations of production; what defines him as a worker is the employment

contract. According to his account, his work is strictly confined by what he is paid to do, with no aspirations to exceed the expectations neither of his employer nor of his colleagues.

In my question about the ideal coworker, the respondent was called upon to negotiate the question of the relationships between colleagues, his attitude towards them, and his expectations both from himself and the others. In stark contrast with the entrepreneurial pattern discussed before, the participant does not invoke the theme of teamwork; instead, he prefers to position himself vis à vis the capitalist mode of production and rescript employee relations on a different basis. From this subjective position, the ideal coworker is not the one who works more in order to accommodate the team, but rather one who carries out her/his duties as prescribed by the employment contract without leaving any backlogs.

Manoussos, adopting a working subjectivity that is rooted in the antagonistic nature of paid employment constructs as unreasonable and unjust the demands for investing extra time and effort on labour. When I insinuate that he might work more than he is supposed to in order to be a "good workmate", he emphatically rejects my assumptions with a variety of rhetorical techniques. At first, he constructs a three-part structure – "*I won't work more. I don't want to work more. I'm not paid to work more" –,* according to which it all comes down to the monetary compensation. Just like Artemis, Manoussos does not mobilize discursive pores related to issues of personal development, strictly forging labour as a means of survival. The rhetorical question that follows ("*Why do more?*") further enhances the construction of "extra work" as illegitimate and absurd, endorsing an instrumental view of employment. Finally, the respondent wants to make sure that his posture is not considered as stemming from what could be regarded as negative personal traits; he describes himself as a hard-working person, implicitly asserting that his stance is a result of reflection and conscious determination.

This is also underscored in his next turn; the speaker casts himself as actively resisting the pressures for additional work, representing at the same time the entire labour market as a site where "going the extra mile" has become the rule. Nonetheless, from where he stands, such a demand appears unreasonable and can be rejected. The employment contract, the means used for his subjection to a firm, is used as a means to confront its pervasive power. Once again, the respondent uses a rhetorical question ("*What does the contract say?*") to emphasize the importance of his job description, defining himself as an employee in relation to his position within the capital-labour relation.

The analysis conducted in this section points to the fact that alternative discourses to the enterprise rhetoric do exist and are available to individuals when they try to negotiate

issues of professionalism and teamwork. We saw that when the participants positioned themselves within discourses that avail socially oriented subjectivities, constructing paid employment as an antagonistic site divided in two camps with conflicting interests, professionalism was defined strictly as the execution of the tasks determined by the employment agreement, and doing more than one is paid to do as irrational. From this vantage point, the neoliberal ethic which imposes the intensification of work by the invocation of discursive constructions such as teamwork, excellence, or professionalism results ineffective and subjects are empowered to propose counter-hegemonic definitions of the working self.

*1.2.2. Socioeconomically determined choices*

Frequently, when making sense of their choices throughout their professional biographies, the participants authored versions of themselves as subjects inscribed within networks of power that determine to a great extent their trajectories by establishing the "rules of the game" and thusly conducting, limiting, or prescribing their course of action.

I.: *How come you started working so early?*
A.: *It was a matter of money. My parents didn't have the ability to offer me, apart from, ok they provided food and housing but we were too many and they didn't ha::ve* (.) *they were poor. Financially. So I started working when I was very little. When I entered the Polytechnic School I also continued working, doing various jobs, teaching children, I continued with the agricultural works and before finishing university I got this job, the job I have now. In March I complete 18 years there.*
I.: *So you tell me that you've been working your whole life. How does that make you feel?*
A.: *I don't like it* ((laughing)). *I didn't want to work my whole life. Because if I we::re, if I were in a different economic environment I would be able to do things that now I can't.*

B. Minas: [When I was unemployed] *I started again to write my book, to redefine myself doing things I liked with a clearer mind, but of course the financial pressure wouldn't let me. Bu:::t, I could do it if I had some basic things covered. For example I never owned a house, to live for a while without paying. I always had to solve these*

*problems. Money should always come in so that I could handle everyday life and I always had to take care of that.*

In the fragments cited above, the participants represent the navigation within the labour market as essentially affected by their position within the social matrix and the conditions forged by the current regime of production.

In the first extract, after having been told that Aris had been working since he was twelve in agricultural jobs, I ask him why he did it. Aris is 43 years old and grew up in a family of seven, in a small city of the Greek countryside. Trying to make sense of his working trajectory, he constructs it around the axis of financial hardship. In his first turn, the participant traces a linear and necessary causality between material subsistence and child work: His parents were poor "*so*" he had to work. Alternative options such as state welfare support or the existence of non-market subsistence practices are not mentioned, as the speaker seems to consider taken for granted their absence and concomitantly the link between labour, even child labour, and survival. We find that an extremely important coherence element, since the interviewee does not elaborate more on his decision, even though it touches a very delicate subject, that has been the epicenter of debates on national and international level and submitted to supposedly strict legislative restrictions.

At the same time, the respondent recurs to the mobilization of a socioeconomic concept, that of poverty, in order to assemble his labouring subjectivity. His integration to the labour market is attributed to the financial condition of his family, rather than a personal choice incited by personal characteristics. Aris mobilizes a bipolar version of the social universe, which is represented as a field consisting of two sides, the poor and the rich. Such a construction highlights the inequalities that make up capitalist society, enclosing the quintessential element of politics, which, according to Rancière (1999) is "the struggle between the poor and the rich" (p. 11).

Adopting for a moment a phenomenological interpretative approach we could say that the participant seems to be facing difficulties when he describes his parents' economic condition. The extension of the verb "have" and the small pause in his talk manifest that the speaker touches upon an issue which is hard to tackle. The interviewee intends to avoid an account that would awaken the negative perceptions about "the poor" and the analogies drawn between financial prosperity and personal value. However, it is only from this position, determined by socioeconomic criteria, that the obligatory nature of work comes to light, together with its political character. By elucidating his description adding the adverb

"financially", he casts off the negative associations between the lack of financial resources and personality traits, further enhancing his social framing.

When he moves on to his adult working experience, Aris completely silences the market mandates; he does not associate his employment selections with the "hunt of working experience", nor with the need to fill a curriculum vitae. Instead, his course is guided by financial hardship and the need to survive, inextricably connected to his social status. The impressive accuracy in the temporal reference when narrating his current employment position, something that I encountered during the sessions with various participants, is a rhetoric element also pointed out by Panagiotopoulos (2013) in his research on unemployment: The participants in his study gave extremely detailed temporal data regarding their life outside the labour market and Panagiotopoulos translates that into an expression of the "traumatic experience" of the "involuntary social abstention" (p. 187). Similarly we could infer that in our case it stands as the rhetoric construction of the "involuntary incorporation in the socioeconomic structure".

In the last turn of excerpt A, Aris subverts the representation of selfhood that he has constructed with his previous contributions. Until now, he was cast as a rational subject that accepts social reality and conforms to it, taking for granted that there are no alternatives, incarnating capitalocentric discourse. However his last phrase creates a fissure in it, challenging both its normalization, with the allusion to different economic systems, and its ethic, prioritizing activities that are not valued by the market doctrine ("*if I were in a different economic environment I would be able to do things that now I can't*"). Destabilizing the certainties on which he has based his whole life, the speaker reveals an important breach through which countervailing subject-worlds may be envisioned.

Aris casts himself as a subject who is not colonized by the capitalist modus vivendi, knowing that he is voicing a "heretic" view; hence the laughter. Satisfaction and desire ("*I don't like it", "I didn't want to"*), two central pillars of the capitalist edifice, are here mobilized against it; they are not nullified in a celebration of some kind of cosmic asceticism, but they are directed towards practices and modes of being that are undermined by, if not excluded from, the current socioeconomic system. The participant draws on counter-hegemonic discourses which propose alternative fixings of economic identities (Gibson-Graham, 2006), dislodging the institutionalized monopoly of the capitalocentric discursive form, to which he himself has also contributed.

In the same vein, Minas, in the second extract, draws upon the discursive motif of economic need when he accounts for the choices that shaped his life within – or without –

work. The 40-year-old participant introduces us to a subject-world that is not anchored in a working identity; instead the latter is constructed as "parasitic", as something that is enacted out of necessity.

More specifically, when describing his life outside the arena of paid work the speaker deploys a vocabulary of revival, with the specific wording ("*started again*", "*redefine myself*") pointing to a process of reclaiming new subjectivities, putting again in motion a self that had been "deactivated" because of the employment condition. Articulating a discourse that contests the hegemonic work ethic which only accredits activities that generate financial profit, Minas entertains a mode of being that enables self-actualization through alternative paths which do not necessarily pass through the market. In fact, as opposed to the capitalist and especially neoliberal interpretation of labour, which allegedly constitutes the ultimate form of empowerment and independence, the respondent assembles a different version, one that blurs the mind and holds one back due to the dependency on a salary.

As all of the extracts of this section, extract B underscores the structural determinants of agency, fashioning a working identity that is strongly conditioned upon the socioeconomic status of the speaker. Minas rhetorically signals the overdetermination by the systemic configuration through syntactical formulations in which "financial pressure" and "money" are placed in subject positions. In the first case ("*I started again to* […] *redefine myself doing things I liked* […]*, but of course the financial pressure wouldn't let me*) the speaker stages before our eyes the struggle between the attempts of performing alternative subjectivities freed from the principles of productivity and profit, and the hegemonic discourse which crushes them, materializing in economic asphyxia. In the second, ("*money should always come in* […] *and I always had to take care of that"*) the economic factor is foregrounded and engineered as capable of imposing the rules of the game and thusly producing the adequate subjectivities. To use Foucault's terms, in these two phrases both the repressive and the productive effects of power relations are illuminated, manifesting the ways in which social antagonisms are incarnated by individuals and reproduced through everyday performances.

In conclusion, the present section has shown that when the participants adopted working identities determined by their socioeconomic status to interpret their working trajectory and to account for their choices, they drew upon discourses which enshrine views of the social as a locus of struggle, characterized by inequality and antagonism, rather than a field of opportunities equally accessible to anyone. Although encompassed by a capitalocentric construction of economic life, in the sense that capitalist economic activity is portrayed as something very hard to escape, the subject positions adopted allow the

deconstruction of the hegemonic work ethic, dislodging the illusion of the freedom of choice that is supposed to govern the labour market.

*1.2.3. Between normalization and resistance*

When negotiating aspects of work that upset or annoyed them, often the participants mobilized discursive pores such as economic necessity or dependency on a salary, constructing them as an obligatory compromise, as an unjust pact that they had to make in order to subsist.

> A. Maria: *Well it is true tha::t working to earn a living makes you back down and tolerate a lot of stuff that under different conditions you wouldn't tolerate. Like some kinds of pressure, like demands, like behaviours, eh:: various stuff that you wouldn't tolerate if you didn't work to make a living.*
>
> B. Eli: *It bothers me when sometimes they make me do something eh:: that is beyond my working hours, which means that I also won't get paid for it. And it is not even on workdays. And I don't get paid.*
> Interviewer: *And what do you do? How do you react when something like that comes up?*
> E.: *I do it* ((laughing)) *I don't think I have much of a choice. I just try to::: for example when we organize a Christmas party on a Sunday, which normally lasts from five to eight, they will start telling you "come at four thirty so that we can decorate the school" and stuff, eh I don't go at four thirty. I go at five, when I'm supposed to be there.*

In the first extract, Maria, a 37-year-old journalist, negotiates the implications of "*working to earn a living*". According to her, when one depends on a salary in order to survive is obliged to "*tolerate*" attitudes and demands that otherwise would not be willing to. The participant opens her argumentation claiming neutrality for her account, presenting it as a well-known fact, something that objectively "*is true*". In this way, the power imbalances between the parties of an employment relationship are attributed to the very nature of the latter and are constructed as their constitutive element rather than to possible deficiencies or bad choices on behalf of the employee. Thusly the "Eden of the rights of man" (Marx,

1867/2002) is deconstructed and the worker is no longer forged as an equal to the employer, but instead as "timid and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but – a hiding" (p. 189).

The participant draws upon discourses that emphasize the social facet of the capital-labour relation fashioning the dependency on wage ("*working to make a living"*) as a disciplining device capable of producing docile subjects ("*makes you back down and tolerate a lot of stuff*"). In addition, she creates a three-part list of the things one has to put up with when working out of necessity; all of them are associated to human attitudes, those of the employers or the managers we could assume, rather than the exigencies of a certain job post or profession, further endorsing the socioeconomic orientation of her argumentative strategy. The unreasonable demands and unfair treatments – for if they were reasonable and fair they wouldn't be defined as something to be "tolerated" – are therefore forged as a normal practice on the employers' part, crafting the workplace as a site of exploitation and, potentially, resistance.

In fact, Maria does challenge the hegemony of capitalocentric discourse and the closures it produces regarding the possibility of alternative modes of production. In the small stretch of talk provided above, the speaker alludes twice to a situation where one does not work to make a living ("*under different conditions*", "*if you didn't work to make a living*"), carving openings and dislocating the hegemonic significations of work (Laclau, 1997). Actually, the interviewee constructs an antithetical picture between work within the capitalist relation and outside that, whereby survival would not be conditioned upon labour. Such accounts produce powerful cracks on the crystallized meanings produced by hegemonic discourses, enabling the renegotiation of relations of dependency and interdependency.

In the second fragment, Eli, an English teacher in her early thirties, assembles a working identity by deploying discursive resources such as "working hours", "payment", and "workdays". In this manner she configures herself as a wage-earner, accentuating the role of labour as a source of income; the repetition of the phrase "*don't get paid*" further bolsters this construction. From this standing point, working beyond the regular hours without being paid is seen as an obligation that one is forced to fulfill. The selection of words, "*make me*" craft the "Other", as almighty, a representation that is reinforced by the phrase "*I don't think I have much of a choice*" in her next turn. Such a construction establishes a unilateral power relation, drawing upon discursive formations that leave no space for non-market economic subjectivities, whereby the employee has no option but to obey; albeit not entirely deprived of resistance potential, as we shall see.

My follow up question suggests that there are possible ways to "react" implying that obeying is not taken for granted. The laughter that accompanies the interviewee's reply may be performing an accusation, blaming me for some kind of naivety, or may just serve as a rhetoric device for displaying cynicism, banalizing the excessive demands and the violation of the employment contract by the employers. In spite of the configuration of the working self as lacking any means to exercise any form of counterpower, the speaker enacts a subjectivity determined to devise disrupting strategies, no matter how insignificant they may seem. The specific wording "*I just*" renders the attempts to be described subsequently trivial and maybe negligible, moulding at the same time the employers' demands as inescapable. However, the verb "*try*", expressing a deliberate and active stance despite the quasi omnipotent "Other" is deployed as the speaker claims for herself a resistant working identity; in order to enhance the facticity of such a construction of selfhood, Eli brings a vivid example, grounding her account in what is presented as "real facts".

Placing emphasis on the word "*Sunday*", the respondent builds on a discursive capital that revolves around the constitutional rights of the workers, defending their institutionalized part in the production process, and thusly legitimizing and further rigidifying the employment relationship as an integral part of social life. Nevertheless, at the same time, the adoption of a rebellious subjectivity, even if it is cast as minor, signifies a project of dislocation for the capitalist economic identity, "the moment of failure of a given identity or social construction, a failure which not only dislocates the identity in question but also creates a lack stimulating the desire for a rearticulation of the dislocated structure" (Stavrakakis, 2002, p. 533).

What has been made clear through the analysis conducted in this section is that when participants chose to define themselves as subjects determined by their socioeconomic condition, in clear opposition to an "Other" who appears to monopolize power, moments of distress at the workplace are attributed precisely to the disequilibrium of power. Even though they are constructed as a normality of the current social configurations, in this way, they generate tensions and can serve as a series of dislocations disrupting sedimented identities and call for new articulations, leading to the engineering of alternative modes of subjectivation.

### *1.2.4. Summary*

The pattern of identification that we named "socioeconomically determined self" consists of discursive techniques that build a version of the self primarily defined as a wage-

earner, as an individual that relies on labour for an income, and adopts an instrumental approach towards paid labour, constructing it as an obligation one should fulfill in order to survive. This subjective position offers a view of the social universe as a realm of antagonism, divided in two camps that have conflicting interests: the employees and the employers.

From this vantage point, professionalism is defined strictly as the execution of the tasks determined by the employment agreement, and doing more than one is paid to do as absurd and illegitimate, challenging the neoliberal ethic which institutes the intensification of work by invoking discursive constructions such as teamwork, excellence, or professionalism. Additionally, the agentic subjectivity, individually responsible for her/his course in the labour market is also resisted, through the construction of the latter as a site of inequality, dislodging the illusion of the freedom of choice that is supposed to govern it. In the same vein, moments of distress at work are not normalized as part of the strategic plan of an entrepreneurial mind, but they are rather attributed to the disequilibrium of power that structures the capitalist productive relations.

Our findings concur with previous studies which also point to the existence of discourses alternative to the entrepreneurial prototype (e.g. Doolin, 2002; Fournier, 1999; McCabe, 2008; Mangan, 2009). Even though the neoliberal paradigm results more vulnerable than often claimed (e.g., du Gay, 1996; du Gay & Salaman, 1992), the "traditional" capitalist edifice seems harder to destabilize. Even when positioned within discourses that assert the exploitative nature of the extant socioeconomic system, discourses on rights, formal working hours and contractual obligations normalize the capitalist regime, legitimizing the wage labour relationship, obfuscating the fact that it is established upon the institutionalization of inequalities.

Nonetheless, the subject positions availed by this discursive pattern make it possible to unveil the social foundations of the supposedly natural landscape of capitalist production, profit distribution, labouring, and even relating to one another, deconstructing its superficial coherence and fixity, making possible the visualization of alternative politico-economic imaginaries. What I witnessed during the interviews was the transformation of bodies into battlefields, embodying the conflicts between the antagonistic discursive formations that comprise the social, experiencing the clash between the hegemonic constellations of meaning and the persistence of the real, to use Lacan's terms; "a real which poses limits to human construction, to our creativity, but at the same time constitutes the condition of possibility for any creative political reconstruction" (Stavrakakis, 2002, p. 533).

### 1.3. Occupation-oriented self

Finally, a third discursive pattern of selfhood at work was the one we named "occupation-oriented self". This motif features the mobilization of discursive pores such as craftsmanship, foregrounding the participants' belonging to a certain professional group[20] with norms and procedures regulated internally, according to a relative education and accreditation. The argumentative strategies within this framework do not rely on market-inspired narratives in order to produce an intelligible account of the self and the working experience, nor do they recur to discursive repertoires of economic necessity; instead they emphasize the commitment to a particular occupation and the choice to serve the principles of a concrete profession rather than to adapt to the needs of the market or the clients.

> Kyriakos: *So this is my second photo to::: I wanted to show tha::t, this is the laboratory, which is a bit chaotic and this is my robe hanging. This has to do with the fact I was talking about earlier, that there are no clearly defined roles and basically I wanted to project that many times you have to take care of irrelevant or insignificant or administrative stuff and act less as a scientist.* […] *So it's like you've hung up your robe. Because what I'm saying is just give me the freedom to exercise my profession myself, something that the state has authorized me to do anyway by giving me a university degree. I mean I'm authorized to exercise it, to exercise it i::n my own way. Always of course in the framework o::f the title of the pharmacist. As long as I:: how to say it, as long as I don't fail the title of the pharmacist let me do what I have to do as it should be done.*

Kyriakos at the age of 32 holds a university degree in Pharmacy and a relevant Master's title and currently works at a private pharmacy. In the fragment presented above he is describing one of the pictures he took, following my instructions to take a photo that answers the question "What does being an employee mean to you?". It is a photograph (see Appendix 4, photo 12.b) of the pharmacy's laboratory, where we can see a pharmacist's robe

[20] We will not engage in the discussion around the most appropriate definition of "profession", or in trying to set clear-cut boundaries between "profession" and "occupation"; definitional precision on that matter would add nothing to the analysis we are trying to undertake in the framework of the present dissertation. Throughout this study the two terms will be used interchangeably as we regard them both as similar social forms (Evetts, 2013), enjoying relative autonomy in setting the standards and norms of their practice, albeit inscribed within particular socio-historical discursive matrixes (Fournier, 1999).

hanging on a coat rack. The room is not very tidy, coming in stark contrast to the orderly image pharmacies usually have in the front areas, where they attend the clients.

The participant problematizes two issues when talking about the picture. As he says, he wanted to criticize two interrelated matters that he finds frustrating about his workplace: the lack of a clear task division and the subsequent need for him to sacrifice time and effort from the "*scientific*" work in order to attend to "*peripheral stuff*" and thus not being able to carry out the former as it "*should be done*". The speaker classifies the duties that have to be executed in the pharmacy in two broad categories, namely, the "*irrelevant or insignificant or administrative stuff*", or in a word the "*peripheral*" ones and the "*scientific*" ones.

The respondent creates a three-part list placing emphasis on the nature of the tasks that he casts as peripheral, forging at the same time "scientific work" as their opposite and hence central and important. Positioning himself as a scientist, Kyriakos claims to be serving a meaningful purpose which is obstructed by trivial duties, such as tidying the laboratory. This kind of self-perception lies at the antipode of the entrepreneurial prototype and accounts like the ones we discussed in the section 3.2.1, which cast even the most "insignificant" duties as worth of one's outmost attention, in the pursuit of "excellence". As we shall see shortly, being part of a private organization and assume a strictly professional identity can engender considerable tensions for individuals (e.g., Alvesson, 2000; Evetts, 2013; Stecher, 2012). In fact, Kyriakos' understanding of professionalism resonates with what Sennett (2006) describes as "craftsmanship", "a value which could countervail against the culture of the new capitalism" (p. 194); in Sennett's words:

> It's not simply that the obsessed, competitive craftsman may be committed to doing something well, but more that he or she believes in its objective value. A person can use the words correct and right in describing how well something is done only if he or she believes in an objective standard outside his or her own desires, indeed outside the sphere of rewards from others (p. 195).

Claiming a scientific subjectivity or forging oneself as a member of a professional group with its own rules and principles entails a certain way of conduct; this is what Kyriakos maintains with the phrasing "*act like a scientist*". As Fournier (1999) has pointed out, acquiring a body of knowledge is not enough in order to "be a professional" and one has to constitute oneself in an "appropriate manner". Drawing on Foucault she contends that this is exactly why professionalism can serve as an effective tool for exercising government "at a distance" (Miller & Rose, 1990).

However, the meaning of "appropriateness" is not radically fixed, but constantly negotiated and resignified. Here, being opposed to the "*irrelevant or insignificant or administrative stuff*", it is rescripted as something relevant and meaningful, something that is not as superficial as administration but rather more profound and important. By providing "evidence", in the form of a photograph, of his negligence in performing "peripheral" tasks like tidying up the laboratory, the interviewee disclaims being lazy and attributes his defiance to a deliberate choice, authorized by his scientific identity. Authoring a version of the self in this manner justifies and legitimizes disobedience, presenting a potentially emancipatory construction of selfhood, inasmuch as "a strong professional identity may imply more independence of and disloyalty to employers" (Alvesson, 2000, p. 1109). Besides, an explicit boundary is set between him and the employers, evident in the imaginary dialogue the participant voices latter in his response, representing professional identity as a source that legitimizes demands for autonomy and "*freedom*".

Failing to engage in discretionary decision-making is constructed by the participant as a form of resignation, as if the quintessential element of the professional identity has been eliminated, and therefore the person has been stripped of his professional hypostasis. The metaphoric use of the verb "hang" in Greek, followed by what is most declarative of someone, indicates her/his withdrawal from the respective field, and here it is being portrayed in a photograph. The pharmacist's robe, a metonymy for expertise and meaningful work, is hanging useless in a space in need only of "insignificant", "administrative" labour.

Moving on within Kyriakos' reply, we observe that the speaker fashions his professional identity drawing upon state accreditation; the state, represented by its educational entities, is defined here as the ultimate, if not the only, legitimate judge of one's professional status, by providing certification. The demand for "*freedom to exercise my profession myself*" gains its legitimacy being grounded in the official accreditation provided by the state. Apart from the importance of professions and professionalization to the microphysics of power of liberal governmentality as a way to authorize expertise (Fournier, 1999), what we need to underscore here is the tension of the discourse of professionalism, which heralds autonomy, yet already inscribed within socio-historically specific systems of truth. This tension is embodied in the speaker's talk as he shifts from a rhetoric construction of an autonomous self empowered to demand ("*give me*") entirely identifying with the profession ("*my profession"*), to a passive voice ("*I'm authorized to exercise it*") once the "state" enters the equation.

Hence the profession is imputed with a double function; it serves as a framework which narrows the possible ways of action, as a source of authority which is in a position to

impose quasi-objective rules and criteria of performance, determining how something "*should be done*", while at the same time offering the possibility to defy the local norms set by a particular organization claiming the emancipation of the "professional", even though such a behaviour may be punished by the labour market.

*1.3.1. Loyal to one's profession*

There were times when the interviewees handled questions of accountability for their attitude towards their quotidian tasks mobilizing discursive constructions such as loyalty to the values of a particular profession or the pleasure of doing something well for its own sake. Within this pattern, the participants made explicit reference to their occupation, prioritizing its principles and norms over the criteria determined by their workplace, or even the labour market in general.

A. Interviewer: *What does it mean to you to be an employee?*
Eli: *To be by the book.*
I.: *What does this mean?*
E.: *Eh:: to carry out my duties right, to be responsible, but first of all to carry out what I think I have to do, as a <u>teacher</u>.*
I.: *So you do things that are not expected from you?*
E.: *Eh:: I guess and sometimes they are not appreciated. Well the owner actually does not allow us to do many things anymore. I mean for example I liked to show movies to the students* […] *But he forbade that because he said parents might complain that we are doing irrelevant stuff. So it's tha::t he is more interested in the formal aspect of learning, so that he can say that we covered all the material, or that we have scheduled the exams, but not in doing that in a meaningful way. I mean, I am more interested in, not just to teach what I have to teach but to make sure that they have learned, you know, that this has been productive so to speak. He is ok if he just gets his money.*

B. Kyriakos: *Within the framework of the particular workplace, that I am now, I think that sometimes I am more than sufficient. With reference to how this framework is established, of course. By the particular pharmacist, the owner. Not by any pharmacist.*

Interviewer: *Aha. So you feel you are doing more than you are supposed to?*
K.: *Sometimes yes.*
I.: *If it is not expected from you why do you decide to do it?*
K.: *Eh:: ok, sometimes I can't help it. It happens in a specific part of the job, regarding the advice, the scientific advice to the customer. I mea::n to explain to someone that taking antibiotics without having consulted a doctor is bad because of this or that reason or to say that this or that supplement that is being advertised on TV is probably a waste of money for you, for your case, because there are a number of studies that show that and so on. But it is something that a business wouldn't like, the pharmacy wouldn't like that, because it would lose a thirty-five euro sale.*

C. Interviewer: *Is it important to be good at what you do?*
Manoussos: *Well it depends, what it is you do. I mean, how to say it, if I we::re a salesman, for example when I worked for the toy store that I told you about, I don't care if I sell more. Eh:: in the particular subject, because it is a purely technical part, you know, eh:: I only work with technical stuff, ok, I like to:: perform. I mean I really like to solve whatever problem there is. I dig it a lot, I feel good with me, I feel good with myself. It's not like you get any cleverer by doing it. You use the same neurons over and over again. It's just that I dig it.*

In the first extract, Eli, whom we met in section 3.3.3., is asked to make sense of being an employee. For her, the working identity can be condensed in one word (I have translated the Greek word "*τυπική*", which was her original answer, as "*by the book*"); her definition of being an employee is to follow certain norms and conventions. However, her next turns further clarify her construction, revealing a conflict between two potential sources of authority, which represent two different worldviews.

In her second turn, Eli defines "being by the book": The speaker constructs a three-part list ("*to carry out my duties right, to be responsible, but first of all to carry out what I think I have to do, as a <u>teacher</u>*") in a very interesting way: The first and the last element on that list refer to the content of her work, as defined by two distinct agents, whereas in the middle, the factor which may seen as sticking them together, is a form of being, "being responsible", a particular way of dealing with one's duties, regardless of whether she/he has a say in setting them or not. Nonetheless, the use of "*but*" right before the third item of the list

signifies an opposition between the first two and the final one, which is mitigated by the addition of "*first of all*" that turns the conflict into a hierarchy.

By particularly stressing the word "*teacher*", the participant positions herself as a legitimate source of authority, implicitly claiming that belonging to that professional group gives her the right to occupational control and a certain degree of autonomy over her work. At the same time, being a teacher entails a number of obligations which are different from the ones expected by the employer, forcing the subject to resolve potential tensions by continually redefining herself; judging by her next turn, being "*responsible*" is not interpreted in the same way by her, "*as a teacher*", and by her employer. Hence this particular form of forging the working selfhood exposes a delicate balance between being an employee and defining oneself as a member of a specific professional community, which requires significant identity work on behalf of the individual.

In her last turn, the respondent makes this tension even clearer. Once again she rescripts herself in terms of her membership in the teachers' collective, by using the personal pronoun "*us*", referring to the entire professorial stuff of the school, creating a binary opposition between them and the "*owner*" who does not belong to the teaching community. In order to enhance the facticity of her account and rhetorically reinforce the antithesis she has drawn, she uses an example from her everyday practice. Eli undertakes the position of a professional who takes initiative, deviating from the conventional forms of exercising her work, in order to do something "*meaningful*". This is opposed to the figure of the owner, who represents the superficial approach to knowledge, who is not interested in quality but in making profit. Having claimed an identity that obeys the moral obligations of the teaching profession, the speaker derives her sense of meaningful work from doing her job well for its own sake. The economic rationality as imposed by the market ethos is thusly challenged, entertaining a mode of being that gives to professionalism a different goal, apart from making money or constantly improving the self: "to make health, or safety, or knowledge, or good government, or good law" (Tawney as cited in Larson, 2014, p. 11).

A similar antagonism is also echoed by Kyriakos. The interviewee articulates his working identity by making reference to two competing discourses: One which is more commercially aware and budget focused (Evetts, 2013) and another which prioritizes the commitment to the values enshrined by an occupational group. However, in this case the speaker constructs this group as internally divided; not all of its members share the same fundamental perceptions regarding the ideal modus operandi. Still, these internal fragmentations may be linked to the multiple roles of some of its members. Kyriakos'

employer is a pharmacist himself, but also a businessman, the owner of a drugstore. Disclaiming being arrogant or exaggerating about his performance, the interviewee specifies that he exceeds the expectations of his employer, not the expectations set by "*any pharmacist*". The latter can be understood as a personification of the broad scientific branch which in this manner is set apart and even opposed to the particular view of the job maintained by the owner, which is inevitably imbued with a business mentality.

The respondent chooses to undertake the subject position of a "scientist", that "*can't help*" but execute his duties according to high standards set by himself. However, there is no allusion here to the "personal nature" motif as was the case with the "entrepreneurial" identity pattern. Within the "occupation-oriented" construction of selfhood, going the "extra mile" is justified and even forged as obligatory due to the accountability to an overall category of professionals which prescribes a unique code of ethics.

The scientific subjectivity is rhetorically weaved in various ways within the respondent's argumentative fabric. First of all, he establishes from the beginning of his final turn that he puts in extra effort only in a specific aspect of his work. Thus the latter is constituted as comprising various facets which are not equally important. What emerges as most relevant to the speaker's working identity is providing advice, "*scientific advice*" as he will rush to add. Furthermore, thoroughly recreating scenes of quotidian situations lends additional support to a configuration of a scientific subjectivity; in both examples Kyriakos does not just offer his opinion ("*taking antibiotics without having consulted a doctor is bad",* "*this or that supplement* […] *is probably a waste of money*"); he documents it presenting evidence ("*because of this or that reason*", "*because there are a number of studies that show that*").

Once again, the professional values enshrined undermine the market doctrine which encourages economically rational choices and the neoliberal doctrine which transforms even social goods, such as health, into a field of enterprise. The business ethos is here personified and constructed as an agent who approves and disapproves of employees' practices, indicating the resistance the speaker meets when trying to enact an alternative subjectivity. This finding partly contradicts Doolin (2002) who found that clinicians who worked for both the private and the public sector demonstrated a certain ambivalence towards entrepreneurial behaviour: "In the public health system, they often displayed a social conscience and a rejection of management, but in the private practice their behaviour was more entrepreneurial" (p. 383). Kyriakos, as well as Eli who is also employed in a private language

school, seem to resist the discourse of enterprise, mobilizing discursive pores that emphasize their disinterested professionalism.

Notwithstanding his effort to construe a selfhood in scientific terms seeking to disavow identity inferences that point to the commodification of medical values, he is not immune to the market discourse. The interviewee invokes the figure of the "*customer*", accepting the commercial dimension of his work. It is interesting that during our talk, in many instances Kyriakos used the word "customer", but sometimes he immediately changed it to "patient", or even created an amalgam, using the wording "*patient slash customer*", mirroring the identity dilemmas he himself faces.

In the third extract, Manoussos also enacts an "occupation-oriented" identity, claiming loyalty not to a certain employer or to a self who permanently seeks to achieve excellence at anything he does, looking for self-fulfillment through any paid employment; instead, "being good" at what one does depends on the meaning the particular job has for him. Hence work is not something to be valued per se; personal devotion and the will to perform well is conditioned upon the personal interests of the speaker. In this framework, the discourse of professionalism and excellence is mobilized in order to refer to the "practitioner pride and satisfaction in work performance" that are encouraged by professions (Evetts, 2013, p. 785). Similar findings resulted from Fournier's study (1999) whereby some respondents drew upon the discursive pool of professionalism, but not aligning with the company's goals, but instead referring to the "satisfaction of job well done" or to "solving problems" (p. 301).

Manoussos constructs his identification with his technical occupation by giving us an example of an "un-professional" attitude: When he worked as a salesman, he did not try to sell more. In this way he configures labour not as something inherently worth to dedicate oneself to, manifesting the contested character of professionalism and its fragility as a device of management at a distance. Additionally, he constructs his devotion to this particular occupation as disinterested, given that it does not offer him the possibility to improve or to get better; one "*uses the same neurons over and over again*" and the only reason he does it is because he "*digs it*". According to Sennett (2006) "[g]etting something right, even though it may get you nothing, is the spirit of true craftsmanship" (p. 195). This attitude, the unconditional commitment, can be seen as countervailing to the hegemonic work ethic since it "entails closure, forgoing possibilities for the sake of concentrating on one thing. You might miss out. The emerging culture puts enormous pressure on individuals not to miss out" (p. 196).

In the framework of the "occupation-oriented" discursive pattern, individuals identified with a particular professional group and from this vantage point they were able to criticize, contest, and even defy corporate practices. The interviewees constructed professions as setting standards and sustaining distinct sets of values and codes of performance, which usually were opposed to the market rationale, legitimizing the autonomisation of the conduct of their members; however autonomy and control over one's duties is not claimed in the name of a selfhood committed to excellence, or of the client's satisfaction, but in the name of the profession itself, for the sake of doing something right and well.

Accountability for everyday performance is primarily owed to the norms established by the profession, even though it is increasingly difficult for knowledge professionals to exercise discretionary decision-making within employing organizations (Alvesson, 2000). Individuals have to engage in intricate identity work in order to bridge the gap between being an employee of a company and concomitantly a member of a professional community. Mobilizing this repertoire, the respondents articulated a counter-hegemonic working subjectivity, resisting the market logic which upholds economically rational subject positions. As our analysis demonstrated, performing "occupation-oriented" subjectivities may serve as an effective tool for carving out spheres of autonomy and challenge both the capitalocentric and the neoliberal discursive formations – even though they were both lurking in the respondents' answers.

### *1.3.2. Remain within the occupation*

When talking about shaping one's working trajectory, sometimes the participants mobilized the discursive pore of "profession" making sense of their course within the realm of paid labour as guided primarily by their determination to remain within the framework of their occupation. The issue of agency was handled with certain ambivalence as, on the one hand the respondents positioned themselves as actively pursuing a career in their field, conditioning professional success upon knowledge and experience gained with personal cost, while on the other, they drew upon the construction of "luck", as a determinant factor that they cannot control.

A. Interviewer: *Why don't you like that? How do you imagine the future in the company you work now?*
Dionysis: *I imagine tha::t in a decade you will have gotten a position where you will earn good money and all the other stuff the company offers and you will have ended up being eh::: I call them calendar-men, they look at their calendars and say "this has to be finished by that date, that has to be finished by then" and you don't do work. You're just full of talk and no essence. I want to remain technician. Regardless of the salary, I don't want the nature of my work to change, become a vice-director and leave the occupation. I will have no idea what's going on in the technical field and so at anytime if something goes wrong and the company kicks you out, you won't be able to stand on your feet because you won't have the knowledge, you'll have nothing.*

B. Interviewer: *But wouldn't you like to ascend, in terms of salary or hierarchy?*
Manoussos: *In terms of salary yes, I won't bullshit you, definitely yes, but hierarchically:: not in the sense of getting a title bu::t in the sense of the job. Becau::se I don't want to leave the technical part. But within the sector that I work eh:: I want to do a certain work, within the same field. It is not hierarchically higher, and I don't know if the money is better, although I think it is, but it's not for that, it's that I like it more. This, yes, yes. This is something I'm looking for. I am also studying to get a certification on this subject. But it's just that you have to get lucky, it's hard to find it. It's hard.*

In the first extract, Dionysis has told me that in the company he works for many technicians pursue positions that are placed higher in the organization chart and better remunerated; they are granted administrative posts but they do not work in the technical department anymore. When I ask him why he does not like this perspective, the interviewee assumes a professional identity and defines himself as a "*technician*". His entire working trajectory and – apparently – social status are directed by his identification with the particular occupation.

The participant constructs his possible professional outlets in a bipolar manner. He can be either a technician, or a "*calendar-man*", which is a word he has invented himself ("*ημερολογιάκιας*", in Greek) in order to define those who hold managerial positions, having given up their role as technicians. The use of the "impersonal you" structure casts the linear

course and the binary opposition as banal, as something that happens frequently within the organizations, setting up an internal boundary between occupations. Following the practice that Stecher (2012) identified as indicative of the "occupational identity" profile, Dionysis marks a clear difference between the "technicians", the experts whose work is "essential", and the rest who execute bureaucratic tasks, offering nothing significant; the speaker actually invalidates the second group, claiming that they "*don't do work*" and that there is no "*essence*" in what they do.

The participant outlines an almost Kafkaesque picture of people repeating the same senseless actions, or rather the same senseless words, since they are just "*full of talk*", having surrendered themselves to a meaningless working reality. In fact, it is not the employees' fault; the employment posts themselves are to blame: One "*turns into*" a "*calendar-man*". It is a metamorphose that can happen to anyone, as the "impersonal you" structure signals; anyone who is lured by the "*good money and all the other stuff the company offers*".

Authoring an "occupation-oriented" version of selfhood, the speaker casts as irrational a behaviour which is hegemonically considered "rationalism" from the perspective of the contemporary culture of utilitarian calculation; earning more money, corporate benefits, and higher hierarchical status are constructed as irrelevant, whereas maintaining the identity of the professional is represented as the number one priority. Crafting identity by recurring to this kind of discursive material can disarm organizational control exerted through traditional devices of rewards and punishments such as pecuniary remuneration and hierarchical mobility. Furthermore, the customeristic ethic, one of the central axes of the subjectifying power of marketing ideology in organizations (Fougère & Skålén, 2012), is being effectively resisted: Even though respecting deadlines and being on time in order to please the client are becoming more and more important in a business world which moves frenetically, the respondent configures this aspect of work as less important, emphasizing instead the satisfaction gained by working in a particular area.

There is one more notable juxtaposition that we can discern in Dionysis' narration. The interviewee in his argumentation contemplates the possibility of being laid off from his work at "*anytime*", drawing upon the discourses of labour precarization. Within this unstable environment, expertise stands as the only factor that can help you "*stand on your feet*"; if you do not possess the "*knowledge*", you "*have nothing*". A professional identity is thusly portrayed as offering a level of security which the identity of the employee, irrespectively of rank or salary, cannot guarantee.

Hence the navigation in the labour market is forged as an individual process, while cognitive supplies are the only ones to secure survival against a backdrop of banalized precarity. On the other hand, core elements of the dominant managerial paradigm, such as customerism are being challenged; the vocabulary of professionalism is deployed here in a different manner, expressing "the desire to remain in technical areas of work rather than climb the greasy pole of management" (Fournier, 1999, p. 301), attaching an alternative meaning to constructions such as "hierarchy" and "money".

A similar resignification is also effected in the second excerpt by Manoussos. Although the participant does not configure the money variable as completely irrelevant, he engineers his working existence as revolving around a particular profession. Remaining within his preferred professional territory is fashioned as the compass which guides his choices.

Manoussos entertains an interpretation of selfhood as fundamentally committed to the technical profession. Admitting the importance of money can be understood as a rhetorical technique in order to build a reliable persona and enhance the facticity of the construction of an "occupation-oriented" subjectivity that questions the dominant meaning of hierarchy. The speaker hesitates to decide if the job he desires enjoys a higher hierarchical status, as the extension of the last letter of the word "*hierarchically*" manifests. The "official" hierarchy, which is organized under distinct "*titles*" used by corporations to classify job posts is contested and a personal hierarchy is suggested, one which is articulated on the basis of personal preferences; he "likes it more" and this is what makes it a better job, not the status or the salary that come with it.

Just like Dionysis did in the previous extract, Manoussos also elaborates one's working trajectory by invoking personal choice and desire; he does not want to leave the technical field, he wants to do a particular job, one which he likes more. Expertise is once again conceptualized as a key-factor to one's efforts to achieve the preferred job, here in the form of official certification. Turning to the coherence of the participants' narratives, it is interesting to underscore that both in the form of experience and in the form of accreditation by an official entity, acquiring knowledge is cast as a responsibility that individuals have to undertake for themselves, assuming all costs involved. However, contrary to the accounts drawing on entrepreneurial discourses, respondents who foregrounded their occupational identities construed this procedure as part of being committed to a professional community rather than trying to meet the market demands.

Nevertheless, apart from the personal effort motivated by the loyalty to a particular profession, the interviewee in fragment B also mobilizes the discursive theme of "luck". No matter how hard you try, "*you have to get lucky*". In this way, the agentic perspective afforded by professional discourses is tempered, as the participant formulates an understanding of the self as being subjected to forces he cannot control. Making one's way within the labour market is not conditioned only on personal characteristics or efforts; the individual is not omnipotent even if she/he makes the right choices. By reiterating the phrase "*it's hard*" the speaker makes that clear to his audience, claiming for himself the position of an effortful subject. However the repertoire of "effortfulness" (Gibson, 2009) is configured differently here; effort is not directed to adjust selfhood to what the market asks for, but rather to fulfill personal desires that emanate from the identification with a particular group, and may be even punished or marginalized by the labour market, with lower payments and status.

In conclusion, the "occupation-oriented" pattern avails subject positions that handle issues of agency individually in terms of knowledge and expertise. However, within its framework, devices of control such as money and status are incapacitated and resignified, imbued with counter-hegemonic meaning. Even though precarity and structural inequalities of waged work are being banalized through the course of action prescribed by this discursive construction of the working self, enacting professional subjectivities may serve to dislodge the hegemonic entrepreneurial prototype, by promulgating deviant understandings of what is "meaningful" and "rational".

### *1.3.3. Professional particularity*

There were times when the participants, assuming a professional identity, tended to attribute the fact that they work overtime to the particularity of their occupation. In fact, frequently it was not even conceptualized as "additional", but rather as an integral part of the particular professional field.

A. Interviewer: *Does your work follow you when you are not at the workplace?*
Dionysis: *Yes, unfortunately.*
I.: *How?*
D.: *It is again mostly because of the n:ature of the occupation. Maybe it's also my fault to be honest but ts if anything happens, whatever incident we have, you have to react immediately and many times I will have to go back again no matter what time it*

*is or I will have to work from home. So it affects you but it is not something permanent. But it has happened and that's the way it will work, it is clearly a matter of the particular field.*

B. Interviewer: *When you are not at work, do you take up activities that will help you do your job better?*
Maria: *Ehm yes.*
I.: *What kind of things?*
M.: *What kind of thi::ngs… eh::… to read, to stay informed, to:: learn about new things, new trends, new launches, to go out and observe and meet people… In my case, as a journalist in the particular sector, it is very interrelated, the personal with the professional. So it helps me a lot when I go back to work to use what I have in my disposal in order to become a better professional. Consequently whatever piece I can find around and pick it up and filter it and make the best out of it I try to do it. So yes I search in Facebook for campaigns, the social media, all that kinds of stuff.*

In the first extract I ask Dionysis if he has to attend to matters that have to do with his work when he has left the company. I place "work" in a subject position, ascribing to it an active role, "harassing" the subject: The verb "follow" implies that the respondent does not normally choose to work after the end of his shift, but it is rather imposed to him. The participant does not challenge my construction and admits that work does have the power to set the rules and that he understands that as something unpleasant. At this point the interviewee seems to problematize the situation, configuring it as something "unfortunate" which should not happen, or does not happen normally. However, in his next turn he conceptualizes it as an integral part of his job, completely normalizing it as he adopts the position of a responsible professional.

In fact, Dionysis "naturalizes" the fact that he has to work more than he is paid to, attributing to the "*nature of the occupation*". Conceiving of it in this way implies that it is a structural part of the profession, not a superficial element that depends on how he or the employer decide to handle matters. Hence working overtime is viewed as something that cannot change or be avoided, but instead as something one accepts when she/he decides to exercise the particular profession.

Nonetheless, the participant appears rather ambivalent towards the unchangeability of the situation, also holding himself accountable for it. The speaker seems to question the

impossibility to act otherwise and claims for himself the position of a dutiful professional who willingly chooses to subject himself to this procedure. In this way, his decision to work extra time is not framed as a mere coercion, but rather as a deliberate choice out of commitment to his profession. The phrase "*to be honest*" adds truthfulness to this version of the self, which could be doubted because of the contradiction between the two statements, while the adverb "*maybe*" acknowledges it and serves to temper it, insofar as it will be reiterated with the introduction of a "*but*". Yet working more is still formulated as something negative with the selection of the wording "*fault*", further accentuating the participant's disinterested devotion to his occupation.

The continuation of this sentence ("*if anything happens, whatever incident we have, you have to react immediately and many times I will have to go back again no matter what time it is or I will have to work from home*") is constructed in a very peculiar manner. The speaker starts by using the first person plural, identifying with the company, or, more probably, judging by the rest of his answers, with his department. However, subsequently he shifts to the second person singular, almost as if he is repeating an order ("*you have to react immediately*"). We could assume that it is an obligation engendered exactly because of the collective identification that we recognized before, and for that reason it is rationalized and configured as uncontestable. A third change of the subject follows, as the speaker deploys the first person singular, adding to this apparently one-way situation an element of personal choice, fashioning the self as a professional loyal to duty. As Disch and Jean O'Brien (as cited in Weeks, 2011) have observed, professionals conceive of themselves as incommensurable and are willing to do what needs to be done rather than merely what they are paid to do.

The interviewee further rationalizes the practice of working after the end of the working day by constructing it as something casual, occasional. He stages an imaginary opposition between his work and others, whereby situations like that are "*permanent*"; the outcome of this comparison diminishes the negative impact since his condition is not as bad as others. Today in Greece the raw work hour violations on behalf of the majority of private companies has become a normality; working for a firm where this happens only occasionally is seen as a bright exception. Hence comparisons of that kind add to the institutionalization of such practices, which stay unchallenged.

Finally, the participant reaffirms the configuration of working additional time as an intrinsic characteristic of the "*field*". He states that he knows that it is going to happen again so it is a considered decision from his part not to make an effort to change it or to resist it in some other way. These findings seem to confirm Alvesson's (2000) observation that

"knowledge - intensive workers form the ideal subordinates, the employer's dream in terms of work motivation and compliance".

Let us now move on to excerpt B. When I ask Maria if she does any activities connected to her job outside the workplace, she seems a little confused and has to take some time to think; this is how we interpret her repeating the question and extending the vowels. As she will soon reveal, life within and outside the workplace are closely interrelated and as a result the participant finds it difficult to discern if certain practices are aimed at personal satisfaction or professional use.

All the activities mentioned by the respondent have to do with finding and handling information ("*read*", "*stay informed*", "*learn*", "*observe*"), as well as communicating and relating to others ("*go out and observe and meet people"*, "*search in Facebook*", "*social media*"). As we already saw when reviewing the relevant literature, in the post-Fordist era the "general intellect" has turned into productive force and has become "the true wellspring of wealth" (Virno, 2004). At the same time, the capacities to communicate and relate to one another are also put to work. Social life itself is being subsumed by the current capitalist mode of production, which incorporates "all subjective potential, the capacity to communicate, to feel, to create, to think, into productive powers for capital" (Read, 2009, p. 33). The temporal and spatial boundaries between work and life are being recalibrated and hitherto untapped facets of social life are being colonized and commodified.

Nonetheless the intensification of the biopolitical character of capitalism is being narrowed down in a discourse of professionalism, as the participant attributes the blurring of the lines between labour and leisure to the particularities of her occupation ("*in my case*", "*as a journalist in the particular sector*"). Positioning herself as a professional, the collectively produced knowledge and social relations become an asset, something that is "*in my disposal in order to become a better professional*".

In fact, Maria emphasizes her efforts to stay loyal to her profession by making a long list of actions ("*find around and pick it up and filter it and make the best out of it*"). However this is not constructed as something distressful or "unfortunate", as was the case of Dionysis, but rather as something neutral, being completely normal. The argumentative structure of her talk indicates that this kind of stance emanates immediately from the professional subjectivity ("*consequently*", "*so*"), unquestionably placing the "personal self" at the disposal of the "professional one". Hence the intensification of work takes the form of "intensification of life" (Harney, 2009) without that being viewed as problematic, at least from the perspective of the professional.

In conclusion, in this section we saw that when people declare disinterested commitment to their occupation, identifying with a particular professional group and respecting its norms, aspects of the contemporary configuration of labour such as working beyond one's official working hours or devoting leisure time in order to develop professionally are cast as normal, as inextricably linked to one's occupation and therefore taken for granted. Adopting professional identities, individuals rationalize the intensification of work and the colonization of free time, even if sometimes they experience it as something disturbing. Positioning themselves within profession-centered discourses the participants invoked a "professional particularity", ignoring the structural characteristics of the entire socioeconomic edifice.

### *1.3.4. Summary*

When wrestling with issues of accountability and professional choices the participants sometimes derived a sense of identity from a discourse of professionalism. Although enterprise discourse tries to fix the meaning of the "professional" as a financially rational individualistic entity, our analysis brought to light an antagonistic discourse that enshrines loyalty to the norms and standards established by one's particular occupation, even if they do not align with the market demands. When authoring "occupation-oriented" versions of the working self, individuals claimed autonomy in exercising everyday tasks and legitimized their defiance of corporate practices. As Alvesson (2000) maintains, a person who is self-defined primarily as a professional develops weaker ties to the company itself, having to balance conflicting loyalties between professional affiliation and organizational commitment (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). This entails a great deal of identity work, since the managerial discourse was seen to penetrate their constructions of selfhood in different and subtle ways.

The "occupation-oriented" mode of being an employee avails an individualistic view of agency, conditioning it upon knowledge and expertise, whose acquisition is one's personal responsibility; however the discursive motif of "luck" was also used, downplaying this individualistic outlook. At the same time, participants who enacted professional subjectivities tended to re-engineer the meaning of signifiers such as "money" or "status", destabilizing their hegemonic fixations as principal drives for one's choices and actions and as indexes of success. On the other hand, the professional identity was invoked in order to rationalize the intensification of work and their decision to work beyond official working hours, interpreting

the colonization of leisure by labour in terms of a "professional particularity", relevant only to one occupation.

Performing a professional discourse entailed the normalization of the elimination of the separating lines between free time and employment, which sometimes was not even configured as a negative experience. Furthermore, only one participant referred to organized action on a professional basis, to the creation of a union – in a fragment that we will not be able to examine here – something that points to a conceptualization of professions as establishing norms and granting the right to discretionary control to individual agents rather than to a united community which collectively demands and defends its rights.

As Weeks (2011) suggested, "professional socialization has always served as a disciplinary mechanism, one that can induce the effort and commitment, entitlement and identification, and perhaps above all the self-monitoring considered necessary to a profession's reproduction as such" (p. 72). Even though we identified such an effect, our analysis, coinciding with previous research (Doolin, 2002; Fournier, 1999; Sennett, 2006), indicates that an "occupation-oriented" discourse can foster the formation of alternative subjectivities, challenging the dominant work ethic which is established upon capitalocentric and neoliberal discursive formations by articulating the signifiers of profession and professionalism around nodal points such as craftsmanship instead of enterprise.

## 2. The Meaning of Work

In the previous section we explored the ways in which individuals construct themselves as employees by shedding light to the discursive resources they mobilize in order to engineer the working subjectivity. Here we will scrutinize the forms in which the meaning of work is formulated, illuminating the discursive pores that inform their argumentative strategies as the participants talk about the concept of labour and their experiences in its framework.

As we already discussed in previous chapters, work is conceptualized both as a means to an end, when people value its instrumental aspect as a form of achieving financial goals, as well as an end in itself, valued for its own sake. However, instead of focusing on psychological attributes, "personal" value systems, or organizational characteristics (see Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010, for an overview of these approaches) in our effort to

understand how people make sense of labour we focus on its discursive construction and the ways meaning is produced and reproduced through everyday communicative acts.

Indeed, the two orientations – towards an instrumentalist view of work and towards a perception of it as inherently valuable – were often negotiated during the interviews and most participants aligned with both attitudes, depending on their identity concerns during the interaction. In this context, we identified three discursive patterns that function as devices of meaning production and that were drawn upon repeatedly by the respondents when talking about work. Each of these sense-making discursive apparatuses is entangled in intricate social debates, manifesting the creative ways in which meaning is produced in quotidian conversations and at the same time the contingent nature of hegemony. The "school", the "journey", and the "slavery" vocabularies were recognized as the most pervasive repertoires, each one availing distinct subject positions, based on different presuppositions concerning selfhood and the social world.

The "school" discursive reservoir is articulated around a metaphor that creates an analogy between school and work. In this way, the pedagogical role of school is transferred to labour and subjects are interpellated by a rather paternalist discourse, constituting them as potentially unruly pupils, who have to take "lessons" on how to be. The "journey" repertoire configures the working life as a "voyage", as an end in itself and an intrinsically worthy experience which leads to the actualization of one's potential. The third pattern takes two shapes which both revolve around the notion of "waged slavery", however one emphasizes the aspect of choice regarding the field of occupation and the employment conditions whereas the other questions the legitimacy of the capitalist productive relationship itself.

This section is organized as follows: Each pattern is discussed in detail, in terms of the subject positions that are preferred by the speakers as well as in terms of the ways in which work is constructed in their framework. Interview fragments are presented and discussed and at the end of the analysis of each motif the reader will find a concise summary of the findings. Once again, as with the subject positions discussed in the previous section, the discursive devices identified and analyzed here are not regarded as rigid, mutually exclusive categories; instead, each one serves a different rhetoric function, drawing upon distinct discursive matrixes that were creatively articulated and/or challenged when individuals were called to negotiate the meaning of work. Table 2 briefly illustrates our findings.

Table 2. Category 2: The meaning of work.

| **Category 2: The meaning of work** | **Sub-categories** | **Elements of analysis** |
|---|---|---|
| | 2.1. "School" repertoire | 2.1.1. Responsible adult<br>2.1.2. Supplies for life<br>2.1.3. Lessons to be learned |
| | 2.2. "Journey" repertoire | 2.2.1 In pursuit of self-fulfillment<br>2.2.2. "Journey" of professional development |
| | 2.3. "Slavery" repertoire | 2.3.1. Discourse of "personal choice"<br>2.3.2. "Anticapitalistic" discourse |

### 2.1. The "school" repertoire.

The "school" repertoire was often deployed by the participants, offering them the chance to position themselves as responsible, self-disciplined adults, who albeit lured by leisure and laziness recognize the value of working. The pattern consists of terms which refer to work as offering "lessons" on how one should behave in order for her/him to "grow" as a person, "teaching" how one should be, implying that without paid employment individuals would be "arrogant", "ignorant", and "selfish", like little "children". The financial means of subsistence are even compared to the "immaterial supplies" offered by education and the meritocracy that is canonically linked to pedagogy is transferred to waged work, casting the latter as a legitimate means to survival, offering equal opportunities to everyone. Gibson-Graham (2006) showed how a "child" vocabulary that fashions individuals as needy and immature, articulated with other discursive constructions serves to perpetuate the extant productive regime. Here, apart from the irrationality that is usually ascribed to children, the participants also casted themselves as "students", who learn about the world through their experience in the framework of paid employment.

#### *2.1.1. The "responsible adult"*

When negotiating the meaning of work, the participants tended to adopt the position of a responsible adult, who has renounced her/his infantile, irresponsible nature in order to become a self-disciplined subject.

A. Interviewer: *So the fact that you have to get up every day and go to work, how does it make you feel?*
Klio: *That depends on the day. There are days when you just don't want to go to work, it's the "I don't want to go to schoo::l" in all its glory. So there are days that you force yourself out of bed but you know that even if you stayed at home you would do nothing. I mean ok. There comes a moment when you say, ok, vacation is good, vacation is good, vacation is good, I have to do something else now. I mea::n you feel tha:::t "I don't want to go to school, but I finally went and I did <u>something</u>".*

B. Tina: *When things got serious and the jobs got for real, yes, of course, it takes up a big part indeed, you feel that you sacrifice things. You sacrifice things when you see a beautiful day outside and you say "now I can't go and have a coffee at the square", for example, "under the sun, I have to dig myself into the office". And even though many times I grumble about that, many times I grumble about that, and Yanis, my husband, he hears that very often in the morning, something like "I don't want to go to school", you know,* ((laughing)), *eh:: however when I go to work and I do the things I do, I forget about it, it doesn't matter anymore.*
Interviewer: *Aha. Eh::*
T.: *But honestly, I've thought about it, I've woken up in the morning and I'm a mess and I'm tired and I can't get up and I say to hell with it, I won't go today. Ts and then I feel so guilty cause I say ok, since you're not sick, si::nce there is no other reason, you have nothing else to do.*

In the first extract I ask Klio how she feels about the fact that she has to go to work every day. My question aims to generate reflection on an experience that has become so normalized that goes unnoticed. The participant starts her answer with a phrase that implies that she is going to give a multifold answer – "*That depends on the day*" – yet she describes only one kind of "days". This introduction lends credibility to the speaker who seems to be preparing for a multifaceted analysis of the experience, without embellishing or demonizing it. However, it also indicates that the speaker does not question the very conditions that impose this everyday obligation but rather, as we can assume, she considers only the workload that expects her in the office that particular "*day*", or, even more probably considering her subsequent claims, her own mood.

Indeed the participant attributes the reluctance to go to work to a personal desire which is constructed as irrational and attributed to a childish attitude that needs to be repressed. The word "*just*" demonstrates the complete absence of valid argumentation that could support the lack of willingness to begin another working day, forging this unwillingness as illogical since there is no reason that could legitimize it. This "irrational" stance is imputed to what is presented as a common pattern, which is named by Klio herself as "*I don't want to go to school*", casting individuals as children. The impersonal "you" signifies that this kind of thinking is not unusual among employees and the "school" metaphor is ideal in order to ascribe it to an immature version of self which has to be reasoned.

Concomitantly, if individuals are represented as unruly pupils who want to skip class, paid labour is depicted as school, the official pedagogical institution, or metonymically, education in general. Within this effective trope, the characteristics of the latter are transferred to the relations of production, eschewing any trace of domination, fomenting their depoliticization; the power inequalities are justified, just like the ones encountered between students and teachers, while the obligatory character is supposed to be established for the benefit of students and employees respectively. Hence it is considered senseless not being able to understand that it is to your own interest to go to work. Additionally, the very fact that it is practically compulsory, at least for most, like the first years of schooling[21], results necessary and prudent, exactly because workers may exhibit such childish and irresponsible traits.

At this point we have to note that in Greek the phrase "I don't want to go to school" is indeed used metaphorically when people do not want to fulfill obligations that may be tiring, boring, or difficult to carry out, but are thought to be beneficial for them. It is also frequently used by employees, as both the fragments cited here manifest, making this analogy rather widespread and oft-rehearsed. Drawing analogies between work and education in quotidian communication reinforces the hegemonic work ethic which extols the centrality of labour, presenting it as an indispensable asset, promulgating that it is not society which needs work, but you who need it; "work it could easily do without, but which you need absolutely" (Gorz, 1999). Thusly the "school" motif adds to this "fraud", as Gorz puts it, reinforcing this "inversion":

> It is no longer those who work who "make themselves useful" to others, but society which is going to make itself useful by "enabling" you to work, by "giving" you that

[21] In Greece the first nine years of schooling are compulsory.

"precious commodity" of work, in order as much as possible to avoid your "going without" it (p. 57).

So mastering the body and the desire to indulge in corporal pleasures such as staying in bed is rationalized as the speaker assumes the position of a logical adult that disclaims laziness. In fact, what seems to matter in the end is not to do something one likes or something useful to someone. As the interviewee clearly states, the stake is to "*do something*" and that "*something*" can only be achieved in the workplace; the opposition is eloquently expressed: "*if you stayed at home you would do nothing"*, but "*finally I went and I did something*".

The "school" discursive reservoir interpellates subjects as potentially lazy children who have to disavow immaturity and discipline themselves according to the mandates of the dominant work ethos. And this is exactly what Klio does, by reiterating a rather paternalist discourse, which casts as "*vacation*" anything that does not take place in the framework of paid employment. By admitting that "*vacation is good*" the speaker claims for herself a persona that realizes the importance of a "healthy" work-life balance; however, by repeating the particular phrase three times, she constructs leisure as something that can become dull and monotonous, if it is not handled "wisely". Thusly, vacation and leisure in general is defined as something that is necessary only as a supplement to labour, deriving its meaningfulness from work, which is meant to serve as the epicenter of one's life.

Tina in excerpt B expresses a similar view. She has just explained to me that when she was younger she was employed part-time in various posts that she regarded only as a means to complement her monthly allowing. Working fewer hours permitted to her to enjoy more "free time" and thus she did not feel that she was making any "sacrifices"; on the contrary, now, things are different. Nevertheless the participant does not only refer to the time that work currently occupies; instead she describes the jobs she got after finishing education as "*serious*" and "*for real*". It is not only about the time commitments required by the different jobs, but rather about their "nature", and consequently, about the character one has to embrace in order to meet their demands. In effect, being "*serious*" is one of the most typical attributes of adults, one which differentiates them from kids, who usually play pretending to exercise various professions, but of course do not work "*for real*".

Hence, one has to be an adult – behave, think, and feel like an adult – in order to take part in the "real" labour market. And this is another point we should consider: Working part-time or in jobs that do not promise a long-term career seems to be constructed in a rather derogatory manner, pertaining to the infantile universe, not suitable for grownups. On the

other hand, full-time employment, of the kind that calls for an "adult personality", is cast as the "real" thing, the inescapable reality which cannot be subverted, only navigated with responsible management of choices. The specific syntactic structure and the addition of phrases such as, "*yes, of course*" and "*indeed*", point to a truth modality (Fairclough, 1992), presenting the particular claim as incontrovertible.

Thus the speaker performs an "adult" subjectivity, who consciously makes her life decisions: The verb "sacrifice" implies an active and deliberate choice which is produced after an assessment of the options one has and entails the compromise of the less important in favour of the more significant ones. Tina paints a vivid picture of a bright day inviting her to go out and enjoy the sun contrasting it to an equally powerful one, of her "dug into the office", enhancing her responsible persona, claiming for herself an effortful and self-negating identity. Once again we have to underline the fact that all the verbs used are in active voice: Both the restrictions ("*I can't go out*") and the obligations ("*I have to dig myself*") are imposed by the individual, who assumes the duty to police herself, articulating a discourse that preaches discipline and self-denial. In addition, the respondent constructs this kind of self-disciplining thinking as commonplace, naturalizing the unquestionable compromise of desire at the altar of "responsibility".

Actually the interviewee acknowledges the possibility of an alternative subjectivity which also seems more attractive, as the contrast between the two images described above signifies. She actually enacts it, articulating a "childish" discourse when she "*grumbles*" in the morning. The speaker deploys an extreme case formulation, by repeating the phrase "*many times I grumble about that*" adding that this happens "*very often*", revealing a tension and an opening in the internalized normative discourse. Nonetheless, by mobilizing the "school" repertoire any alternative is discarded as immature and is ridiculed; the desire to disobey – even what is described as one's own authority – is attributed to an infantile part of the self which cannot be taken seriously, hence the laughter. As we see, the phrase "*I don't want to go to school*" is cast by this participant as well as a widely known "motto", configuring the analogy between work and school as common knowledge.

What we observe in Tina's first turn is that it is organized around three antithetical pairs that sketch two, apparently, incompatible subject-worlds: Firstly, the working life of a young person is opposed to the one of an adult, with the latter demanding not only more time, but also particular mode of being. Then, two aspects of reality are juxtaposed, one pertaining to the carefree nature of the child and the other to the maturity and the dependability that, normatively, characterize the grownup. And the third is between the infantile, childish

selfhood that "*grumbles*" and complains for having to give up bodily pleasures and the working self, who entering in the workplace becomes once again a fully grown person. From the standpoint of the mature subject, any thought that questions the primacy of labour is blamed on a child figure, lurking inside everybody; however, this contradictory and ambivalent way of speaking, and the enactment, even briefly, of what is constituted as the non-preferred identity contribute important cracks to the crystallization of the particular discursive formation, unveiling its contingency and the fact that work is "so irrational from the standpoint of purely eudemonistic self-interest" (Weber, 1905/1992).

As a matter of fact, Tina returns to the topic building even further the construction of the struggle, although I was ready to ask something different. In the second turn of her response she claims facticity for her account with the adverb "honestly", as well as by presenting a long list that creates a rather eloquent portrait. The speaker intends to author a rebellious version of herself using a curse ("*to hell with it*") and for a moment performing disobedience ("*I won't go today*"). Yet, she has already limited this act of resistance to a great extent by mobilizing a vocabulary of personal well-being and potential burn-out (*I'm a mess and I'm tired and I can't get up*), providing justifications that are widely accepted as legitimate. In this way she fashions an even more responsible subjectivity when she states that she feels guilty because she does not have an "officially" validated excuse, such as being sick or having something else to do that could "beat" work in terms of importance.

Once again, in the same paragraph, Tina "speaks with two voices": After having articulated a quasi-dissident argumentation, she returns to "reason" and talks sense to her irresponsible self, uttering words that seem to be dictated by her superego, if we adopt a psychoanalytic perspective. The "team-player" theme is deployed again, constituting an effective discursive device for the elaboration of a responsible working subjectivity. The same goes with the use of the psychological term "guilt", which implies that even the mere thought of disobedience is regarded as immoral and should generate shame, while the speaker sculpts a mature and rational self. Inverting Foucault's (1988) observation, we could claim that "childhood is madness", and

> [t]he madman […] must feel morally responsible for everything within him that may disturb morality and society, and must hold no one but himself responsible for the punishment he receives. The assignation of guilt […] becomes both the concrete form of coexistence of each madman with his keeper, and the form of awareness that the madman must have of his own madness (pp. 246-247).

In this section we explored the ways in which participants fashioned themselves as responsible subjects by mobilizing what we named the "school" motif: Metaphorically relating the workplace to school and education, the attributes of the latter are transferred to the former, hence fashioning as irrational and immature any resistance against it. The speakers articulated a discourse that interpellates them at the same time as both potentially unruly children and as responsible adults who have to disavow immaturity and embrace the mandates of the dominant work ethos.

Describing the disciplinary regime, Michel Foucault (1995) says the following:

> In a system of discipline, the child is more individualized than the adult, the patient more than the healthy man, the madman and the delinquent more than the normal and the non-delinquent. In each case, it is towards the first of these pairs that all the individualizing mechanisms are turned in our civilization; and when one wishes to individualize the healthy, normal and law-abiding adult, it is always by asking him how much of the child he has in him, what secret madness lies within him, what fundamental crime he has dreamt of committing" (p. 193).

In our era, when subjects are enjoined to monitor themselves in the name of autonomy, it is individuals themselves who assume the duty to control the amount of "childness" that lies in them. This discursive formulation seems to revolve around a quotidian phrase that was often used by the participants and was cast by them as a common pattern of thought, "I don't want to go to school", which performs precisely the functions that we described above. However we could not ignore the links between mundane speech and the contemporary political, institutional, and Media discourses that interpellate individuals as irresponsible children, establishing certain economic behaviours as rational, especially within the framework of the alleged "Greek crisis". Stavrakakis (2014) traces in the "disciplining operation" with neoliberal orientation that has been carried out in the country during the last years, "a process of creating and sustaining shame and guilt – and thus legitimizing punishment […] that relies, at least on a first level, on a series of dominant metaphors" (p. 35). Among them, he discerns

> a very traditional pedagogical metaphor, where the problem, the causes of the crisis, is now attributed to a certain immaturity and/or misbehaviour. Greece is to be treated the way one treats a truant child that deserves to be punished not only to straighten out its own behaviour but also as an example to other kids (p. 36).

The choice to align with the "responsible adult" prototype cannot be dissociated from the circulation of such metaphorical constructions that have dominated the Greek and

international public sphere, further establishing their validity. Nonetheless, we could assume that during the interviews we did come across ways of talk that may entail potential fissures in the edifice of the capitalist productive relations.

*2.1.2. Supplies for life*

In some instances, the interviewees deployed the "school" vocabulary parallelizing the wage earned from labour to the knowledge gained in school, rationalizing the fact that one has to work to survive, representing paid employment as a means to an end. Knowledge is not configured here as an end in itself, but rather as an asset to be cashed later in life.

A. Interviewer: *So what do you think about that, that we have to live in order to w, eh:: that we have to work in order to live* ((smiling))?
Irene: *I think it's a socia::l convention. I mean just like the student will go to school and learn all those things that will help him make it through life the adult will have to find a job. Because you cannot survive without it.*

B. Nefeli: *No, I don't think that it is coercive to work unless* (.) *because I have such examples in my environment, unless his family has taught him to have everything without having to move his little finger. So for that man it will be coercive. I haven't been educated in this way. Even when I was in school I was taught that in order to get a good grade I have <u>to work</u>, <u>to study</u>.*

C. Interviewer: *So you feel that work is about fighting for what you deserve, your survival?*
Tina: *Work certainly contains this element, by definition. I mean it's like when you are at school, you have to fight, you have to study, you have to commit yourself to earn something. Now you have to fight to earn a living.*

During the interview with Irene, I committed an interesting lapsus, to use a psychoanalytic term. Instead of saying "working to live" I almost said "living to work" and I realized it just before completing the phrase. I do not mean to examine this incident in its psychoanalytic dimension though, just to voice a concern about its possible impact on the

interaction, given that my interlocutor did in fact notice it. However, she did not comment on it and moved forward with her response as if it had never occurred.

Turning now to the participant's answer, she chooses to define labour as a "*social convention*", evoking the representation of an agreement made by free people. This interpretation entails the voluntary participation of all parties involved, and hence its defiance can legitimately be punished. However, the essence of this convention, as the speaker clarifies in the following sentence, lies in its "distributive" function, ascribing roles to its members and bodies to particular spaces, its disciplinary character in other words, "sanctioning and prescribing normal and/or deviant behaviors" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 23). The terms "convention" or "contract" were often used by respondents when they were called upon to define the working relationship, pointing to their availability in social debate. Dardot and Laval (2014) suggest that the process of contractualization in human relations has replaced older forms of symbolic reciprocity, rendering the contract the yardstick of all social bonds. This conceptualization of relationships in terms of voluntary created relations between free individuals represents for Dardot and Laval the modern individualism. However, as they maintain drawing on Foucault, it is not subjective freedom what lies under the contract, but rather a process of normalization and discipline, constituting an "apparatus of efficiency". And if the student is defined as such through her/his assignment to school, the adult can be defined as such only as far as she/he forms part of the workforce.

In addition, using the "school" repertoire the speaker manages to create an equivalence between the knowledge one acquires in obligatory education which will "*help him make it through life*" and the salary, without which "*you cannot survive*"; the immaterial "supplies" offered by books and teachers, the "profit" made by going to school, are translated to the monetary reward of the worker. Thusly the waged labour relationship is rationalized and naturalized thanks to a disciplinary discourse effacing the power inequalities that constitute it, prescribing a particular subjectivity as normal for everyone.

Similarly, Nefeli rationalizes the imperative character of paid employment by recurring to the "school" metaphor, drawing an analogy between the student, who has to struggle in order to get a "*good grade*" and the adult who can't "*have everything without having to move his little finger*". The speaker denies the coercive nature of paid employment grounding her account in the external reality in an effort to enhance its facticity and claim objectivity; thus she asserts that she has "*examples*" in her own environment that confirm the argument that what could be described as coercion is merely a personal understanding that originates from bad education, selfishness, and laziness.

The participant creates a division between two kinds of people: those who have learned to work in order to get what they deserve and those who were taught that they can have anything without putting any effort. She places herself among the first group, forging an effortful subjectivity, attributing her attitude to what is cast as "proper" education. Thusly labour is conceptualized as a matter of personal choice made exercising free will, having embraced the responsible identity of a grownup.

Furthermore, the participants often blamed the previous generation for raising their children providing them more than they should, spoiling them, and teaching them that they can have anything they please without trying for it. This kind of criticism echoes the accusations made against the Greek people in official texts on a national and international level as well as in everyday communication, especially within the framework of the "Greek crisis", that they have lived beyond their means, guilty of financial excesses, and laziness. As we saw when reviewing the relevant literature, accusations of this sort have been deployed in order to justify the dismantling of the welfare state and the neoliberalization of the labour legislation.

The respondent, adopting the position of a responsible adult, discursively enacts this perspective attributing dissidence against the work ethic to laziness. From this standing point, success and failure appear like the outcome of one's personal effort; at the same time, the labour market is conceptualized as a field of opportunity in which everyone has equal chances to make it. This discourse of meritocracy which attributes inequality to differences in skill and work, rather than structural inequalities (Harvey, Allen, & Mendick, 2015) is markedly endorsed by the neoliberal dogma, marginalizing the dialogue on social equality. As Gammon (2012) puts it, "Neoliberalism, with its rhetorical emphasis on individualism, meritocracy and self-reliance, provided the means of nominally adhering to notions of equality, while promoting a form of economic sociality that reinforced and aggravated historical inequalities" (p. 512).

The same figurative way of discursively constructing work is also used by Tina, in fragment C: Just like when you are at school, when it comes to work you need to "*fight*" and to "*commit yourself*"; only this time the goal is survival itself. The speaker literally defines work as a fight for survival and in order to account for that she compares it to school and the effort that students make in order to "earn" knowledge. Work is identified with the struggle for sustenance and this representation is justified through the mobilization of the "school" pattern: The participant links the two institutions recognizing the "fight to earn something" as an element they have in common.

There are two dimensions that we would like to focus on at this point. Firstly, this metaphor rationalizes the hegemonic work ethic which preaches that there are no free lunches in life and that in order to remain alive you have to do something that others evaluate as worthy of a reward (Bauman, 2002). In this way, paid employment is cast as legitimately the only way that one can make ends meet reproducing a capitalocentric discourse positing the waged-labour relation as the only possible way to earn a living; it is the only path to survival just like studying is considered the only path to knowledge.

Secondly, the interviewee reiterates the same individualistic argumentation about the navigation in the social world that we encountered in the rest of the fragments of this section. Using the impersonal "you" structure further accentuates the individualistic orientation of the discourse of meritocracy, which conditions accomplishment and advancement on personal achievement. Hence equality of opportunity is taken for granted and the social antagonism gives its place to a war of all against all, incapacitating alternative subject-worlds fueled by collective identifications, legitimizing the social Darwinism that is promulgated by the neoliberal doctrine.

To sum up, we would like to highlight the way in which the "school" repertoire is used to justify the paid labour relationship as the only legitimate subsistence practice through the comparison of the knowledge gained at school with the wage earned from work. Participants tended to author versions of themselves as responsible adults who are willing to fight in order to get what they need, presupposing a labour market which offers equal opportunity to everybody. Producing the oft-rehearsed discourse of meritocracy assuming that personal effort unequivocally leads to success, they crafted the navigation of the social as a personal matter. Such individualistic perspectives reinforce the arguments about the "undeserving poor" which legitimize the implementation of neoliberal measures in welfare and employment legislation: Not only success but mere survival has to be earned through hard work.

*2.1.3. Lessons on how to be*

In other instances the respondents mobilized the "school" vocabulary in order to talk about the things one "learns" inside the labour market and the "lessons" work teaches us about the world, social relationships, and, ultimately, about how we should "be". Thusly they forged it as an end in itself, regardless of its content or the working conditions.

A. Interviewer: *How come you started working while you were studying?*
Elina: *I started because in Canada there is a different mentality about how you spend the summer.*
I.: *What do you mean?*
E.: *The mentality is that on summer you work in order to get by the rest of the year. For us he:::re, I think that in Greece you can start at the age of twentyfou::r, twentyfi::ve, twentysi::x* ((smiling)) *and thirty, I mean it's not, many people won't do something like that but I think it is something that teaches you a lot of stuff. And all those jobs, in a cafeteria a::nd babysitting and all this kind of stuff, they finally help. Because you learn eh:: it's important. I think you see things differently when you have worked at a fast-food and then you enter a fast-food as a client, you have a different perspective. You understand a bit more what the other is going through. So I did this stuff eh:: to:: earn some pocket money. But I think I also had the picture tha::t I want to get through some difficulties, some tests, to see what it means to work. But I didn't have papers so I had to go to:: the Greek restaurants to be exploited by the Greek immigrants, really, that's what was going on, in their restaurants*.

B. Maria: *I cannot even imagine that a person has never worked in his life. I think that this is an experience that someone should have for some time. It's a real school.*
Interviewer: *What does this experience offer you?*
M.: *It crushes your selfishness. That's why it makes you a better person I think. You learn to play accepting the terms that others have set, you learn to coexist with people. That's it.*

C. Tina: […] *Eh:: I am not competitive at all, as many others are, something I learned with time living within the working environment, they are competitve, a lot.* […] *Yes, look, it is eh:: how to say it, these are lessons you learn with time. It is good to adapt with time, I mean that what you see should form a basis in order for you to shape your conduct, so to speak. Eh: I'm not saying that you should all of a sudden become a different person, no way, but definitely all those years I have learned some lessons and I ha::ve eh I have caught myself thinking, "look, regarding this aspect you have to change your position, you have to think that maybe you have to behave differently". Withou::t jeopardizing your values, we do::n't step over the rest, we*

*don't we don't we don't, that's for sure but eh:: you have to because your way does not work.*

Elina is 23 years old, holds a degree in Environmental Studies and works for a big NGO. She has just told me that during her studies in Canada she was employed in many jobs that had nothing to do with her field of interest. When I ask her why she chose to do that she mobilizes a discourse of orientalism (Said, 1995), attributing her decision to the influence of the "Canadian mentality". As Said (1995) has shown, the orientalist discourse largely revolves around the juxtaposition of a construction of the "West" as rationally organized, and for that reason having accomplished great progress, as opposed to the underdeveloped "Orient", which is constituted as "stagnant", "backward", and "irrational". The identification with the "Canadian mentality" and the implicit criticism, performed with an eloquent smile, of the "Greek habit" to enter later in the labour market, allow to the speaker to claim an "occidental" moral identity.

We have neither the space nor the time to engage in a discussion about the formation of the modern Greek national identity and the dualism that is said to characterize it (for that matter see among others, Bozatzis, 1999; Herzfeld, 1987; Tziovas, 1989). What we should however underscore at this point is that the dominant discourses on both a national and an international level have configured Greece as the "negative imprint" of Europe, castigating it for its "oriental" shortcomings, especially within the framework of the so-called "Greek crisis". In line with previous studies (Bozatzis, 1999; Kesisoglou, 2014), our analysis shows that individuals perpetuate this colonial gaze and author "occidental" versions of themselves.

Returning to the analysis of Elina's talk, we turn our attention to the use of the "school" jargon. The interviewee fashions herself as exceptionally effortful, since "*many people won't do something like that*", accounting for her choice in the name of "learning". Work is granted a subject position and has the ability to "*teach*", regardless of its actual content. Individuals are interpellated as children who need to be educated and the labour market appears as the only institution that can provide this kind of education. In this way, the capital-labour relationship, the adverse conditions it entails, as well as its exploitative nature is conceptualized as an undisputed reality; individuals can only be trained to survive in its context, rather than resist or subvert it.

Thus, according to the respondent, being employed from a young age, is instructive in a dual sense; firstly it teaches you how the world "is" and consequently how you can navigate it, preserving the centrality of the work ethos. Secondly, it moulds one's personality,

making her/him considerate and able to appreciate the effort one puts into jobs that are often underestimated. Turning to the coherence of her talk we should note that people are conceptualized as innately inconsiderate and arrogant and only work can teach them to show respect and compassion to others.

The "school" vocabulary is once again mobilized, as the participant describes her first working experiences in terms of "*tests*"; the labour market has the authority to evaluate one's performance and judge if she has failed or passed. This kind of argumentation that equates paid employment to school seems to individualize waged work, framing it in terms of personal strengths and cultural traits: Being employed becomes an index of effortfulness and of capacity to overcome difficulties, which are normalized as part of an unchangeable reality. Additionally, work is done for personal benefit which stretches well beyond the economic level to the formation of a "sound" personality.

Elina fosters her elaboration of "child" self by referring to the remuneration from her first jobs as "*pocket-money*"; the "wage" that constitutes the essence of the capital-labour relationship is rescripted as a reward offered to a minor for her effort, downplaying both the right to a satisfactory pecuniary compensation and the importance of the services offered, since they do not deserve a proper pay, but rather a symbolic allowance. Even though an instrumental aspect of work is indeed contemplated, the discursive elaboration of the self as a student who works for the sake of being "trained" and "educated", on a macro-social level serves to rationalize the unfair treatment of younger workers, who, as we already stressed, according to recent legislation are entitled to lower minimum salaries than the rest workforce and less employment rights.

Elina closes her response drawing an opposition between two kinds of work: the one explicitly described, which entails exploitation on behalf of the employers and the "normal" which is implied by the speaker, as the choice she was not able to make because she lacked the official documentation. The interviewee undertakes the position of an effortful subject, morally obliged ("*I had to go*") to conform to the "occidental" working prototype; the latter is further accentuated by juxtaposing the unlawful employment conditions in the businesses of Greek immigrants to the Canadian labour market, which, through this opposition, is implicitly cast as fair. Adopting this perspective, the inequalities that structure the capitalist mode of production are being banalized given that exploitation is traced only in job posts that do not comply with the institutionalized rules that organize it. Moreover, even what is in fact criticized as "exploitation" is sanctioned in the name of the "schooling" experience provided by work.

In the second extract, Maria also draws upon the "school" discursive pool, explicitly identifying work with school. By deploying a truth modality reinforced with the adjective "*real*" she compensates for the subjective modality with which she initiates her answer. The metaphor through which school lends its signified to work seems to be among those that have become so normalized that we do not notice the ways in which they guide our thinking (Chandler, 2002), Hence this oft-rehearsed metaphorical elaboration of work gives way to its representation as essential to humans, even if it is for a short period of time. In reality, it limits people's imagination, as this excerpt clearly demonstrates, establishing an unequivocal analogy between labour and education: Although it can be painful it is intrinsically useful in as much it teaches invaluable lessons on how to "*coexist*", inculcating "appropriate" identities.

As we saw earlier, this rhetorical configuration of the working relation forges it as an indispensable asset to the individual, who needs it in order to sculpt a well-rounded personhood. The participant also draws upon a discourse of "experience", which is more prominent in the pattern that we will explore subsequently and will be more thoroughly discussed in that framework. At this point we will only concisely comment its wide circulation within the discursive hegemony of neoliberalism, whereby everything is represented as an "experience" and subjects are invited to live all of them if they want to develop a sense of a "full" self.

Education in this content does not refer to the practical knowledge or the professional skills that, according to the respondents, many are eager to acquire at any cost. Instead, the "school" motif, prescribes particular formulas of being, which seem to endorse the obedient subjectivities demanded by capitalism; it enhances the production of docile subjectivities by conceptualizing individuals as inherently "*selfish*", who can give up the infantile narcissism and renounce their self-revolving ego only by going through the "*experience*" of paid work. In fact, denying to "*play accepting the terms that others have set*" is considered as "*selfishness*" and hence precludes the possibility of any effective reaction that would modify both the "*terms*" and the power balance.

Thusly, the "school" vocabulary as articulated by Maria operates on three levels: Firstly, it normalizes the power inequalities that govern the labour market; it goes without saying that at work you play by the rules set by others. Secondly, it extends this inequality to social relations and constructs as commonsensical the social disparities which force a great part of the population to accept terms that are not in a position to negotiate in order to make a living. And thirdly, it further naturalizes that image, sketching it as an objective reality that

cannot be contested or challenged, sedimenting the condition for its reproduction; hence it is individuals who need to be trained in order to maximize their capacity to survive in it.

In the last extract presented above, Tina also talks about what she has "*learned*" during her trajectory as an employee, constructing her experiences from different workplaces as "*lessons*" on how people "*are*" and the ways in which one should navigate the world of labour.

Giving an account of herself, the speaker creates two broad categories of individuals: those who are competitive and those who are not, classifying herself under the second list. The participant attributes this codification to the "*lessons*" "taught" by working life, as if the latter was a neutral backdrop which simply hosts the actions undertaken by various agents. The objectivity that is canonically attributed to the knowledge acquired at school is transferred to the environment of labour thanks to the deployment of the "school" repertoire. Hence the social nature of the working relationship and its configuration within matrixes of discourse and power are obfuscated; whatever is "learned" within this "school" is dressed the guise of objectivity, liberated by the socioeconomic aspects of the productive relation, which is ultimately structured as a natural state: it is people who are competitive, waged labour has nothing to do with it.

Having fashioned the experiences in the labour market as "lessons", the adaptation to its rationality emerges as the best response on behalf of the employee. Sennett's (1998) powerful metaphor of the "chameleon employee" can therefore be deployed on one more level: Apart from the flexibility in terms of time, place, skills, and abilities that are required from the contemporary working arrangements, the employee is also "advised" to "*adapt*" to the mentality that reigns the business environment. Since competition is cast as the dominant principle subjects should react accordingly, reinventing themselves and grounding their working subjectivities in that "*basis*".

So Tina, performing a paternalist discourse that establishes what is "*good*" and how one "*should*" shape her/his behaviour, constructs the subject as an agent with freedom of choice: Individuals are not obliged to modify their conduct or personalities; however, as "good students" who have "learned their lesson" they should understand that this is the only reasonable course of action. Such a conceptualization of work as "instructive" reinforces and perpetuates the function of paid employment as an apparatus of the neoliberal governmentality: Without inculcating the principles of competition or enterprise, it posits the capitalist productive relation as an undisputed reality, which rational subjects should learn how to navigate, always respecting its norms and structures. As Weidner (2009) observes,

"the subject does not need to internalize specific neoliberal values about the importance of a society constituted by competitive, rationally choosing individuals, provided she accepts that this is the reality in which she finds herself and acts accordingly" (p. 406).

As if answering to imaginary objections, the speaker rushes to ward off any negative inferences about herself by drawing upon a discourse on "*values*". The implementation of a distancing strategy from the unconditional embracement of competition and the market ethos – achieved by the "but" structure used in two consecutive sentences – seems necessary for the participant in order for her to protect her moral persona, lending facticity to the conclusion she makes: One should follow the lead of the others and adopt their "*ways*" in order for things to work out. The way in which Tina chooses to represent her internal debate, echoing a broader social debate about the morality of the market ethos, is rather interesting: She prefers to talk with the voice of the "teacher" or the wise parent who instructs her "pupil-self" how she should behave: "*look, regarding this aspect you have to change your position, you have to think that maybe you have to behave differently*". The next phrase and the repetition of "*we don't*" three times, also evokes the image of an adult preaching the appropriate conduct, which ultimately has to be modified according to the hegemonic prototype.

An analogous effect we could attribute to the repeated allusion to the "time" factor ("*I learned with time*", "*you learn with time*", "*I'm not saying that all of a sudden you should become*", "*but definitely all those years*"). According to the interviewee, the "learning" process effected in the framework of one's labouring trajectory takes time and does not happen abruptly. Thusly the acceptance of the market doctrines is portrayed as a procedure that is deliberately taken up by the individual, as a result of reflection ("*I have caught myself thinking*"). It is conceptualized as a sign of maturity, akin to the readiness of rational adults to shape their conduct respecting "reality".

To sum up, the "school" motif seems to construct individuals as inherently arrogant, inconsiderate, or just naïve, like children, who should abandon their narcissistic selfishness and adapt to the reality of the market. Work, irrespectively of its content, is configured as an end in itself, as an instructive experience that educates and builds one's character providing qualities that are considered important. This discursive reservoir enshrines forms of subjectivation consistent with the needs of capitalism for obedient subjectivities, contributing to the crystallization of waged labour as something that people need, and to the market ethos as a reality that has to be respected.

*2.1.4. Summary*

The discursive pattern that we named "school" motif revolves around a metaphor through which the attributes of school are transferred to the relation of paid work, which is thusly conceptualized both as an end in itself and as a means to an end. When deploying this meaning-making device, the participants tended to position themselves as responsible grownups who voluntarily sacrifice pleasure and renounce laziness as immoral, constructing as childish and irrational any thought or reaction that may challenge the centrality of labour. The "school" reservoir nurtures a paternalist discourse giving individuals the opportunity to oppose the selfish child to the wise adult, casting at the same time work as something inherently useful, no matter its content or conditions. However, resistance enacted mostly through bodily reactions does exist, even though it is crippled and condemned as an expression of infantile irrationality.

Supporting this discursive construction is the implicit but fundamental presupposition that "we live in a meritocracy where individual achievement can lift us up above the masses, can make us stand out, to be someone" (Lloyd, 2012, p. 630). This individualistic conceptualization of the social is fostered by and further normalizes the neoliberal understandings of the world and the social Darwinism the latter enshrines, marginalizing the debates on social inequalities; society is represented as an arena where a war of all against all takes place. Salary is likened to the knowledge gained through the schooling procedure and hence paid employment justifiably constitutes the only legal and moral path to survival.

Furthermore, thanks to this trope, the labour market is configured as offering "lessons" on how to behave, what to desire, what to think: The attributes that are desired by the business context have to be embraced and its rules have to be followed in order for individuals to be classified as rational adults and not as selfish children. Work is thusly engineered as an end in itself, moulding "useful" subjectivities, contributing to "personal growth", slowly "killing" the inner child that refuses to confine itself in its restrictive structures. Individuals seem to have internalized the disciplinary discourses and voluntarily assume the responsibility to control the amount of "childness" they have inside.

Concluding this section we would like to make some important remarks. Firstly, we would like to discuss the importance of this discursive motif against the Greek cultural backdrop. Throughout the history of modern Greece, education has been granted a pivotal role in the social structure. Since the formation of the modern Greek nation state, in the beginnings of the 19th century, it has been elevated to a catholic value (Bozatzis, 1999). For a

number of reasons, it has been considered as one of the main vehicles of social mobility, as well as an indicator of prestige and social status (Gouvias, 1998; Tsoukalas, 2005).

We suggested that the respondents drew upon a "school" vocabulary in order to author a meritocratic version of work, conditioning success upon personal effort, assuming that this is the case in education. However this premise has been highly contested and various studies (e.g., Gouvias, 1998; Psacharopoulos & Papakonstantinou, 2005) have shown that children whose parents have "better" educational and professional background have more chances in succeeding in tertiary education examinations. Nikoloudis (2011) observes that the ideologeme of meritocracy in education is sustained by an essentialist understanding of social life, which projects the social subject in a social vacuum. Thusly failure is individualized and attributed to personal traits and effort; the discourse of equal opportunities manages in this way merely to substantiate the structural inequalities that have left their marks on social agents who are inscribed in particular sociocultural contexts.

### 2.2. The "journey" repertoire.

Often during the interview sessions the participants chose to rhetorically compose an account of paid work as a "journey" of self-actualization and development. The "journey" motif, as we named it, is assembled around images of "travelling", "collecting experiences", "moving forward" and "crossing limits". The "destination" is not a particular occupation or workplace; the perpetual movement within the labour market suffices: It is "upward", leads to "self-actualization" and "self-discovery", and hence it should never stop. If it did, it would signify the advent of "routine" and "stagnation", the death of "perspective" and thus of "personal development"; and this is something unacceptable. This discursive pattern presupposes a subject that pursues self-realization through work and an organization of the business world that should be able to provide it. The latter is forged as comprising various "paths" among which employees are individually responsible for choosing, taking into consideration the market demands as well as the prospects for self-development that it offers.

Kesisoglou (2014) brought to light a similar discursive repertoire which he named "life's course", through which one's working biography is portrayed as an individual and unconstrained course towards constant improvement and self-fulfillment. We preferred the metaphor of the journey because it was frequently used by the participants, it inspired a lot of their photos, and because the notions of "self-discovery", "crossing borders", and "gathering experiences" came up very often. In the same vein, our study unveiled one more aspect of this

pattern: The labouring history was, though less often, conceptualized as a "journey" in reference to a particular profession, in the framework of which the speakers forged themselves as professionals who "move forward" as they "explore" its possibilities to "evolve", expanding its "boundaries".

*2.2.1. In pursuit of self-fulfillment*

Positioned within the "journey" discursive pool, the participants rescripted themselves as subjects who seek to actualize their potential through paid work. "Personal development" was crafted as the "destination" of this "voyage" coming as a result of "personal effort" and "constant movement". Yet it is never reached since there is always more to "discover" about the self and the world.

A. Tina: *Well it is a fridge, which symbolizes affluence, your survival basically. With work you can survive and build on everything else at the same time. Go a bit further, explore a bit further, arrive at a destination.*
Interviewer: *Which is the destination?*
T.: *Well the destination I think i::s for you to be fulfilled. To gather experiences, to feel that you do your job well and that you always have a challenge ahead. To feel that there is always the margin for you to do something better, to learn something more, to go elsewhere, to travel a bit further, so to speak. That there is a future in this thing and that there are more steps ahead. Then we will learn this and then we will discover that and then we will do this work better and there is always a margin for improvement and that you leave something behind, to tell you the truth.*

B. Eva: *Paid work is work that you produce for money and it takes you further.*
Interviewer: *It takes you further…*
E.: *Yes, it takes you further as a person. Not your company or your boss, I don't mean that. I'm talking only about you. It is something unique that I haven't experienced outside this framework.*
I.: *How does it take you further as a person?*
E.: *Eh::: You get to know your limits, basically, not only in a negative sense, also in a positive one. The limits of your creativity, the limits of your ability to communicate, because the balances are very fragile* […] *So once you know your limits you can*

*move beyond them, expand them. So it is at the same time knowing yourself and developing yourself and actualizing yourself it is eh:: many things.*

C. Nefeli: *So for me this book symbolizes my wish to manage to make the journey this man made and arrived at discoveri::ng himself. I mean he was not afraid to abandon the security and the convenience of his job as teacher and make a big journey to discover a story. What this man did, I want to do it now, not in such an old age, take my life in my hands and make this journey.* […] *And yes I think that work takes you further, it definitely does not let you stagnate, especially if you wish to develop through that.*

In the first extract, Tina is describing one of the photographs she took answering the question "What does being an employee mean to you". In the picture we see a fridge covered with magnets, souvenirs from different places she has visited (see Appendix 4, photo 8.a). The speaker ascribes to work a double function, constructing it as having two facets inextricably related to one another; the "truth modality" used ("*With work you can survive and build on everything else at the same time*") leaves no doubt about it. The first one constitutes the basis or the point of departure: the attainment of means of subsistence. The second is the "journey" to self-fulfillment. Both are constructed as integral parts of the working experience that one "*can*" achieve through work.

The pole of "survival", represented by the steady and immobile electric apparatus, is taken for granted as an aspect of labour. It is forged as the fixed backdrop against which "*everything else*" is "*built*". The participant does not elaborate more on the subject, probably considering that there is no need to discuss such an undisputed view, but makes a rich account when arguing about the second dimension. She uses three verbs which express movement ("*go*", "*explore*", "*arrive*"), even though the last one signifies also the end of it, while the repetition of the word "*further*" also stresses the concepts of motion and advancement. At the same time though, the reiteration of the adverb "*a bit*" moderates the process and contributes to the construction of a realistic argument; the progress does not have to be dramatic or explosive, "baby steps" are fine as long as they take you someplace else.

Besides, according to the interviewee, the "*destination*" is not an actual "place": It is not a particular job, occupation, type of workplace, or working relation. It is "*to be fulfilled*". Tina's picture brings to mind Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, reflecting his argument that all human needs can be satisfied by the different aspects of work (Lutgen-Sandvik,

Riforgiate, & Fletcher, 2011). According to Miller and Rose (1995), mostly from the mid-1970 onwards, theorists defined the worker as a human being looking for self-realization in work, just like in every other aspect of life; in turn, work should not be understood as the imposition of constraint and routine. Hence management doctrines sought to combat dissidence by preaching "empowerment" and engaging the self-fulfilling aspirations of the individuals, which otherwise would become an obstacle to organizational goals.

The respondent describes work as a locus of self-actualization, providing "*experiences*" and the opportunity to "*learn*", to "*discover*", and to "*improve*" perpetually. This is how "*to be fulfilled*" is defined: "*To gather experiences, to feel that you do your job well and that you always have a challenge ahead*". This single phrase constructs labour as a continuum, unifying the past, the present and the future in a rather individualistic conceptualization of work: The experiences of the past, the present performance, and the challenges awaiting in the future make up a trajectory that subjects have to walk alone.

The future however is what matters the most; "arriving at a destination" is defined as achieving the permanence in a constant state of flux, making sure that there are no limits. The participant rhetorically paints a picture centered on movement and improvement, with the eyes set "down the road"; she draws upon the "journey" discursive pool, using words like "*steps*" or "*discover*", she underscores the noun "*future*", and repeats the adverb "*then*", giving a sense of an endless procedure of self-development. There seem to be no boundaries, or rather, the individual should ensure that any potential limitations are effectively dealt with as "challenges", enabling the individual navigation in a never-ending "voyage" towards constant improvement.

"Leaving something behind" is also constructed as a fundamental aspect of this "trip"; the respondent claims for herself a persona interested in something more profound than the momentary experiences, forging at the same time work as something that is not ephemeral, offering only temporary effects such as money or recognition, but as having impact on the future as well. She invokes truthfulness for her assertion ("*to tell you the truth*") in an attempt to define paid work as exceeding the usual understandings that narrow its function to livelihood or to personal achievement. It is the only social dimension that this discursive repertoire avails and it entails that it is the individual who leaves her/his mark on the world and not the other way around. Thusly, the capital-labour relationship is invested with a transcendental quality, inherently enabling workers to leave their traces, just like a tourist leaves her/his footsteps on the sand.

Indeed, the portrait sketched by Tina resembles a lot the figure of the "tourist" described by Bauman (2002), valuing mobility more than anything, avoiding any type of commitment or loyalty, ready to move on whenever she/he realizes that something more exciting can be found around the corner. The "journey" discursive pool does not afford "productive" subjectivities, entangled in relations of subordination. Instead, individuals position themselves as "sensation-gathereres", an identity that can never be fully accomplished, since there are always new and more seductive experiences ahead, and one can never be sure that she/he has tasted everything (Bauman, 2002). Once again the working self is modeled after the "consumer" prototype, indulging in the illusion of free choice. It is what Sennett (2006) drawing on Goffman and Debord argues: "The consumer is engaged by his or her own mobility and imagination: Movement and incompleteness equally energize the imagination; fixity and solidity equally deaden it" (p. 149).

Eva in excerpt B configures paid work in the same bipartite schema: on the one hand there is the material survival ("*you do for money*") and on the other the immaterial development ("*it takes you further*"). Two points are worth noting here: Firstly, work is detached from its specific content. The particular job or occupation are not the factors that determine whether or not the employee experiences labour as fulfilling. Instead, being employed is per se represented as a path to personal advancement. This is made clearer by the rhetoric choices made by the speaker – the second point we wish to underline – placing work also in a subject position and claiming that it "*takes you further*". Concomitantly, the self occupies respectively both the subject and the object position: As a subject, she/he is defined as a "producer" labouring for "*money*". As an object, she/he is led to actualize her/his potential by work.

Although the agentic personhood aiming for personal development foregrounded by Tina does not emerge with the same dynamic in this extract, the nonmaterial gain from waged employment is again elevated to a "*unique experience*" one cannot find unless she/he enters the job market. The participant does not silence the dimension of the capital-labour relationship like the previous speaker; she acknowledges the fact that someone else may extract profit from the workers' effort and, as if answering to imaginary arguments that prioritize the employees' contribution to a firm, stresses that what matters the most is one's personal improvement.

Taking out of the picture the employer and the business ("*Not your company or your boss, I don't mean that*"), the subject is no longer defined by her/his social hypostasis, but rather as a free individual ("*I'm talking only about you*"), in search for "experiences" that

promise its ceaseless improvement. Thusly work is engineered as something one does for oneself; like in the "loyalty to the self" pattern we discussed earlier, employees are construed as focusing on their personal evolution, while work is conceptualized as contributing to their growth as human beings. Consequently it is stripped of its political nature and is transformed into an individual matter. In turn the speaker does not prefer a collective identification, a subject position that would make the antagonistic structure of wage labour relevant; instead, she adopts an individualistic stance as an autonomous agent minding only for her own development.

Actually the respondent deploys the "journey" vocabulary in a way that echoes the ''discourse of excellence'', authoring a version of herself as a person who is concerned about becoming better and better. What we find the most striking however is the fact that improvement does not aim at professional skills or knowledge regarding a particular job post or occupation; rather she refers to transindividual elements of subjectivity and social relations such as "*creativity*" and "*the ability to communicate*". Accounts of this sort bring to mind what Mills (as cited in Weeks, 2007) called "'personality market', in which "personal or even intimate traits of the employee are drawn into the sphere of exchange" (p. 239). They also reproduce and legitimize the neoliberal presumptions about the subject as striving for self-actualization and personal improvement through work, while at the same time success and failure are effectively individualized as they depend on the techniques of self-evaluation and improvement undertaken by the employees themselves. The mobilization of the "journey" motif, with the use of expressions such as "knowing one's limits" and "moving beyond them", apparently serves the contemporary work ethic that establishes wage labour as "an essential element in the path for the self-realization of individual identity" (Miller & Rose, 1995, p. 456).

In the third extract, Nefeli is also describing one of the photographs she took for the study (see Appendix 4, photo 10.a): It shows three books, one of which is *The Night Train to Lisbon*, by Swiss writer Pascal Mercier, which is the one the participant is talking about in this excerpt. The speaker mobilizing the "journey" discursive device assembles a version of selfhood as aiming for self-discovery through work, configuring the latter as means to self-actualization. Nonetheless, this destination cannot be reached by any "path"; not every job leads there. In fact, the speaker crafts an opposition between two kinds of work: one that provides "*security*" and "*convenience*" and another which can be viewed as a "*journey*" towards "self-discovery". Unlike the first type which includes jobs that are considered stable and secure, the second one, which is portrayed as the preferred one, involves risk-taking. The

attachment to secure structures is represented as impeding the ultimate goal of the worker, which is no other than to explore and fulfill her/his true potential through work. The discourse of "enterprise" demands a particular emotional regulation that allows the assumption of risk configuring a subject that despises anything that promises security and stableness. It is indicative that Sennett (2002) uses precisely the example of teaching jobs that lose their appeal to young people as risk-taking is emphasized in their formation (p. 76).

The interviewee lays for herself a claim to an agentic and effortful identity, willing to "take her life in her hands" in order to arrive to the desired destination. Positioned within the "journey" discursive reservoir, the speaker views the labour market as rife with opportunity, characterized by a meritocratic organization, whereby individual effort is recognized and rewarded. Besides, as was the case in the previous fragments, the real stake does not lie in "getting somewhere" in specific: the point is to engage in restless movement; and this is what work can ensure. Once again, the working experience is put in subject position ("*work takes you further, it definitely does not let you stagnate*"), forged as an entity that has inherent capacities and powers.

One of the most significant of these capacities seems to be that "*it does not let you stagnate*". It is worth noting that in her speech, Nefeli uses the word "*βαλτώνω*", which literally means "to turn into a swamp" and metaphorically "to become inactive". She creates a powerful image depicting work as the motor of human development, without which motion dies and individuals are swallowed by inertia. Obviously the stagnant waters of a swamp constitute an undeniable impediment to any trip and need to be avoided at any cost. Yet, accepting a job post does not automatically guarantee one's personal growth. The speaker holds subjects individually responsible for their advancement and social course, arguing that development comes as a result of personal desire ("*especially if you wish to develop through that*").

Drawing upon discourses of "enterprise" which nurture the subjective figure of the autonomous, unrestrained worker, enjoying freedom of choice in a meritocracy, the respondent conditions upon individual attitudes and desires – not even professional skills or educational background – one's chances to succeed in moving forward, signaling the triumph of the neoliberal governmentality and the production of the self-regulating personhood, through the absolute individualization of risk and responsibility. As du Gay (1994) puts it, "[t]his "autonomization" and "responsibilization" of the self, the instilling of a reflexive self-monitoring which will afford self-knowledge, and therefore self-control, makes paid work […] an essential element in the path to self-fulfilment" (p. 663).

It is not a coincidence, we believe, that one of the most commonly-used metaphors within entrepreneurial rhetoric and managerial manuals is work as a travel to unfamiliar lands, conceptualizing the career as a spiritual journey (Vallas & Cummins, 2015). In this section we shed light to the ways in which individuals rescript themselves as pursuing self-fulfillment through work, by mobilizing what we named the "journey" motif. Embodying the model of the "tourist", who refuses any long-term commitment "opting instead for a constant sequence of temporary destinations with no final end in sight" (Gabriel, 2008, p. 322), the respondents put into play the neoliberal discursive formulations of constant improvement and freedom of choice, reproducing the mantra of the dominant work ethos, according to which "the individual is not to be emancipated from work, perceived as merely a task or a means to an end, but to be fulfilled in work, now construed as an activity through which we produce, discover, and experience our selves" (Miller & Rose, 1995, p. 457).

2.2.1.i. "Mapping the journey"

The "journey" pattern provided to the participants the discursive resources to interpret their repeated job changing fabricating it as an integrative part of a calculated and strategically planned trajectory, directed at continuous ascendance and personal growth. In this framework, the respondents' narratives were informed by the rhetoric of "freedom of choice", presupposing a working subject that is actively looking for self-realization through paid labour and a meritocratic job market which permits unrestrained navigation among different routes.

A. Interviewer: *Your present workplace, your present job, where does it stand within your working trajectory?*

Demosthenes: *Look, this is something that has changed. In the beginning I used to see it as a stepping stone, so to speak, but now I see that the company itself is making steps forward, big steps, and for as long as the company grows I want to grow with it. As long as the company moves on I want to move on with it.*

I.: *So you feel that there is a limit, that this is something that won't last forever…*

D.: *Ye::s. We all have goals and yes there are better companies from which I'd like to pass and do different stuff.*

B. Interviewer: *So when did your working history begin?*
Klio: *It began when I was a student in university, when I was nineteen, for financial reasons so it started, typically, with a telemarketing job, it continued with a typical work as a saleswoman in a bookstore and subsequently after searching a lot, in an accounting office, which was more relevant to my studies. I stayed there for five years or so. I learned a lot of things and it was a very good place to start but at a certain point there should be some kind of advancement.*
I.: *When you started at the age of nineteen what did you expect?*
K.: *Look, back then I didn't expect anything. The first jobs were only supposed to provide some money, so that my parents don't have to support me entirely. It's just that as the time passed you think to yourself, "ok, shouldn't I find something more relevant to my studies because I am about to finish university?" And then you find the next and you say, "ok, how many years am I here, what have I learned, what have I accomplished? Shouldn't I go to something else?" And this is how the ball went from the one to the other, it was a natural evolution.*

C. Nefeli: *So let's take the example of the painter. He who paints and sells his paintings, has chosen to do that. He does what he likes and he succeeds. If someone is a painter but he does not succeed, again it is his choice. He was not obliged by anyone to choose this road. He can always do something else instead of painting. So, is what we choose to do the only road we can take? Do we, maybe, choose to enter a path because another path is not convenient? Or because another path is too risky for us?*

In the first extract I ask Demosthenes about the way he views his current job. I construct it as a part of a broader trajectory, implying that it probably constitutes only one of many stations that will make up his career. He does not reject this line of thought and confirms that he does conceive of it as merely a "stop". The participant undertakes the position of an individual that subjects every decision concerning his labour biography to rational thought; this may entail reevaluations along the way, as the subject takes into account the "objective facts" that shape his choices. In fact, the two axes that are forged as determining one's professional course are the pursuit of personal development and the developments that take place in the business arena.

More specifically, the speaker refers to this evaluation process constructing it as a something flexible, almost independent from the individual, following its own "course": "*this is something that has changed*". However, this course seems to be guided by the two axes we just talked about: the search for personal growth and the state of the market; and it has been objectified ("*is something*") thanks to the objective hypostasis of these two poles. If it looks as if it can "change" on its own it is because these two dimensions are regarded as its natural coordinates.

The speaker interprets his working reality as a trajectory comprising various stages which are determined by the speaker's goals and plans. His current occupation was chosen "*in the beginning*" as a "*stepping stone*" to something else. Other studies have also identified the "stepping stone" discursive device (da Costa & Silva Saraiva, 2012; Doherty, 2014; Kesisoglou, 2014; Lloyd, 2012) which normalizes the conceptualization of wage labour as something more than a way to make a living, as a path offering the chance to reach "higher" goals. Additionally the interviewee mobilizes the schema of "free choice" casting himself as an independent agent who makes informed decisions based on his will to "*grow*" and to "*move on*".

It is significant that the employee is not the only one who "travels"; the company also "*makes steps forward*" and "*grows*". The personification of the firm serves Demosthenes' argument in that it naturalizes the constant mutations that the labour market is undergoing and at the same time represents him as a rational decision-maker who can recognize the opportunities presented to him. The professional course is drawn on the map following the new roads opened by the market and one has to be always alert and ready to modify the initial plan; because the greatest danger for the "chooser" is that of "missing an opportunity – because of not seeing it clearly enough, not chasing it keenly enough, or being too inexperienced a runner to catch it" (Bauman, 2002, p. 328).

The "stop" at the particular workplace has temporal limits that are explicitly set; once again these are established by the two axes we identified before: the determination for personal development and the position held by the corporation within the business world. It becomes evident now that the latter is understood as an objective reality which has to be respected; the employee has to "go with the flow" in order to see her/his dreams of self-fulfillment to be accomplished. The decision to prolong one's stay in a particular workplace results as a personal choice, the outcome of a rational evaluation of the prospects it offers. Doherty (2009) maintains that even when a job is regarded as a "stepping stone" this should not necessarily suggest lack of loyalty to the employer or the particular occupation; that

commitment should not be conflated with a job for life. However our research shows that the "journey" motif and the "stepping stone" discursive apparatus in particular does not avail working identities willing to create long-term employment bonds; instead it favours ephemeral relations that last only as long as the organization fulfils its role as a vehicle for personal evolution; as long as it provides the conditions that bolster individual development. In this sense, loyalty loses its actual meaning.

The unwillingness to "cast anchor" is attributed to a personality that restlessly aims for something better, setting "*goals*" and struggling to achieve them. The speaker uses the first person plural ("*We all have goals*") presenting as commonsensical the thought that one's working life is organized around different goals established by oneself. Nevertheless, none of the predefined goals seems to constitute the final destination of the "journey": The speaker wants to "*pass from*" other workplaces, "*better*" ones, but not "end up" there. "Change" in the form of executing different tasks ("*do different stuff*") arises as an integral part of this voyage manifesting the lack of loyalty to both an employer and an occupation.

Klio also configures her working history as a journey guided by individual determination and rational calculation. The speaker talks about her first working experiences as "*typical*" taking for granted that they are common entry points to the labour markets for young people, especially students. And this is because they are usually part-time, not well paid, and they offer only the basic insurance benefits, if any. By integrating them in the "journey" narrative as merely points of departure for one's professional venture the speaker normalizes and legitimizes their precarious and exploitative nature, ascribing to the individual the responsibility to demonstrate determination in order to manage to move on to the "next stop".

In fact the participant builds an effortful persona asserting that she searched a lot in order to find a post that was more relevant to her studies. Yet this was not enough; the job is again evaluated against the possibilities for "*advancement*" that it promises. The labour market is construed as comprising of jobs suitable for different phases for one's career; one does not "fit all". Thusly the interviewee assembles a working subjectivity that searches for personal development through work, invoking at the same time a representation of the labour market as capable of granting it, provided that the individual actively pursues it.

In her next turn Klio continues the construction of her working history as a trip from one station to the other, a trip in which she is at the helm at any time. According to her, only her first professional activities were imposed to her by financial necessity. Claiming a responsible and self-regulated identity she describes the successive changes of working

environment as an outcome of rational thinking, emanating solely from common sense; the second person singular ("*you think to yourself*") is very effective in this direction and the questions she poses ("*Shouldn't I find*", "*Shouldn't I go*") seem to express exactly a commonsense rationale that she has fully interiorized.

The questions she asks sound like coming from the "voice of reason"; one should hold a position related to her/his studies before graduating from university and should measure at every moment if her/his choice meets the criteria of ceaseless improvement and self-actualization. The constant mobility is hence defined as "*natural*" and voluntarily incited by the subjects due to their expectations from paid work. In this way one's professional course is considered as a product of her/his rational planning, holding the self accountable for the "turns" taken along the "way" and for potential "miscalculations" that may lead to failure.

This is exactly what Nefeli suggests, in excerpt C. In this stretch of talk the speaker conjures the individual as a free chooser and the labour market as offering a wide range of options, equally accessible to everyone. Thusly the worker is the only one to blame if he/she does not "*succeed*"; similarly, he/she has to obey to the rules of the market in order to survive, both socially and materially.

The discussion about the "hypothetical painters" started in the context of our conversation about the possibility of guaranteeing an unconditional basic income for all. The participant mobilized the "journey" motif in order to discard such an idea, constructing the business arena as providing a rich array of alternatives, "*roads*" or "*paths*", as she named them. The portraits of both imaginary painters are sketched following the model of the free-chooser, the individual who has the ability to select among the different avenues that open up before her/him. The social background is considered negligible and does not play a part in the example used by the respondent; the two painters are conceptualized as two independent units without a social dimension that can navigate the labour market unrestrained. However, the first one represents rationality. Success is measured according to the standards and the criteria of the market, while the law of demand appears as the yardstick for one's professional success. The painter "*succeeds*" when he "*sells his paintings*"; the market's response is the only that should be taken under consideration and the one that dictates the next professional steps.

On the other hand, the second painter, also enjoying unfettered access to the distinct professional outlets, stands for unreason for he defies the verdict of the market. The "freedom of choice" theme is greatly stressed; three different ways of expressing it are joined one after the other in order to emphatically underscore it and the individualization of responsibility that

it entails ("*it is his choice. He was not obliged by anyone to choose this road. He can always do something else*"). The "journey" motif enshrines the neoliberal archetypical figure of the worker as a rational decision-maker, articulated around the thematic of "free choice". Hence there are three presuppositions that form the basis of argumentation strategies of this kind: Firstly, the entrepreneurial universe is rife with opportunities available to everyone; secondly, people can make their decisions unobstructed and hence account for them as personally responsible; and thirdly the norms of the market are axiomatic and should be respected if one wishes to survive.

In this "journey", individual conduct should be "conducted" by the calculative rationale of the enterprise. The various "*ways*" one encounters should be examined using the criteria provided by the market. Nefeli asks a number of rhetorical questions, forging their answers as obvious and herself as a subject who demonstrates a reflexive stance, weighing the consequences of her actions, always following the directions marked by the forces of the market. The first question ("*So, is what we choose to do the only road we can take?*") is answered by one of the fundamental premises of the discourse of "enterprise", namely that the employee is a sovereign chooser who holds his/her life in her/his hands since there are plenty available options. The second and the third one ("*Do we, maybe, choose to enter a path because another path is not convenient? Or because another path is too risky for us?*") are looking for the causes of "failure" in the very decisions made by individuals and in the mentality that rules them. "Convenience" is directly opposed to "risk" and the latter emerges as the key element to success.

As we already discussed earlier, convenience and security have been demonized, targeted as the main factors that undergird the structural deficiencies of the Greek political and financial structures, especially against the backdrop of the so called "Greek crisis". The need for the state to nurture a socioeconomic culture inspired by the neoliberal ideals of the individualization of risk and the domination of the market principle in every sector of one's life has been greatly promulgated during the last 30 years or so, both in business and political discourses; it has also been impressed onto recent labour and welfare legislations and of course on corporate practices.

In this paragraph we discussed the ways in which the "journey" repertoire is used to normalize constant job changing, integrating it in a strategically calculated professional course, freely chosen by employees. In turn, selfhood is forged as perpetually seeking to actualize its full potential, a goal that can only be achieved through ceaseless movement. Thusly, success and failure are attributed to the personal decisions made by individuals and

specifically to whether they comply with the entrepreneurial prescriptions. Articulated with the discourse of "enterprise" the "journey" repertoire underpins the neoliberal repudiation of security, legitimizing minimal state protection and the institutionalization of precarity.

*2.2.2. "Journey" of professional development*

The participants also deployed the "journey" vocabulary in order to construct their working biographies as a course towards becoming better professionals, mastering their occupation, and even taking it to a next level.

> A. Interviewer: *Why is it so important to you to learn things?*
> Dionysis: *Look, if you want to be good at the particular occupation you have to learn constantly new stuff, every day, to be as much up to date as possible.*
> I.: *Is it important for you to be good at the particular occupation?*
> D. *Eh:: sure, I want to be good because I am very interested in the particular occupation. This is why I want to evolve and explore all of its facets and reach a point when I can say that I have achieved something and then move even further based on the experience and knowledge I have gained. This is what work is for me. Or what it should be. And this is always the primary criterion when I choose a job.*

> B. Minas: *The third photo has to do with travelling, which for me is a one-way street, to travel. It is something that I never negotiated, I have to travel if I am to stay in a business. And it is eh:: interesting now that I think about it becau::se I think I view the whole profession, my life as a professional like a journey, I feel like a traveler. I mean I want to develop what I do. I want to suggest new things, to do things a different way so that I become better at what I do. I want them to be accepted, to see that the company approves of them, that people accept it, but for me it's more important to move forward as a salesman of orthopedic products, to do this better, and not to stick to the same paths just because the company thinks that this is the way to sell more. And for me this is a one-way street.* […] *There are very few true professionals in the business and I think that being a good professional means to take what you do further, for its own sake.*

Dionysis has pointed out several times that he wants to learn as many things as possible, either by reading or by taking up different kinds of tasks that fall under his occupation. When I ask him why it matters to him so much to stay informed, he assumes an "occupation-oriented" subjectivity, emphasizing his identity as a professional. The speaker configures profession as establishing its own norms one has to follow in order to "excel"; excellence is resignified, countervailing the hegemonic fixation of its meaning, which is predominantly articulated around the entrepreneurial exemplar. It is the "*particular occupation*" that sets the criteria according to which you are considered "*good*", not the market or the "personal" commitment to constant improvement.

The "journey" repertoire is used here in order to endorse the "occupation-oriented" selfhood and to unfold one's working trajectory as an "exploration" of a particular professional area. Paid work is discursively formulated as a site where individuals can "*evolve*" and "*explore*" their profession. Dionysis defines the possibility to develop as a professional within his workplace as the "*primary criterion*" for job selection; in this way he divides the job market in two camps, one comprising of workplaces which foster professional advancement and another that does not. Thusly wage labour is portrayed as a locus of professional growth, inviting individuals to compete for the posts that offer such potential. Staying employable ("*you have to learn constantly new stuff, every day, to be as much up to date as possible*") is an obligation assumed by workers if they "*want to be good at the particular occupation*" and hence fill the promising working positions.

At the same time, when positioned within the "journey" reservoir, one's working biography resembles a solitary trajectory towards mastering one's craft. Even though the speaker identifies with a professional group, the use of the first person singular throughout his second turn manifests an individualistic viewpoint which does not permit the contemplation of the social dimension of the working relation. Hence work ("*This is what work is for me*") is conflated with a series of achievements understood as individual accomplishments ("*and reach a point when I can say that I have achieved something*") and one's professional course is determined solely by the "*experience and knowledge*" one has *"gained*". Consequently, success and failure emerge as the outcome of personal effort that workers should demonstrate in order to "*move even further*". In this manner, the use of the "journey" repertoire obfuscates the exploitative structure of the capitalist mode of production and occupational professionalism becomes an effective disciplinary apparatus.

At the same time though, articulated around the notion of "occupation", the "journey" motif does not afford the "tourist" subject position that we analyzed earlier.

Individuals want to "*explore*" and "*move further*" but within certain limits, those that circumscribe the specific profession. "Change" is not glorified as a value in its own right, as "purifying" from the "demons" of routine and security but rather it is construed as an exigency of the particular occupation. Concomitantly, albeit the constant advancements and transitions that the "journey" vocabulary affords, when attached to the concept of craftsmanship it also involves a great deal of loyalty and commitment to the chosen field; unlike the "tourist" who wanders from job to job in pursuit of a never attainable self-fulfillment, the "traveler" who seeks professional development remains within the boundaries of her/his occupational realm, engaging in an exclusive relation with it.

In this sense, paid work is not conceptualized as consisting of various different paths that one is free to choose from; it is viewed as a "*one-way street*", inasmuch as it is the devotion to a certain occupation that determines one's course. This is what Minas claims in the second fragment when describing one of the photographs he contributed to the study (see Appendix 4, photo 9.c). The picture shows the participant, slightly smiling, looking at a map. As he explained, it is a photo taken during holidays, but he thought that it captured the essence of "travelling", which for him is something that he "*never negotiated*" during his working trajectory.

It is interesting that the respondent, in order to express that travelling is an indispensable part of work, uses a travel metaphor, defining it as a "*one-way street*", meaning that he would not accept a job unless it involved trips to other cities. However, even though the picture was intended to represent an aspect of his work that he considers of paramount importance, he ends up realizing that it also has a deeper meaning, which he had not thought about until that point. This confirms the appropriateness of our methodology, proving the usefulness of photo-interviewing, which gave the participant the chance to engage on a different level with the concept of "traveling" as it was depicted in a concrete instance (Warren, 2005).

Minas deploys the "journey" lexicon, directly comparing his professional life to a "*journey*" and himself to a "*traveler*". However, unlike most participants who set as final destination their fulfillment as "persons", he emphasizes his professional hypostasis and foregrounds the loyalty to the demands of his occupation. At the same time, the discourses of "change" and "improvement" are also deployed; however their meaning is fixed around the nodal point of "profession" and it is not determined by market standards. In fact, the speaker acknowledges that in order to be a "*good professional*" one may have to confront the hegemonic approaches to work which "*stick*" to "*the way to sell more*". Hence, "change" ("*to*

*do things a different way*", "*to move forward*") and "improvement" ("*to develop what I do*", "*become better at what I do*", "*to do this better*") are being resignified when the "journey" motif is grounded in an "occupation-oriented" identity. As we already showed, authoring a version of the self in this manner legitimizes disobedience and enables the creation of spheres of autonomy.

Actually the respondent divides those who work "*in the business*" in two categories: those who are "*true professionals*" and those who are not. By claiming a position within the first group, he identifies with a collectivity, placing its laws and regulations above those prescribed by the discourse of "enterprise". To "*take what you do further*" emerges as a mandate emanating from this collective subjectivity and as we saw this may not comply with the corporate principles which aim just to "sell more".

Additionally, by employing the "journey" motif the participant declares a disinterested commitment to his occupation, maintaining that the cornerstone of professionalism is "*to take what you do further, for its own sake*". The unconditional loyalty to it was rhetorically constructed earlier in his answer when he seemed to compare two different sources of authority that both judge his choices and professional attitude: One is represented by the "*company*" and the "*people*", i.e. the clients, and the other is his professional identity as a "*a salesman of orthopedic products*". According to the speaker, subjecting himself to the second authority is more important, even though the first cannot be directly overruled. However, there is a direct dividing line among himself as a professional and the "company". Hence, a potential hierarchical development that could be achieved if acting in conformity with the corporate doctrines of profit and clientelism is denied in the name of belonging among "*the true professionals*". This sense of belonging seems to function as a motivation to continue his "journey", heading towards improving his skills as a professional and opening new roads for his occupation. Still, the wage-labour relation is not challenged in its core and it seems that even this conceptualization of work as "journey" takes for granted its existence.

As both fragments eloquently show, the "journey" repertoire, when "anchored" in the notion of craftsmanship, avails subject positions that, albeit inclined to regular movement and change, demonstrate loyalty and commitment to an occupation. In this way, the development of an "occupation-oriented" identity is facilitated, which in turn can stand up against the entrepreneurial practices preferred by the employers. Although the participants who mobilized this pattern did not question the capitalist mode of production altogether, they did resist the entrepreneurial prototype and redefined the hegemonic standards and priorities.

*2.2.3. Summary*

As Alvesson and Willmott (2002) assert, in the framework of the company the vocabulary of "self-actualization" can be deployed as an effective means of attaining consent and commitment to organizational goals and practices. In this section we showed how the "journey" repertoire as we named it, articulated around images of "travelling", "collecting experiences", and "moving" towards "personal fulfillment and development", presupposes a subject that pursues self-actualization through work and an organization of the business world that should be able to provide it. In this way, aspirations for individual accomplishment "become firmly attached to waged work, where they can be hijacked to rather different ends: to produce neither individual riches nor social wealth but privately appropriated surplus value" (Weeks, 2011, p. 7).

In turn, the world of paid work is forged as comprising various "paths" among which employees are individually responsible for choosing, taking into account the market demands and the prospects for self-development that each one offers. In this way, the entrepreneurial, calculative personhood is forged; from this vantage point, one's working biography is viewed as a series of personal decisions, freely made by the subjects who are therefore entirely accountable for its course. Resembling the figure of the "tourist", whose essence lies in constant movement, lack of attachments, and collecting experiences, the employee can never fully reach the "destination" of "self-fulfillment", since there are always new sensations to be experimented ahead. Bureaucratic or stable jobs, representing security and stability are discarded for holding back the employee from embarking on this "journey" towards "self-development", whereas "risk" and "change" are configured as indispensible elements of the working life. Thusly, the institutionalization of the neoliberal dogma of individualization of risk and the growth of precarity are rationalized defining them as "matters that lie within the reach of individual agency and self-determination" (Vallas & Prener, 2007, p. 347).

On the other hand, the "journey" motif can also be deployed for the construction of what we named "occupation-oriented" identities. Articulated around nodal points such as "craftsmanship", one's working trajectory is understood as a "journey" towards mastering one's craft, following the rules that the particular professional community sets. Nonetheless, even though it permits identification with the occupational group and the demonstration of loyalty to its principles and norms, the "journey" vocabulary does not seem to challenge the capital-labour relationship, taking for granted that the labour market is the unquestionable locus of professional development. What it does question however, is the discourse of "enterprise" which prioritizes clientelism and profit-making; thusly it redefines "excellence"

and "self-fulfillment", invoking a representation of the working trajectory not as a succession of freely made choices among a variety of available "paths", but as a "one-way street" determined by the standards and the criteria of one's profession.

### 2.3. The "slavery" repertoire.

When negotiating what work means to them, the respondents often constructed it as "slavery[22]", or "forced labour" using terms such as "coercion" and "wage slavery", usually opposing them to "choice", "change", "freedom" and others expressing satisfaction. Positioned within this discursive construction, the participants forged themselves as rebellious subjects who challenge the status quo, envisioning a different working universe. However this pattern takes two forms: The first draws heavily upon a "choice discourse", presupposing that work is, ideally, a source of satisfaction and self-actualization; the second mobilizes an "anticapitalistic" repertoire, questioning the capitalist relations of production altogether.

#### *2.3.1. The discourse of "personal choice"*

The discursive construction of "slavery" was often informed by a discourse of choice, configuring work as a source of satisfaction for employees, provided that their freedom to choose its content is secured.

> A. Yanis: […] *as I told you before, work is coercion, it's a synonym to slavery, I mean I believe that work as it is today derives from slavery* [/dulía/]. *It's not something that I would choose to do, my job, it is something that came my way. Unfortunately in Greece professional orientation is non-existent. I mean ts I don't believe that a child at the age of seventeen or eighteen that finishes school knows what he wants to do for the rest of his life when there is no one to examine the talents of each individual.* […] *and they don't explain that the profession is totally different from a hobby, or a talent. I mean let's say that someone wants to make jewelry from*

[22] It is interesting to examine this sense-making apparatus in the light of the relation between the terms "δουλειά" (/douliá/, meaning "work") and "δουλεία" (/doulía/, meaning "slavery"). According to Sarantakos (2013), the latter appears already in Mycenaean texts; gradually it passed from meaning slavery to signify any hard work and later, in the Middle Ages, work in general. Only then the pronunciation changed as the accent was transferred to the last syllable. The word "σκλαβιά" ("sklaviá") also means "slavery" and comes from the Latin "sclavus"; it appeared in Greek texts in the 12th century and was used mostly in popular writings, whereas literary texts feature the synonymous, but of Greek origin, "δουλεία" (/dulía/) (Sarantakos, 2009).

*stone, but in reality people buy jewelry made of wood, so someone should know that from the beginning.*

B. Interviewer: *Do you think that it is important to work?*
Dionysis: *M:: If there was a choice to:: let me put it differently i::f everyone could work on something they liked, exclusively eh::: it would be something like an exercise of his mind, it wouldn't be bad, it wouldn't be coercive, as it is now. But it should be set up in a totally different way. If you were to do what you like, to be able to change it, to change career altogether at any time of your life without any problem it wouldn't be bad, I mean, it would be like sharpening one's mind. For example if tomorrow I woke up and I wanted to give up computer science and take up carpentry to be able to do it* […] *But many things should change for that to be possible, I mean from primary school the education system should help you and show you many different things and let you free to go towards whatever it is you like and you are good at.*

C. Eli: *So here we see the other side, it's the side of the::* ((laughter)) *in quotation marks, forced labour, of the coercion* ((laughing)).
Interviewer: *What do you mean coercion?*
E.: *Eh:: it's that sometimes you cou::ld, at work the conditions could be a bit better. So what we see here i::s my colleagues and we are at the office and there has been a power cut. It is winter and it is very cold, so you see that we are forced to wear our jackets and everything. And this picture shows exactly that, that the employer could have made sure that his employees and the children are not cold.* […]
I.: *The fact that you have to go there every day? That you have to work in order to live? Is this coercion?*
E.: *The fact that I have to work in order to live I don't think it's that bad, I don't think it's a coercion, because I don't think that work i::s I don't know, maybe if I did a job that I didn't like maybe I would view it differently,* [I would think] '*oh I have to work'. Maybe you don't find everything so pleasant at work but I think, I try at least to find a balance or to turn a blind eye sometimes and I think that if I considered the difficulties I face there so hard to cope with I think I would have left and found another job.*

In the first extract, Yanis defines work as "coercion" and "slavery" – using the term dulía (δουλεία, in Greek) – mobilizing a vocabulary that, at least at a first glance, seems to resist the dominant significations of waged labour. At this point he reiterates a statement that he made early in the course of the interview, when he also noted that employment derives from the institution of servitude, mobilizing the etymological connction between the Greek words "duliá", meaning work, and "dulía", meaning slavery. Here he makes a similar distinction between an "ideal-type" of work and work "*as it is today*", "*in Greece*". Hence it is not the salaried labour per se that is problematized but rather a specific expression of it, shaped by the inability to choose. In turn, the latter is attributed to the particularities of the Greek schooling system and the "*non-existent professional orientation*".

Yanis grounds his argument about the link between work and slavery in personal experience, revealing that the nodal point around which the meanings are fixed is choice about the particular occupation and the characteristics of one's job, rather than having a say in whether one should enter the labour market ("*It's not something that I would choose to do, my job")*. "Work" is equated to "slavery" insofar as one is deprived of the possibility to make an informed choice about her/his professional course. In this way, paid labour is engineered not as a means to make a living but rather as yet another facet of life expected to be satisfying, actualizing one's talents and potential; as yet another area where one is enjoined to perform her/his "consumer subjectivity", whereby the liberty to choose is more important than the object of choice (Bauman, 2004).

Actually, to do "something you like" professionally emerged as one of the main priorities of the respondents. This finding concurs with previous studies (e.g., Flament, 1996; Kesisoglou, 2014) and confirms Bauman's (2004) observations about the "aesthetic value" of work. As he suggests, the ability to choose, to efface the dividing line between labour and recreation, to "lift work itself to the rank of supreme and most satisfying entertainment" has become a significant stratifying factor in our "society of consumers", distinguishing the "slaves" from the "elite of the lucky and successful" (p. 105). Yanis seems to reproduce this rationale, implying that if one is able to pick a gratifying job is freed from servitude; in this manner, the working relation is being depoliticized, reduced to a matter of personal choices made by free subjects, individually responsible for their social course. Hence, the workplace is conceptualized as a "private space, the product of a series of individual contracts rather than a social structure, the province of human need and sphere of individual choice rather than a site for the exercise of political power" (Weeks, 2011, p. 3).

This blurring between production and consumption, between the political and the private is according to du Gay (du Gay, 1996; du Gay & Salaman, 1992) a crucial aspect of the "enterprise discourse", which forges work as a site of self-realization, achieved thanks to the availability of choices to everyone. As he contends:

> The "employee", just as much as the "sovereign customer", is represented as an individual in search of meaning and fulfillment, one looking to "add value" in every sphere of existence. Paid work and consumption are just different playing grounds for the same activity; that is, different terrains upon which the enterprising self seeks to master, better and fulfil itself (du Gay, 1996, p. 65).

Turning again to Yanis' text, we observe that he further bolsters the equivalence he establishes between work and slavery deploying – what is presented as – an objective assessment of the "Greek reality": The subjective modality ("*I believe that work as it is today derives from slavery*") is accompanied and therefore reinforced by a truth modality (*in Greece professional orientation is non-existent*). The speaker creates a casual connection between the two statements, ascribing blame to the Greek institutions, which according to him are responsible to ensure the freedom of choice for everyone. His argument sustains that the extant working regime resembles slavery because the state has failed to provide adequate professional orientation to students, resulting in inappropriate professional decisions, practically nullifying their right to choose. Thus the problem is allocated to an incompetence of the national system not only to "detect" the "*talents*" of individuals, but also to educate about the professional arena and connect the two poles: Another trace of orientalism (Said, 1995), which is frequently underscored in many discourses which advocate market-oriented reforms in education (see for example, Gouvias, 2012).

Regarding the latter point, the interviewee defines the professional realm in market terms; one should know which products or services are most in demand ("*in reality people buy jewelry made of wood, so someone should know that from the beginning*") in order to shape her/his conduct accordingly. In this way, the market is constructed as having its own norms that if respected, to wit, if people, unobstructed, perform their "informed consumer" subjectivities, the element of servitude will be eliminated. Accordingly, the neoliberal prototype of the subject as a rational chooser is endorsed, assuming that "[a]s free rational agents armed with full information, people will make the right choices – but, again, only so long as nothing biases or constrains these choices" (Dean, 2008, pp. 54-55).

In the second fragment, the participant builds a similar argument defending the view that work should function to actualize one's potential and express their preferences,

identifying coercion only in the inability to choose and change field of occupation at any time. The speaker constructs a hypothetical situation where "*everyone could work on something they liked*", insinuating that this is not the case today; if everyone was granted the ability to extract satisfaction and personal development ("*it would be something like an exercise of his mind*") the coercive factor would cease to exist and employees would be liberated. In fact Dionysis places this hypothetical condition within reach, arguing that although "*many things should change for that to be possible*" it is something that can be substantiated provided that "*the education system should help you and show you many different things and let you free to go towards whatever it is you like and you are good at*". Like Yanis, Dionysis holds the national institutions responsible for creating subjects who have discovered their strengths and predilections and are willing to "put them to work", to place them at the disposal of the labour market.

Thus the modifications that would lead to the eradication of coercion in the framework of paid labour should be targeted towards the safeguarding of the nature of work as a means of self-expression rather than eradicating its compulsory character and its constitution as the only means of material and social survival. The latter seems to be considered a natural condition and it is further banalized by the mobilization of the motif of free choice, further fortifying its construction as a private space. Positioned within this discursive formation the capitalist productive relation seems reified and taken for granted, a sedimentation that cannot be subverted; "*it*" can only afford to be rearranged, "*set up*" in a different way.

In addition, this excerpt features another persistent pattern, that of "change". The participant, apart from the right to choose, emphasizes the ability to change career at any time "*without any problem*" as a prerequisite for a working universe stripped of the element of coercion. The vocabulary of "change" was often deployed by the respondents, usually in opposition to routine and stagnation; it was used in an attempt to cast themselves as effortful subjects who do not conform to what they have, always seeking something new and better, constantly reinventing themselves in a private pursuit of ceaseless move and improvement. The labour market should offer this possibility to employees, providing utmost flexibility in order for them to fulfill their potential, become better and express themselves.

Drawing upon the discursive pool of "change" in this way, the speakers reproduce the neoliberal discourses enjoining individuals to ""shop around", to pick and shed one's "true self", to "be on the move", [which] has come in present-day consumer society to signify freedom" (Bauman, 2006, p. 87). Even though aspirations of the sort could bare a subversive

potential, the participants did not challenge the core of the capitalist productive regime and the exploitative nature of waged work; the "freedom" reclaimed is not articulated as "a formula of resistance", but rather as "the capacity for self-realization which can be obtained only through individual activity" (Rose, 2004, pp. 65, 145).

Moving on to the next fragment and exploring the way the concept of "coercion" is engineered, we once more come across the theme of satisfaction from one's particular workplace. Eli has just started describing one of the photos she had taken for the purposes of this study (see Appendix 4, photo 1.c). She has chosen to discuss it after having talked about the other two which portrayed what she defined as the most satisfactory parts of her work. Here, the main argument draws upon the "discourse of choice", informed by a rhetoric about "working conditions".

In fact, coercion is directly associated to the working conditions and the fact that employees are "*forced*" to work under "adverse" circumstances. It is interesting that the interviewee begins her sentence using the general "you" as subject ("*you could*") but then turns to a more impersonal syntaxis where "*the conditions at work*" are placed in a subject position, manifesting the difficulty for individuals to do something about it; the quality of the workplace is presented as a given reality and the employer is cast as the only one who is able to reform it, leaving no space for any course of action on behalf of the employees. Actually, providing a decent working environment is constructed as something that employers "*could*" do, something that is left to their discretion ("*the employer could have made sure that his employees and the children are not cold*"), not an undisputed obligation on their part.

Hence the job market is not configured as a uniform realm of exploitation but instead as a site made of better or worse workplaces; therefore work is considered as "forced labour" only when the working conditions do not correspond to one's standards. Argumentative strategies of this kind naturalize the capitalist productive relation, banalizing its exploitative structure; as Weeks (2011) quoting John Stuart Mill argues, we confine ourselves to attending specific problems instead of focusing on work as a way of life, like the serfs who "did not at first complain of the power of their lords, but only of their tyranny" (p. 3).

However, contrary to the repertoires of choice and change that presuppose a universe made of individual agents striving for success in solitude, forgrounding the need for satisfactory occupational conditions permits collective identifications and the antagonistic reconfiguration of the working relation. Despite the fact that in the picture appear only Eli's colleagues, she describes it using the first person plural, placing herself among them, lining up "against" the employer.

When asked about whether she considers compulsory having to work in order to live, the respondent draws upon the vocabulary of "satisfaction" in order to define coercion. Having to work in order to live "*is not that bad*" if you like your job; not being able to enjoy what you do for a living generates a different way of thinking according to the interviewee, making you question this daily obligation. Thusly, any dissident thoughts are attributed to the frustration with the local conditions and the personal working experience, for which the participant holds the self individually responsible: The speaker adopts the position of a free subject, personally accountable not only for her working biography but also for finding gratification, or at least a "*balance*" within it. Eli constructs as common knowledge the fact that not every aspect of work is pleasant, using the impersonal "you" structure ("*Maybe you don't find everything so pleasant at work*") and allocates to the individual the duty not to change what is considered unsatisfactory but instead to manage oneself, policing her/his feelings and conduct ("*I try at least to find some balances or to turn a blind eye*").

Invoking "exit" as a possible outlet ("*I would have left and found another job*"), the speaker authors a version of herself as a "free" subject, drawing upon discourses of choice that conceptualize the employees as unrestrained social agents navigating autonomously the business universe, which in turn is represented as full of opportunities, posing no limits. Hence "slavery" is conditioned exactly upon the liberty to choose among workplaces, since "[s]laves, serfs, and proletarians rarely enjoyed the opportunity of exit from their bonds. Today's employee, like today's consumer, lives from exit to exit" Gabriel (2008, p. 322). As we already discussed when reviewing the relevant literature, some scholars do consider "exit" to be a strategy of resistance in organizational settings (e.g., Alvesson, 2000; Hirschman, 1970); indeed many of the participants in our study understood it in this way.

Yet, even though it does generate reflection and questions the local conditions, our analysis shows that it does not challenge the nucleus of the capitalist mode of production; it rather fosters an individualistic version of resistance, giving employees the possibility to assert their "consumer" subjectivities, further reinforcing both the capitalocentric rationale – there is no exit from the labour market, only from a particular workplace – and the neoliberal dogma – with the enactment of the prototype of the employee as individually responsible for her/his social trajectory.

Stuart Hall (2011) suggests that "[e]xercising "consumer choice" is the next best thing to freedom itself" (p. 722). Our findings suggest that being able to do so actually defined as freedom, whereas "slavery" is forged as the lack of such a possibility, mostly because of the particularities of Greek institutions. What is more, "slavery" or "forced labour"

is defined in terms of the satisfaction gained by the employees, taking also into consideration the working conditions, comparing merely one job to the others, taking for granted the extant organization of work. In this way, waged labour is privatized and individuals are configured as "free choosers", reproducing neoliberal discursive formations which use "wonderful-sounding words like freedom, liberty, choice, and rights, to hide the grim realities of the restoration or reconstitution of naked class power" (Harvey, 2005, p. 119).

*2.3.2. The "anticapitalistic" discourse*

Significantly less often, the interviewees talked about paid work mobilizing an "anticapitalistic" vocabulary targeting directly its exploitative nature, forging it as "slavery" regardless of its content, the working conditions, and of whether it is gratifying or not.

A. Interviewer: So *tell me, what does the concept of paid labour brings to your mind?*
Manoussos: *Eh:: not the most pleasant thoughts.*
I.: *What do you mean?*
M.: *Actually the exact opposite, something like wage slavery, so to speak. But it does exist.*
I.: *Does it <u>have</u> to exist?*
M.: *If it has to exist… it forms part of the:: this thing they call social convention. Since you live in a big city and the only way you can meet your needs, to have a house, to survive is to work, you are forced to do it. So it's coercive. Of course you can do something different, live a bohemian life, go to your village and cultivate land. I mean if you don't choose to live in a different way you will have to need money. But even if you want to, they've made it so hard, it's like, not impossible, but pretty difficult. On purpose.*

B. Interviewer: *The fact that you get paid every month, how does it make you feel?*
Aris: *Not good, not good at all because I think tha::t when you create something eh:: it kills the creative element work has when you do it for money. How can you create something if you have to meet the criterion of profit? And also, I mean who determines how much you should get paid for this work? I mean you live in Greece or you live in India… Why should the farmer in India and the farmer in Greece have*

> *a different evaluation and a different payment? Don't they offer the same? I mean it doesn't make me feel good that I am priced just because the market at the particular moment, at the particular place, at the particular economic area puts a price on my work and judges that I have to get paid a certain amount.* […] *It shouldn't be like that. You shouldn't be forced to work for a salary.*

The question I ask Manoussos in the first extract is the one I usually used as an introduction to the main topic of the interview, after the brief self-presentation of the participants. Normally the answers manifested ambivalence towards paid work, trying to fit in a single phrase what the speakers considered its negative and its positive aspects. Manoussos takes a more straightforward stance, using a negative formulation to express his disapproval ("*not the most pleasant*"); it is rather an ironic euphemism, taking into consideration his next turns, whereby he clarifies that the thoughts associated to labour are the "*exact opposite*" of pleasant, defining it as "*wage slavery*".

The participant does not use the term "dulía" ("δουλεία") that would help build his argument on the etymological relationship between the two terms, but prefers the wording "*μισθωτή σκλαβιά*" ("*wage slavery*") aiming directly at the capitalist organization of work. The speaker embraces a "rebellious" subjectivity using the 19th century concept of wage slavery, which foregrounds the similarities of wage work with slavery. Fundamental to Marxist and anarchist thinking, the notion to a great extent encapsulates the critique to the capitalist relations of production emphasizing what an anonymous article in the Journal of United Labor argued as early as 1884:

> [W]hen a man is placed in a position where he is compelled to give the benefit of his labor to another, he is in a condition of slavery, whether the slave is held in chattel bondage or in wages bondage, he is equally a slave (cited in Gourevitch, 2013, p. 596).

Chomsky has repeatedly pointed out (e.g. 2002, 2011) the fact that the line between selling yourself and renting yourself is so fine that it hardly exists. Similarly, Graeber (2006) suggests that the similarities between the capitalist mode of production and slavery are so striking that in a sense it could be argued that one is a transformation of the other.

Thus the interviewee assembles a "revolutionary" persona, voicing a critique which places paid employment into the realm of the political, making it a social rather than a personal stake. However, this stance is rhetorically constructed as rather ineffective; just after having articulated a dissident viewpoint about the nature of labour, the speaker emphatically

reminds its existence ("*But it does exist*"). Its oppressive character is represented as something self-evident, a reality that does not need further explanation; still this does not affect its persistence. On the other hand, it is not portrayed as the only alternative; it "*exists*" but it does not dominate the socioeconomic scenery. This is an argument that will be more thoroughly developed in his next turns.

My next question explores exactly whether the participant allows for openings for different conceptualizations of the economy or not, albeit his criticism. Manoussos seems to do so, although under certain conditions. He also refers to the idea of the "*social convention*", however he does so in a way that questions its dominant representation; it is what "*they*" call "social convention", implying that he does not share the perception that it is a voluntary commitment between social agents what renders paid employment obligatory. By creating a three-part list ("*meet your needs, to have a house, to survive*") he adds more weight to his conclusion according to which you are "*forced to do it*". Once again the element of coercion is present and it is here linked to the essence of capital-labour relation, namely the fact that material survival depends on the willingness to enter the job market.

The possibility of choice is also contemplated in the speaker's text. Though, unlike the participants in the previous section who contrasted one workplace to another, in this excerpt a different organization of the world of work is juxtaposed to the dominant one; there is a "*different way*". The interviewee presents an agricultural lifestyle as an alternative to the urban way of life which renders money necessary. The view that moving to a village and cultivating land is the only way to escape the capitalist mandates was expressed by many participants in our study; nevertheless most of them considered it unviable or even a sign of backwardness. In this case, the speaker forges it as an applicable alternative, disarming the naturalized hegemony of the "formal" market. On the other hand, limiting the alternatives only to rural environments, the cities are cast as sites where the capitalist financial structures are the only functional, precluding the possibility of non-transacted market practices. Additionally, what is presented as an antagonistic mode of being is in reality determined within a capitalocentric system of meaning; it is defined as "*bohemian*", adopting the perspective of what is regarded as the "orthodox" lifestyle.

Finally, Manoussos seems to retract the confidence with which he proposed that one can select whether or not to remain a "wage slave". The discourse of the "free subject" is destabilized by an antagonistic configuration of the social; the impersonal "*you*" is opposed to a powerful "*they*" endowed with the power to shape the conditions for everyone else, following a purposeful strategy ("*on purpose*"). Hence the division of the social in two camps

is not something that occurred by chance, nor is the social course of individuals conditioned solely upon their personal decisions and abilities; they are outcomes of the inequalities of power which contribute to the reproduction and the perpetuation of the system that generates them. Nonetheless, "their" domination is not absolute; it's "*pretty difficult*" but "*not impossible*" to resist.

In the next fragment, Aris talks about the effect of the pecuniary remuneration on the subject and the working experience. He makes two points that are to certain degree interconnected and that call into question the institution of salaried labour. Firstly, he adopts an unconventional identity claiming that being paid is something that makes him feel "*not good*". As opposed to most of the participants who talked about getting their paycheck as one of the best moments of their working lives, Aris constructs it as something that, by definition, has a degenerative effect on work. According to him, the latter is based fundamentally on a "*creative element*", which is being decentralized in the name of "*profit*". By using the verb "kill", the participant creates a violent image, the violence being exercised by the capitalist regime against "creativity", which in turn is granted the hypostasis of a living being.

Thusly Aris mobilizes a discursive formulation of work which clearly distinguishes between two mutually exclusive options: work as part of the capitalist relation and work as creation. The wage is precisely the factor that manifests the relation of dependence between the employer and the employee and therefore it cannot coexist with the creative aspect of labour. The use of the rhetorical question ("*How can you create something if you have to meet the criterion of profit?*") further enhances his argument about the incompatibility between creativity and paid employment, challenging the discourses of "empowerment" that enjoin employees to be creative and express themselves through their jobs. Such an account seems to perform a Marxist discourse on alienation, problematizing one of the cornerstones of capitalist economy, namely that in its framework "labour becomes directly labour to earn a living", a "forced activity" that is imposed "through an external fortuitous need, not through an inner, essential one" and thus

> it becomes quite accidental and inessential whether the relation of the producer to his product is that of immediate enjoyment and personal need, and also whether his activity, the act of labour itself, is for him the enjoyment of his personality and the realisation of his natural abilities and spiritual aims (Marx, 1844/2000, p. 10).

To make his second point, Aris deploys a set of rhetorical questions aiming to dislodge the certainties around the power of the market to impose its norms on human activity and relations, certainties which in turn normalize the crystallization of inequality on a national

and international level. In fact, the speaker practices a technique which Gibson-Graham (2006) call "rereading" of the hegemonic discourses, producing the dislocation of essentialist structures of domination, such as "the market", or "the self-interested subject" (p. xxxi).

Using the figure of the farmer as a metonymy for the working class all over the world, the interviewee marks a dichotomy between the workers and the market, openly questioning the power of the latter to determinate the value of human activity and to transform it to an exchangeable commodity. By naming two countries – Greece and India – which are at a great distance from each other both geographically and culturally, the universality of the claim that work cannot be subordinated to the rule of the market emerges even more powerfully. The participant seems to echo Marx's (1894/1999) axiom that ""price of labour" is just as irrational as a yellow logarithm" (p. 570).

This line of thought permits to Aris to express his discontent with his identity as an employee, not because he is not allowed to express and fulfill himself through wage labour but because he is forced to be subjected to the rules of the market. It also allows him to proceed to a normative evaluation and claim that "*It shouldn't be like that. You shouldn't be forced to work for a salary*", casting in reality employment as forced labour.

In this section we saw how individuals authored revolutionary versions of themselves by drawing on anticapitalistic discursive pools. From this subject position alternative organizations of the socioeconomic sphere are made possible within a discourse which affords a critique of the institution of salaried work altogether. The configuration of the employment relationship as wage slavery and forced labour is grounded here in the questioning of the role of the market as well as in an alternative understanding of the subject, as enmeshed in a social reality marked by power inequalities.

### *2.3.3. Summary*

As Lazzarato (2009) drawing on Deleuze observes, "[c]ontemporary economy presents itsef as a proliferation of choices and options, of possible offers to consumers" (p. 123). Our analysis demonstrated that individuals mobilize neoliberal discursive formulations embracing subject-worlds revolving around what Bauman would call the illusion of free choice. Thusly the job market is conceptualized as a market of experiences that generate satisfaction, prioritizing the "aesthetic" value of work. The axiom of the market domination remains beyond reproach and wage work is defined as wage slavery only as long as individuals are deprived of their "consumer" right to assert themselves as "free choosers", as

well as of their entrepreneurial initiative to manage their own brand as they wish, due to the deficiencies of the Greek institutions and the rigidity of the job market. In this context the Greek state is held responsible for (mis)preparing subjects for the business world and for (not) ensuring conditions of utmost flexibility in it, while the solutions primed, like "exit", are individualistic and do not pose any threat to the capitalist mode of production per se.

Our findings are consistent with Kesisoglou's (2014) study which showed that individuals deployed the discursive construction of the "free subject" and split the social object of work into the poles of "hard work" and "good work"; the latter, which was preferred by the speakers, was configured on the basis of the personal investments made by them, taking for granted and banalizing precarity. Our research adds that it is not just precarity and the adverse working conditions that are banalized through the adoption of this sort of subject positions; the structural inequalities entailed by the capital-labour relationship are also normalized and consolidated.

On the other extreme, some, few, participants articulated an anti-hegemonic narrative, rescripting themselves as "wage slaves", denouncing the dependence on a salary as the only form of subsistence. Mobilizing Marxist and anarchist interpretations and argumentative strategies, they also foregrounded the right of choice but not on the basis of aesthetic criteria; instead of contrasting one job or workplace to another their discursive positioning enabled the contemplation of alternative organizations of the economic life. We should note that only in this discursive representation of work as forced labour was the term "wage slavery" ("μισθωτή σκλαβιά") used, a term with evident political connotations. When the participants relied on the discourse of "personal choice" they deployed the noun "slavery" and specifically the one of Greek origin ("dulía"). More importantly, they did not accompany it with the attribute "wage", which would probably entail a less individualistic approach and a questioning of one of the main pillars of the capitalist edifice.

# CONCLUSIONS

**1. Reflexive considerations**

**2. Accounting for the theoretical and methodological toolkit**

**3. The contemporary setting**

**4. The discursive construction of work and the working self by Greek employees**

- 4.1. The self as an employee
- 4.2. The meaning of work

**5. Implications of the findings**

**6. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research**

# CONCLUSIONS

We must be bold enough to choose the Exodus.
–André Gorz, *Reclaiming Work*

This study set out to explore the ways in which employees in present day Greece discursively construct the meaning of paid labour as well as their working subjectivities. It was intended to illuminate the creative articulation of the socially available discursive resources by individuals when they negotiate their interpretations of wage work and author versions of themselves as employees. In this way, its main objective was to bring to the foreground the sense-making apparatuses that rationalize and legitimize the current state of affairs, and discuss their impact on the identity construction processes. At the same time, it sought to identify the countervailing significations of labour, reveal the cracks of the dominant discursive configurations, and contemplate the possibility of alternative subject worlds.

After a reconsideration of the state of affairs as we read it under the chosen theoretical prism, we will present a synthesis of our findings answering to the research questions, express our thoughts on the conclusions that can be drawn, consider the limitations of our research, and suggest possible areas for future research. Before proceeding though, I would like to take a moment to reflect on my position as a researcher who wanted to conduct a critical investigation, seeking to challenge commonsensical assumptions.

## 1. Reflexive Considerations

As I have already stressed only too many times, the objective of this research was to agitate the social sediments that have formed "common sense" and unmask their constitutive contingency. However, it was more difficult than it appeared. I was raised in a middle class family, educated in official Greek institutions, and I have spent almost all my life in the capital of Greece. What is more, the professional trajectory of my parents could provide the perfect example of the Fordist imaginary: They began and ended their career working for the same organization, involved in union action, and they followed the bureaucratic norms of hierarchical ascendance. Their devotion to the organization was earned by the latter mostly thanks to the stability it ensured – it was a private bank, yet largely controlled by the state, back then – the satisfactory remuneration, and the impressive insurance benefits it offered.

I, on the other hand, entered the labour market at the age of 19, working at a call-center for 3 months; afterwards I did a paid internship at an advertising agency which lasted

another 3 months; and then I got a job as a waitress for almost 6 months. And all that before I even finished my Bachelor's degree – because afterwards came what some participants would call "serious jobs" –, even though my parents could perfectly support me. It was just to "taste reality", to become a "grownup"; because that's what grownups do: they work. What is surprising though is that even before entering a particular workplace, I was already prepared to leave it. I regarded work as inherently good, as the only way to adulthood and hence independence. It was only later, after being exposed to certain readings and people, when I started to think differently about the matter.

Even so, no one can ever position herself outside the matrixes of knowledge and power in order to articulate an essentially alternative proposal; even the most radical thoughts are shaped within an already regulated symbolic sphere. This includes the researcher, who, inescapably, is subject to the dominant rationale, engineering her project within a discursive space marked by such domination. Without undermining, not in the least, the value of critical projects such as our own –I have been explicit regarding that matter – I do feel the urge to acknowledge it once again.

Besides, these observations are not intended to spur another epistemological discussion at this point; they are brought about because of their practical consequences and their impact on every stage of the study: From the determination of the research questions, the selection of the methodological and theoretical tools, and the elaboration of the interview guide, to the interview process itself and the analysis of the findings. As I have explained in previous chapters, the co-construction of the meanings produced throughout the research is something that I try to take into consideration when discussing the respondents' accounts, but it is also an element inherent in every social study and of course life itself outside the academic space. Here though I would like to reflect on my captivation by the dominant techniques of subjectification and the obstructions it entailed for the realization of a critical project.

Definitely, the interview sessions themselves constituted the biggest challenge for me; sometimes the participants' stories really resonated with mine, their fears and doubts were also my own. What they said made perfect sense to me, even though I realized that they were structuring their arguments with the discursive stones that I wanted to crumble. Hence there were times that I experienced a feeling of paralysis, of not being able to move beyond what appeared to be so normal and natural, of not being able to escape my "colonized imagination" (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

Therefore, one of the "findings" of this research has nothing to do with paid labour, neoliberalism, or any other specific object of investigation; it has to do with critique itself, as I discovered in practice how painful it can be, forcing you out of the familiar paths of thought, sometimes even violently, putting your very existence at risk. As Butler (2005), discussing Foucault, explains it:

> if I question the regime of truth, I question, too, the regime through which being, and my own ontological status, is allocated. Critique is not merely *of* a given social practice or a certain horizon of intelligibility within which practices and institutions appear, it also implies that I come into question for myself (p. 23, original emphasis).

**2. Accounting for the Theoretical and Methodological Toolkit**

Aiming to carry out a critical project, our approach to paid work profited from the theoretical tools devised by the Autonomist Marxist tradition (e.g., Hardt & Negri, 2004; Lazzarato, 1996; Weeks, 2011) for the study of immaterial labour, precarity, and the new political subject that emerges from the contemporary transformations of the mode of production. This perspective proved particularly useful as it places emphasis on the collapse of the walls of the Fordist factory and underscores the implications of the "leakage" of life into work and vice versa. While highlighting its emancipatory potential for the worker, the theorists within this strand have also provided useful analyses on the ways in which, under neoliberal capitalism, these developments take the form of a different mode of subjection that has been astutely called "post-Fordist flexploitation" (Gray, 2004).

Adopting a rather different standing point, studies on neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 2012), helped us avoid reducing these transformations into a mere "class project", but rather consider the discourses on paid work into the broader web of knowledge and power which attempts to sculpt all social relations and identities after the form of the enterprise. Contrary to understandings of neoliberalism as a rigid ideology imposed from above, the governmentality scholarship (e.g., Dean, 2010; Miller & Rose, 1990; Rose, 1998, 2004) pays attention to the formation of subjectivity, allowing us to explore the ways in which discursive networks make possible and legitimize modes of being and relating which are imbued with the spirit of enterprise.

Our ontological starting point is that social relations and identities are discursively manufactured and that their meaning depends on the outcome of social antagonisms. Bearing that in mind, discourse analysis, treating discourse as a reality in its own right, was deemed most appropriate for our research purposes. Positioned within the social constructionist

epistemology (e.g. Burr, 1995), we selected Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, and critical discursive psychology to form our analytical approach. This transdisciplinary perspective permitted us to compensate the weaknesses of one approach with the strong points of the other, as well as to achieve a broader and fuller comprehension of the discursive construction of work and the working self by Greek employees.

Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (1985) provided a very helpful theoretical platform as it rejects any essentialist determinism, casting antagonism as constitutive of the social, inasmuch as antagonistic discourses intent to fix meanings by articulating signifying elements. Compensating for its lack of a practical toolkit for textual analysis, we combined it with Fairclough's (1992, 1995) approach to critical discourse analysis, taking up his three dimension model representing the facets of language use, seeking to explain how texts impact power relations and place themselves within the hegemonic struggle. Finally, critical discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 1998) was chosen for its focus on specific instances of language use, as well as its rhetoric approach. In our analytical endeavor, the analytical tools of "positioning" (Davies & Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1998) and "interpretative repertoire" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) proved very useful, as they allowed us to explore the participants' interactional identity concerns, as well as the socio-historical matrix within which they are inscribed, avoiding the reification of discourses and foregrounding the situated character of talk.

## 3. The Contemporary Setting

Equipped with the aforementioned analytical lenses, we examined the discursive field within which paid work is invested with meaning, drawing attention to the specific geo-political space of Greece, and the particular historical moment, the so-called "Greek crisis". Let us review for a moment the hegemonic meanings of labour, in order then to answer to our research questions about the ways in which employees position themselves in the socially available discursive networks.

Under the transformations of capitalism and the transition from Fordism to flexible, knowledge-intensive economies, where immaterial labour has qualitatively prevailed (Hardt & Negri, 2000), the workplace has become the ideal site for the rehearsal of enterprising subjectivities. Through national, international, and managerial practices, among others, citizens are cast primarily as calculative and self-interested financial agents, as anthropomorphous businesses who reach success through ceaseless competition of all against

all. The more communicative and affective labour dominate the world of production, the more the worker is configured as an individual enterprise whose life on every level should be directed towards the maximization and management of her/his "human capital".

The workplace becomes organized under the principles set by discourses of excellence, teamwork, and self-disciplinary professionalism, which substitute rigid hierarchical control, forging the employee as an autonomous agent, endowed with freedom of choice, owing loyalty only to the self, as both a brand and its manager. Thusly, paid work is signified as a locus of self-realization and development, as a freely-chosen activity which provides the space for actualizing one's potential; it therefore becomes one's personal "business", a token of individual ability and competence, stripped of its political nature. Similarly, unemployment is considered a sign of individual "pathology", experienced as a personal problem detached from the socioeconomic configurations. The growing flexibility and precarity are engineered as emancipatory for the employee who is invoked as a risk-taking figure, loathing security and stability as synonymous to personal stagnation.

However, an analysis of what was named "the Greek crisis" has thrown into sharp relief that the establishment of the "homo œconomicus" (Foucault, 2012) as the only viable alternative forms part of a project of de-democratization of society and the institutionalization of a post-political biopower (Kioupkiolis, 2013), where the rule of the market constitutes the only grid of intelligibility. Media and political texts rushed to portray Greece as the "oriental Other" (Said, 1995), defying occidental rationality, or as a child, defying rationality altogether. On the other hand, though, popular mobilizations have managed to carve out spheres of resistance, authoring counter-hegemonic versions of subjectivity, ones that are not entrenched in the business ethos or governed by the double-bind of the productivist-consumerist rationale. Inspired by the ideals of solidarity and social justice, they challenged conventional social classification, reclaiming the right to collective self-constitution.

## 4. The Discursive Construction of Work and the Working Self by Greek Employees.

Against this backdrop, we set out to answer to a number of inquiries, namely: the ways in which Greek employees position themselves within the socially available discourses on work, the subjective positions they prefer when authoring versions of their working identities, and the forms in which they reproduce and contest the dominant significations. At this point we will provide a synthesis of our findings and discuss the conclusions that can be drawn. For a more comprehensive presentation, we organized our material in two categories:

they revolve around the main axes set by the research questions but are modeled after the themes that the participants themselves brought about during the interviews.

We named the first category "the self as an employee" focusing on the meaning-making devices deployed by the interviewees when they authored versions of themselves as employees. Our analysis identified three patterns for the construction of the self as an employee, which presuppose different understandings about the self and the social; we called them, respectively, the "entrepreneur of the self", the "socioeconomically determined", and the "occupation-oriented" self. The second category is entitled the "meaning of work" and sheds light to the discursive pores drawn upon by the respondents when negotiating their interpretations of wage labour. The "school" repertoire, the "journey" repertoire and the "slavery" repertoire were the three motifs that we identified, each one availing distinct subjective positions based on different assumptions about the social universe and consequently legitimizing or challenging the hegemonic fixations of meaning.

The modes of being and the discursive pores drawn upon by the participants are interwoven in culturally available discursive matrixes that form the social debates on paid labour and the working self at the particular historical and geographical context; they do not constitute rigid categories but rather contextually enacted discursive formulations, serving the situated rhetoric concerns of the speaker. Their creative articulations and mobilization manifest their flexibility as well as the contingency of the constituted identities. Here we will examine them separately only for analytical purposes aiming at a more thorough understanding.

### 4.1. The self as an employee.

From the very beginning, the participants were interpellated as working subjects and were asked to account for their choices regarding their professional life, reflect on their emotional responses in relation to their professional activity, and ascribe responsibilities for their working status and course. We identified three ways of discursively engineering the working self: as an "entrepreneur of the self", as "socioeconomically determined", and as "occupation-oriented".

The pattern that we came across with greatest frequency was the one we named "the entrepreneur of the self", given that it featured the main elements of the discourse of "enterprise" as well as a great deal of vocabulary used in business settings. More specifically, this motif was built upon a model of the working self that borrowing Friedman's (1990) term we could call "responsible autonomy", and was based in discursive formulations revolving

around individualism and responsibilisation on various levels. Firstly, the participants crafted themselves as managers of their own "brand", obeying only their own standards and being loyal only to their "inclination" towards constant improvement: They adopted employable subjectivities, who are willing to personally undertake both the psychological and the financial cost of maximizing their "human capital". This implied disciplining the self to the mandates of the market, by regulating emotions, managing one's social relations strategically, and governing the body properly.

"Professionalism" emerged among the preferred sense-making devices and entailed, not just the impeccable execution of one's job description, but rather an overall mentality: Instead of being linked to the standards of a particular occupational group, its meaning was fixed by the discourse of "excellence", regarding customerism and "going the extra mile" as inherent to being a professional. "Competitiveness" and "risk-taking" were also construed as essential "professional" attributes which should be developed, so that one could actualize her/his full potential. In this way, work was defined as something more than "making ends meet", as a locus which principally provides moral gratifications, rewarding high productivity; being effective and efficient were cast as individual goals, as a "personal bet", and therefore their accomplishment led to self-realization.

Success and failure were hence attributed to personal characteristics and the capacity to follow the rules set by the market. In the same vein, the acceptance of precarious contracts or the abrogation of labour rights was configured as part of a strategic "business plan" leading to the maximization of one's assets. However, the internal cracks of the business discourse were also exposed in the participants talk, leaving room for its active contestation: The coexistence of constructions such as "teamwork" and "individualistic calculation" within the entrepreneurial ethos produced tensions in their narratives, generating space for reflection and the opportunity to challenge it.

The pattern of identification that we named "socioeconomically determined" self consists of discursive strategies that fashion a version of the self primarily defined as a wage-earner, as an individual that relies on labour for an income. Mobilizing discursive themes such as economic hardship, no alternative to entering the labour market, the existence of a hostile economic environment, and luck, the participants sometimes chose to rescript themselves as part of a wider group, that of the "workers". This subjective position offers a view of the social universe as a realm of antagonism, divided in two camps that have conflicting interests: the employees and the employers.

When the working selfhood was constructed merely as working hands instead of "human capital", work was forged as an obligatory and parasitic routine imposed by necessity, whereas other activities were represented as the actual routes to self-development and self-fulfillment. Hence, positioned as socioeconomically determined subjects, participants limited professionalism in the exact execution of the tasks as determined by the employment agreement. Additionally, the labour market was portrayed as a site of inequality which determined to a great extent the available choices, imputing the moments of distress at work and the difficulties encountered in the working trajectory to the unjust organization of the capitalist productive relations.

Nevertheless, even when discursive pores that forge the capital-labour relation as exploitative were mobilized, discourses on rights, formal working hours, and contractual obligations seemed to retain their appeal, proving their deep roots, providing a legitimate ground for waged labour. On the other hand, the subject positions availed by this discursive pattern permitted the configuration of alternative imaginaries, juxtaposing work within the capitalist relation with a form of work that does not constitute the sole way to earn a living. Although encompassed by a capitalocentric construction of economic life, in the sense that the capitalist economy was portrayed as an invincible structure, entertaining a "socioeconomically determined" identity opened up space for a series of dislocations; individual plights, difficulties, and sacrifices were constructed as inevitable within the current social configurations, however they served to disrupt the hegemonic discourses and identities, calling for new significations.

Finally, a third discursive pattern for the construction of selfhood consisted of the mobilization of discursive pores such as craftsmanship, foregrounding the participants' belonging to a certain professional group, with norms and procedures regulated internally. Hence we named it the "occupation-oriented" self. The argumentative strategies within this framework emphasize the commitment to a particular occupation, challenging the significations of "professionalism" proposed by the "enterprise" discourse. This motif enshrined devotion to the norms and standards established by one's particular occupation, even if they do not align with the market demands. When authoring "occupation-oriented" versions of the working self, individuals claimed autonomy in exercising everyday tasks legitimizing thusly their defiance of corporate practices.

The "occupation-oriented" mode of being an employee afforded an individualistic view of agency, conditioning it upon knowledge and expertise, whose acquisition is one's personal responsibility; however the discursive motif of "luck" was also used, downplaying

this individualistic outlook. At the same time, participants who enacted professional subjectivities tended to ascribe alternative meanings to notions such as “money” or “status”, challenging their interpretation as principal drives for one’s choices and actions and as indexes of success. On the other hand, the professional identity was invoked by the interviewees in order to rationalize the intensification of work, interpreting the colonization of their free time by labour in terms of a “professional particularity”, relevant only to their occupation.

In spite of that, rehearsing “occupation-oriented” working identities exposed the incongruence between defining oneself as a member of a specific professional community and as a member of the labour market, drawing clear lines that divide the “businessman” from the “professional”. Although without questioning the capitalist regime in its essence, it did challenge the neoliberal articulations of profession and professionalism around nodal points such as “enterprise”. Similarly, work per se was not cast as a road to self-fulfillment; it was rather the possibility to exercise one’s craft and the joy experienced when a task was executed as it should for its own sake that were valued the most, and which gave to work meaningfulness. This is why when these elements were obstructed by organizational demands or market mandates, paid labour would become frustrating and absurd.

### 4.2. The meaning of work.

We identified three discursive patterns that functioned as devices of meaning production and that were drawn upon repeatedly by the respondents when talking about paid labour; we named them “school”, “journey”, and “slavery” repertoire respectively.

The first discursive pattern revolves around a metaphor through which the attributes of school are transferred to salaried work. It was often mobilized by the participants, catering to their concern to position themselves as responsible, self-disciplined adults. The repertoire consists of a lexicon which describes waged labour as offering “lessons” on how one should conduct her/himself in order to “grow” as a person, and “teaching” the appropriate modes of being, taking for granted that without paid employment individuals would be “arrogant”, “ignorant” and “selfish”, like little “children”. The pecuniary remuneration is compared to the “immaterial supplies” offered by education, while the meritocracy that is canonically linked to pedagogy is transferred to waged work, legitimizing the latter as a realm of equal opportunity.

As the characteristics of schooling were transferred to the relations of production, the almost obligatory character of the latter was constructed as beneficial to individuals, just like

the obligatory character of education is to children. Paid work was configured as offering "lessons" on how to behave, what to desire, and what to think, regardless of its context, forged as an end in itself, since it can eliminate the narcissistic inner child that obdurately defies the capitalist rationale, and thusly mould a personality that has the "appropriate" traits.

Having fashioned the experiences in the labour market as "lessons", the adaptation to its rationality emerges as the only responsible response on behalf of the employee. Hence leisure and laziness were conjured as irresponsible attitudes, and the reluctance to embrace the usefulness of work was attributed to childish ignorance and unreason. In this context, we witnessed instances of resistance, expressed mostly through bodily reactions; they were nonetheless undermined by the participants themselves as a sign of infantile irrationality.

The second interpretative repertoire mobilized for the construction of the working self was articulated around images of "travelling", "collecting experiences", and "moving" towards "personal fulfillment and development". The "journey" repertoire as we named it presented as commonsensical the figure of an agentic and effortful subject that pursues self-realization through work and an organization of the business world that can afford that. Self-actualization and development were cast as the "destination" of the voyage; however, they were not to be found in a particular workplace but rather in the perpetual movement. Failure to stay on the move was equated with the death of perspective and thus of personal development, something that was definitely negatively viewed. Following the archetype figure of the "tourist", whose essence lies in constant movement and lack of permanent bonds, the employee was configured as a subject who needs to reject bureaucratic or stable jobs, representing security and stability; otherwise she/he may miss the chance to find something "better" ahead and fail to resume the venture of endless self-improvement. "Risk" and "change" were therefore crafted as indispensible elements towards that end.

In turn, the world of paid work was forged as comprising various "paths" among which employees are individually responsible for choosing, taking into account the market demands and the prospects for self-development that each one offers; the ceaseless job changing was portrayed as an integrative part of a calculated and strategically planned trajectory, aiming at continuous ascendance and personal growth, presupposing a meritocratic job market which permits unrestrained navigation among different routes. Thusly, one's working biography can be depicted as a chain of freely made decisions, whereas potential "boundaries" are rescripted as challenges which enrich the worker's "adventure" and her/his never-ending quest for constant improvement. Success and failure were therefore attributed to

the personal choices made by individuals and in particular to whether they comply with the entrepreneurial prescriptions or not.

On the other hand, the "journey" motif was also deployed for the construction of what we named "occupation-oriented" identities. Articulated around nodal points such as "craftsmanship", one's working trajectory was fashioned as a course towards mastering one's profession, obeying the standards set by the particular occupational group. Nonetheless, even though it permitted the identification with the professional community and the demonstration of loyalty to its principles and norms, the "journey" vocabulary did not seem to challenge the capital-labour relationship, taking for granted that the labour market is the unquestionable locus of professional development. What it did question however, was the discourse of "enterprise" which prioritizes clientelism and profit-making; thus it redefined "excellence" and "self-fulfillment", invoking a representation of the working trajectory not as a succession of freely made choices among a variety of available "paths", but as a "one-way street" determined by the standards and the criteria of one's profession.

Finally, we identified a third sense-making device used for the construction of wage labour. We named it the "slavery" repertoire given that it was grounded in the metaphor of work as "forced labour", featuring terms such as "coercion" and "wage slavery", in opposition to "choice", "change", and "freedom". This discursive pool gave participants the chance to entertain a rebellious subjectivity, envisioning a different working universe. This pattern took two forms: The first drew heavily upon a "choice discourse", presupposing that work is a source of satisfaction and self-actualization, provided that employees enjoy freedom to choose its content; the second mobilized an "anticapitalistic" repertoire, questioning the capitalist relations of production altogether.

In the first discursive assemblage, to do "something you like" professionally emerged as one of the main priorities of the respondents, implying that if one is able to pick a gratifying job she/he is freed from servitude; wage work was thusly defined as wage slavery only insofar as individuals were deprived of their "consumer" right to apply their aesthetic criteria in the realm of labour, or of their entrepreneurial initiative to manage their own brand as they wish, due to the deficiencies of the Greek institutions and the rigidity of the job market. In this way, paid labour was configured not as a means to earn one's livelihood but rather as yet another area where one is enjoined to perform her/his "consumer subjectivity"; thus action should be taken towards the safeguarding of the nature of work as a means of self-expression rather than the elimination of its compulsory character altogether.

The vocabulary of "change" that was often articulated with the "slavery" motif, further reinforced the construction of the self as an effortful subject, who is at the lookout for something better; "freedom" was thusly configured as something serving personal interests and that should therefore be pursued individually. In the same vein, work was regarded as "forced labour" only when the working conditions did not meet the standards expected by the participants, taking for granted the structural inequalities of the capital-labour relationship. In this context, "exit" emerged as the only form of resistance.

On the other extreme, markedly fewer participants articulated an anti-hegemonic narrative, rescripting themselves as "wage slaves", denouncing the dependence on a salary as the only form of subsistence. Mobilizing Marxist and anarchist argumentative lines they defined work as "slavery" regardless of its content, the working conditions, and of whether they found it gratifying or not. These participants did not build their argumentative strategies upon the etymological relationships between the terms "δουλειά" (/duliá/, meaning work) and "δουλεία" (/dulía/, meaning slavery) as was the case with the former, but they preferred a particular wording ("μισθωτή σκλαβιά", meaning "wage slavery") which has clear political connotations; thusly the element of coercion was acknowledged as the core of the capitalist organization of labour altogether.

At the same time, using the "slavery" motif they also foregrounded the right of choice but not on the basis of aesthetic criteria; instead of contrasting one workplace to another their discursive positioning enabled the contemplation of alternative organizations of the economic life. Although its dominance was acknowledged, the primacy of the market was questioned, and so was the discourse of "free choice", as individuals were represented as enmeshed in a social reality governed by power inequalities.

## 5. Implications of the Findings

So, what are the implications of our findings? What are the inferences that could be drawn regarding the discursive construction of paid work and the self as an employee on a macro-social level?

We should begin by underscoring the pervasive impact of the entrepreneurial ethos, which has managed to consolidate its rationale as natural and legitimate, and fix rather solidly the meanings of signifiers such as "work", "risk", and "freedom", among others, around the nodal point of the "enterprise". Most of the discursive patterns identified within the framework of this dissertation, as regards the construction both of selfhood and of paid labour, drew upon forms of intelligibility that configure employees as "autonomous, self-

regulating, productive, responsible individuals" (du Gay & Salaman, 1992, p. 626). The respondents, most often, crafted the working self as "agentic", enjoying "freedom of choice", and hence in absolute control of its social and professional course. In this way, the privatization of responsibility that has been institutionalized by public practices, managerial discourses and Media texts, is reproduced and normalized through everyday discursive practices, while the exclusions and the power disparities it generates are banalized and go by unnoticed.

Thusly, individualistic polices and solutions are regarded appropriate thanks to the mundane embodiment of the neoliberal dogma, inasmuch as competition of all against all and the individualization of risk-management have turned into common-sense. Precarity is normalized and the attempts of the multitude to overcome it as its social condition are hindered, while the moves of "deterritorialisation away from its own conditions of existence" (Tsianos & Papadopoulos, 2006, para. 31) are paralyzed by the individualizing "discourse of enterprise".

Moreover, the consumerist spirit seems to be effectively integrated in the "enterprise-oriented" contemporary work ethic, enjoining individuals to enact consumer identities even in the realm of employment. The interviewees in our study emphasized the aesthetic criteria when it came to job selection, crafting the capital-labour relation as a locus of self-fulfillment and a source of satisfaction, as long as they were granted "the liberty of consumer choice" (Harvey, 2005, p. 42). We therefore contend that instead of their marginalization in favour of a more hedonistic spirit, the hegemonic discourses on work bolster their subjectifying power by casting work under capitalism as a path to self-actualization, obfuscating the dividing lines between work and non-work. In this way, waged work is depoliticized, as employees see in it a personal project, as a path towards self-development rather than a social relation, based on a particular mode of power distribution.

At the same time though, this "freedom of choice" was not unrestricted; all legitimate alternatives were to be found within the "official" market, and were represented by activities that respected the capitalist norm. In other words, the respondents did not seek to choose between capitalist and non-capitalist economic activities, but rather demanded liberty and empowerment in order to exercise unobstructed their identities as members of the market, even in unfavorable terms (i.e., underpaid jobs, no social benefits, etc.). A number of neoliberal propositions were thusly rationalized: Education should be structured in such a way so as to meet the needs of the market, the rigidities of the latter should be eliminated so that it can permit constant changes, and state policies should make sure that subjects become

competitive in the business arena rather than address the inequalities inherent in it. We therefore observe the amplification of dependency occurring in the post-industrial precarious labour market, which takes a twofold form, both on the employment relation and on the self that should be individually be able to achieve it (Tsianos & Papadopoulos, 2014)

Additionally, "freedom of choice" was coupled with "responsibility". Most of the interviewees crafted themselves as "professionals", imbued by a discourse of "excellence" and a customer-focused mentality (du Gay, 1996). Self-monitoring and self-disciplining emerged as pivotal characteristics of the "good professional" within many of the meaning-making devices that we identified, as individuals adopted the position of the manager of themselves. Fashioning effortful (Gibson, 2009; Kesisoglou, 2014) working subjectivities that respect the rules of competition as the only rational configuration of the economic life, invoking teamwork and professionalism, the intensification of work and long hours are justified in the name of the high professional standards that employees set for themselves. Moreover, the dividing line between employer and employee is blurred and thusly so is the political nature of paid work.

Apart from the previous observations that point to the effectiveness of neoliberal governmentality, it is also worth reflecting on the implications of our findings as regards the Greek setting of the present day in particular. Our analysis shows that the identity inferences that individuals sought to ward off were directly linked to the way the Greek identity has been fashioned by public discourses, mostly during what has been called the "Greek crisis". More specifically we saw how individuals perpetuate the colonial gaze that has been established by mainstream Media, political discourses, and financial and business institutions, by authoring "occidental" versions of themselves claiming effortfulness, blaming the country's plight on its "oriental" character and the laziness, inefficiency, and lack of self-discipline that this character entails. Drawing upon discursive reservoirs like the "child" vocabulary, they legitimize interventions towards the "responsibilization" of the Greek attitudes to work according to the "occidental", i.e. neoliberal, canon, as well as the need for someone "wiser" to show the way.

Nonetheless, by no means do we argue that the hegemonic significations of work and the working self have achieved absolute domination over the symbolic. In fact, people often resisted the dominant definitions and constructed the working selfhood by mobilizing alternative discursive pores, defending counter-hegemonic subject worlds. "Occupation-oriented" identities provided stable grounds for dissidence against the business ethos, enshrining values such as craftsmanship and thusly challenging the primacy of the principles

of the market. In addition, discursive formulations that emphasize the political nature of the working relation, foregrounding the social antagonisms that it represents were also drawn upon by the interviewees, questioning the hegemonic individualistic view of labour.

This implies that the neoliberal prototype has not managed to constitute itself as an undisputed normality and that the struggle for the reclamation of alternative identities, other than the entrepreneurial one, is still alive. On the other hand, in spite of the fact that the countervailing discourses we identified do challenge the neoliberal expression of work, they do not pose an immediate threat to the working relation itself, demanding only bigger or smaller reforms in its organization.

Furthermore, Marxist and anarchist vocabularies were deployed as well, opening up space for the enactment of countervailing subjectivities, targeting not just the neoliberal profile of work, but the capitalist mode of production altogether. In this way, as alternative imaginaries of social organization circulate through everyday communication, the prevalence of the capitalist regime is challenged and different economic systems can be attempted.

We should note however that the discursive system of capitalocentrism (Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2006) proved more powerful than the neoliberal constructions; even when participants positioned themselves within discursive camps directly opposed to capitalism, capitalocentric traces haunted their talk; even though they acknowledged wage labour as only one form of organization of work among many, as socially imposed due to power inequalities, they sometimes used capitalism as a yardstick of all economic subjectivities, and asserted the difficulty for it to be dislodged. This persistence of capitalocentrism impedes social action, which, in turn, in a spiral escalation, further reinforces the assumptions about the invincibility of capitalism.

So even when the neoliberal prototype is questioned and work is not regarded as a personal project of self-actualization, the capitalocentric discourse, forging capitalism as unbreakable or as the only sustainable regime, seems to hinder more radical action; therefore, "choosing the Exodus", as Gorz (1999) suggests in the epigraph above, as a "process of subtraction from the relationship with capital" (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 152) and the creative configuration of alternatives become unimaginable, to say the least.

## 6. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

The fact that capitalocentric residues kept appearing in the participants' texts was probably an effect of the design of our study and the selection of the respondents: The interviewees were interpellated as "employees", being in a capitalist working relation, and

this inescapably affected their discursive constructions. Avoiding such an interpellation, or conducting a similar research among those who do not participate in the labour market and pursue non-transacted subsistence practices could add a great deal of interesting information and undermine the magnitude of capitalocentrism.

Moreover, as is always the case in qualitative studies, we could not perform an exhaustive analysis of our research material; an important omission which was imposed by the lack of space and time was that of the analysis of the photographs taken by the participants. By implementing a multimodal analysis (Jewitt, 2009; Kress, 2009) in an interdisciplinary approach, future research can obtain access to different sets of resources used in the processes of signification of work and personhood.

Even on the level of discourse, a great number of themes came up that could not be dealt with in the limited space of this dissertation. Among them, the discursive construction of voluntary non-work certainly constitutes one of the most intriguing issues to be explored further. The participants tended to divide the non-work space in two camps: the legitimate and illegitimate. The first included activities that were worth doing and hence people were justified not to participate in the labour market in order to devote themselves to them: child rearing, studies, and philanthropic activities were cast among them. The definition of the second followed a rather, but not completely, gendered pattern; for women not working – and not being involved in any of the "legitimate" non-work activities – was immediately linked to becoming a "housewife"; for men, not working meant "drinking beers all day" or "playing video-games all day". Therefore it would be interesting to investigate the discursive pores that inform these conceptions and delve also into the gender dimension of the construction of work and non-work.

Feminist scholarship and queer theory could present a much promising theoretical vehicle for a critical approach to the particular object of study. To begin with, feminist analyses over time have devoted great effort to redefine the dividing lines between productive and reproductive labour and have laid the groundwork for more recent understandings about the post-Fordist worker (see Weeks, 2011). On another level, this body of theory could significantly benefit future research by illuminating the ways in which the construction of gendered identities reflects on the configuration of the working self and vice versa, going even deeper into the webs of knowledge and power. Finally, and at this point we have in mind especially the influential work of Judith Butler (e.g., 1993, 1999, 2005), feminist and queer approaches could lend us the instruments they have developed for the confrontation of

patriarchy and heterosexuality in order to assemble a project in pursuit of "collective disidentifications" (1993, p. 4), in relation to economic normativity this time.

The recent "turn to affect" of the social sciences (Wetherell, 2013) could inform subsequent investigations of the field, in order to explore the construction of affect in the talk about work and the working self. Given the ongoing precarization of the working relation, in addition to the framing of the current socioeconomic situation in Greece as a "crisis", such an approach would surely generate particularly interesting findings. Implementing an interdisciplinary research design could move research beyond the rigid binary of "affect versus discourse" and reconsider them as "emergent patterns of situated activity" (p. 364).

Future work on the subject could also integrate into the social psychological study of neoliberalism, capitalism, production, and consumption, psychoanalytic perspectives and devices and creatively modify its prism. Lacan's concept of "jouissance" as well as more recent analyses that have deployed it (e.g., Dean, 2008; Stavrakakis, 2014; Žižek, 2010) have offered an extremely intriguing outlook from which the construction of selfhood under neoliberal capitalism acquires new dimensions. In the same vein, a lacanian gaze could serve as an alternative standing point to explore the configuration of selfhood, using his "formula" of the four discourses: In the light of our findings about the impact of the "school" vocabulary, the lacanian "discourse of the university" and its relation to the "master's discourse" could serve as effective lenses for its investigation.

Further study could also focus on particular key themes of public discourses in present-day Greece and examine the ways in which they are drawn upon in quotidian communication in order to shape understandings of labour. More specifically, it would be particularly interesting to investigate Lazzarato's (2012) thesis about the "making of the indebted man"; as he suggests, debt has become a very effective subjectifying tool, inculcating particular dispositions towards production, the self, and the lender. Even though our analysis took into consideration the current financial conditions and much of the relevant literature, continued research into the matter could provide valuable insights on the reproduction of "indebted subjectivities" through everyday communication practices.

There is definitely a plethora of related social terrains that remain largely uncharted by social theorists, and even more theoretical and methodological approaches that could be adopted for their exploration. What I believe that matters the most though is to redefine social research as a political project, oriented towards critique and social transformation; to engage in it aiming to question the established boundaries of symbolic intelligibility and suggest or invent new vocabularies that enable alternative identification processes; to dislodge

sedimented identities, not in order to establish others in their place, but in order to open up space for the invention of new ones.

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# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1. Interview guide (English translation)**

**A. Personal questions**

1. Tell me a few things about you (age, marital status, hobbies)

**B. The meaning of work**

2. What thoughts does the concept of work bring to mind? (Is it identified with remunerated work?)

3. Is it important for people to work? Why do you work?

4. Can you describe your work-history? (When did you start to work, why then, what criteria did you apply when choosing jobs?)

5. Tell me about your job. (What is the main thing it has to fulfill?)

6. What do you think when you go to work? When you leave?

7. How do you feel about the fact that you work? For the fact that you have no alternative?

8. Have you ever been without a job? How was it like?

**C. Working identity**

9. How would you describe yourself as an employee?

10. What do you demand from yourself on this level? What is the most important thing?

11. Do you feel that it has been necessary to change something on you because of your work? How do you feel work affects you?

12. Is it important for you to be good at your job? Do you have to work after the end of your working hours?

13. How do you feel when you get paid at the end of the month? Does the fact that you get paid for what you do affect the way you see it?

14. Does your current job affect your personal relationships?

15. How do you see your professional future?

16. Would you like to occupy a higher position? How is this achieved?

17. Has the crisis affected the way you experience work?

**D. Resistance and alternative imaginaries**

18. What is the thing you dislike the most about work?

19. How do you handle the things you do not like? Are there any other ways to handle them?

20. If you could, would you exit the labour market? What would you do? What impact would it have on your environment?

21. Some countries have established a minimum guaranteed income that gives the option to people not to enter the labour market. What do you think about that? What impact would it have on our society?

22. Could there be a society without labour market? (Benefits, costs?)

**Appendix 2. Invitation to the research (English translation)**

Dear friend,

My name is Katerina Nikolopoulou and I am a student in the doctoral program "Man and Society in the Modern World" at the department of Social Psychology of the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

With this letter I invite you to participate in a research carried out as part of my PhD thesis, under the direction of Leonor M[a] Cantera Espinosa, aimed to examine the construction of the meaning of paid work in modern Greece.

If you accept, your contribution will consist in taking one to three pictures which represent "What it means for you to be employee" and of giving an interview regarding the meaning and experience of paid work, where your own photos will be discussed. (Each participant will be called to comment upon the visual material that she / he has contributed to the research).

The photos that are in digital form need not be printed, and can portray anything, given that they respect the regulations of the place and the privacy of the persons included in them; in any case, it is considered appropriate to obtain authorization and to inform whoever is implicated that the images are likely to be published. After the procedure, copies will be requested for use in the analysis of results.

The interview will take place at a mutually convenient place and time and is expected to last approximately one hour. Its content will be recorded and the information shared will be analyzed by me, only for the purposes of this research. Extracts are likely to be published, with full respect to the anonymity of participants, unless they expressly demand otherwise.

Your participation is voluntary, maintaining the possibility not to answer any question you do not wish to answer or to leave the process at any stage.

For further clarifications, please feel free to contact me by e-mail (katerinaki.n@gmail.com) or phone (697 3334719).

Thank you very much for your time.

Best,

Katerina Nikolopoulou

## Appendix 3. Form of informed consent (English translation)

**Research conducted by: Aikaterini Nikolopoulou**
**Director of thesis: Prof. Leonor Mª Cantera Espinosa**
Doctoral Program: Man and Society in the Modern World
Department of Social Psychology
Autonomous University of Barcelona
E-mail: aikaterini.nikolopoulou@e-campus.uab.cat


**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Information regarding the research**

I, **Aikaterini Nikolopoulou**, student in the doctoral program 'Person and Society in the Modern World' at the Department of Social Psychology of the Autonomous University of Barcelona,

**I DECLARE** that:

- with this thesis I intend to investigate how the meaning of paid labour is constructed through the discourses of Greek employees.
- for this purpose I intend to use qualitative research techniques, such as semi-structured interviews.
- the information provided to me by each participant will be analyzed by myself, respecting the confidentiality and the anonymity of those who freely and voluntarily have agreed to contribute to this research project.

**Declaration of participant consent**

I, _____, agree to participate in the research that forms part of the doctoral thesis of Aikaterini Nikolopoulou, which aims to investigate how the meaning of paid labour is constructed through the discourses of Greek employees.
Therefore, I declare that I:

- authorize the recording of my interview.
- authorize its publication, given that the confidentiality of my identity is protected.
- I have been informed about the objectives and purposes of the investigation.
- I have been informed that I may withdraw at any time during the investigation.

| Name and Surname: | |
|---|---|
| Telephone: | E-mail: |

**Date** **The Interviewee** **The researcher**

## Appendix 4: The participants and their photos

| A/A | Nick-name | Age | Sex | Date of Interview | Duration in min. | Photos |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Eli | 30 | F | 14/01/2015 | 62,07 | 3 |
| **2** | Maria | 37 | F | 15/01/2015 | 55,36 | 2 |
| **3** | Thanos | 31 | M | 17/01/2015 | 60,18 | 3 |
| **4** | Klio | 32 | F | 20/01/2015 | 54,53 | 3 |
| **5** | Xenofon | 36 | M | 21/01/2015 | 64,51 | 3 |
| **6** | Dionysis | 32 | M | 21/01/2015 | 69,02 | 2 |
| **7** | Natalia | 30 | F | 22/01/2015 | 43,34 | 2 |
| **8** | Tina | 43 | F | 23/01/2015 | 72,01 | 2 |
| **9** | Minas | 40 | M | 28/01/2015 | 59,45 | 3 |
| **10** | Nefeli | 28 | F | 29/01/2015 | 65,21 | 2 |
| **11** | Manoussos | 32 | M | 30/01/2015 | 47,08 | Not sent |
| **12** | Kyriakos | 32 | M | 31/01/2015 | 67,39 | 2 |
| **13** | Aris | 42 | M | 01/02/2015 | 34,48 | 0 |
| **14** | Yanis | 30 | M | 03/02/2015 | 73,32 | 2 |
| **15** | Eva | 30 | F | 15/02/2015 | 81,17 | 1 |
| **16** | Kastoras | 29 | M | 17/02/2015 | 70,39 | Not sent |
| **17** | Sonia | 30 | F | 18/02/2015 | 53,02 | 0 |
| **18** | Demosthenes | 30 | M | 21/02/2015 | 43,23 | 0 |
| **19** | Artemis | 28 | F | 24/02/2015 | 61,3 | 1 |
| **20** | Elina | 23 | F | 04/03/2015 | 62,3 | 3 |
| **21** | Irini | 31 | F | 05/03/2015 | 50,13 | Not sent |
| **22** | Ektoras | 32 | M | 07/03/2015 | 56,28 | Not sent |

**1. Eli**

**1.a**

**1.b**

**1.c**

**2. Maria**

**2.a**

**2.b**

**3. Thanos**

**3.a**


**3.b**

**3.c**

**4. Klio**

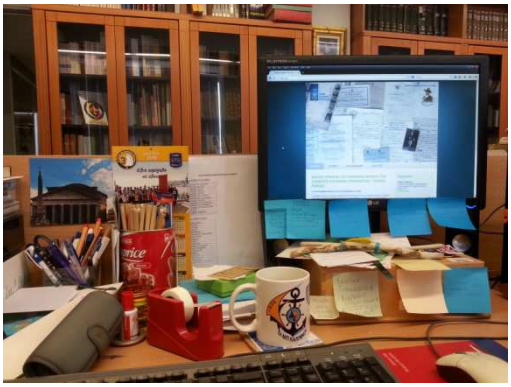
**4.a**

**4.b**

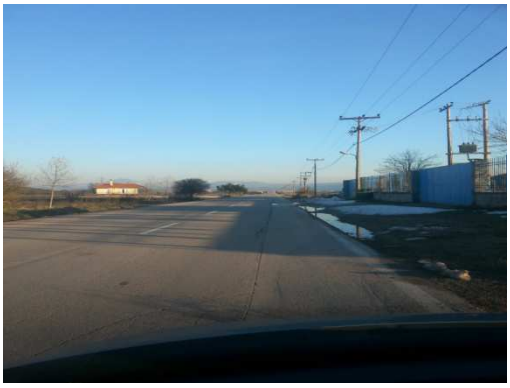
**4.c**

## 5. Xenofon


**5.a**

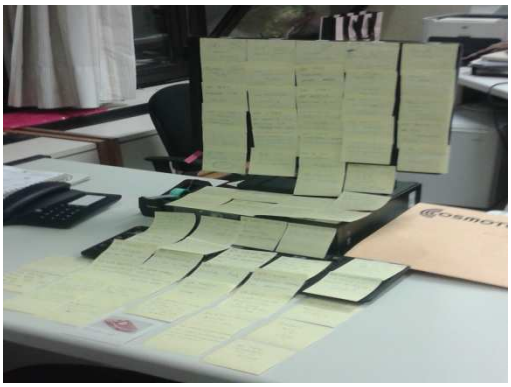


**5.b**



**5.c**

**6. Dionysis**



**6.a**

**6.b**

**7. Natalia**

**7.a**

**7.b**

**8. Tina**

**8.a**

**8.b**

**9. Minas**

**9.a**


**9.b**

**9.c**

**10. Nefeli**


**10.a**

**10.b**

## 12. Kyriakos


**12.a**

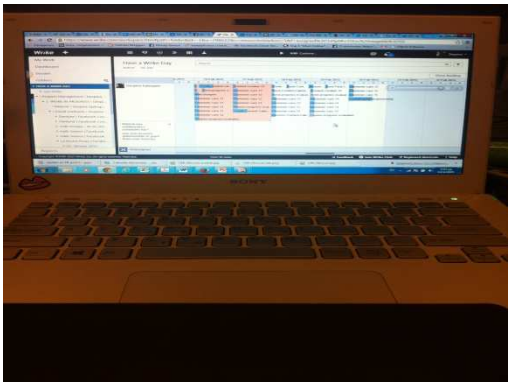
**12.b**

## 14. Yanis

**14.a**

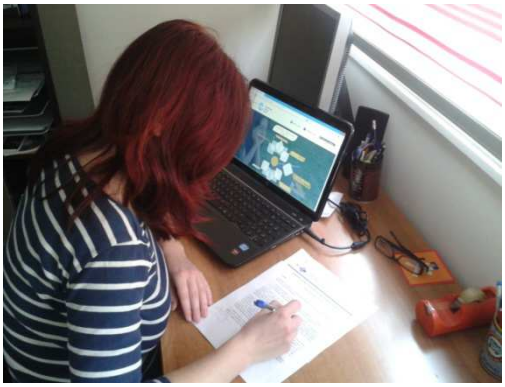
**14.b**

## 15. Eva



**15.a**

**19. Artemis**



**19.a**

**21. Elina**

| Έλεγχος στο Υπόλοιπο του Λογαριασμού | |
|---|---|
| Συντομογραφία (Alias) Λογαριασμού: | TAM01 |
| Ποσό Κίνησης: | 377,15 EUR (ΠΣ) |
| Αιτιολογία Κίνησης: | ΜΙΣΘΟΔΟΣΙΑ |
| Ημ/νία Εκτέλεσης: | 26-02-2015 |
| Ημ/νία Αξίας: | 26-02-2015 |
| Λογιστικό Υπόλοιπο: | 383,53 EUR |

**21.a**


**21.b**

**21.c**