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Investigating the Macedonia Naming Dispute in the Twitter Era: Implications for the Greek Identity Crisis

Persefoni Zeri, Charalambos Tsekeris and Theodore Tsekeris

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Investigating the Macedonia Naming Dispute in the Twitter Era: Implications for the Greek Identity Crisis

Persefoni Zeri[*], Charalambos Tsekeris[†] and Theodore Tsekeris[‡]

ABSTRACT

The Macedonia naming dispute has been an important issue in Greek affairs. It constitutes both an irresolvable, decades-old international problem and a significant, yet undertheorised, analytical topic. In this context, our aim is to critically explore, highlight and discuss the deep-seated and pervasive patterns, representations, attitudes, beliefs, ideas and norms within the Greek social imaginary, as these emerged on Twitter in real-time, during the mass "Macedonia rally" on February 4, 2018. More specifically, drawing on the dialectical interaction between Twitter posts, sociopolitical behaviours and interpretative analytic frames linked to interdisciplinary theoretical discourses, we attempt to understand and interrogate the intellectual structures, value system and operational categories of a large number of Greek groups on the 'Twittersphere'. Based on the assumption that, in the last instance, the rigid refusal of the majority of the Greek people to accept a 'composite name' solution is connected with the tacit social imaginary of the Greek society, the present paper brings to the fore a *complex identity* problem. This problem relationally refers to the internal workings of the individuals, the psyche and the unconscious, but also to hidden and unreflected symbolic backgrounds, macro-social processes, and cultural legacies. Our following Twitter network analysis, focused on selected hashtags regarding the 'Macedonia rally', point out the character of social dynamics and ascertain the findings of the interpretative research strand.

Keywords: Greek Identity Crisis, Macedonia Naming Dispute, Social Imaginary, Twitter, Social Media

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1. Introduction

Based on Cornelius Castoriadis' (1991, 1997) theoretical conceptions of "autonomy" and "social imaginary", this work seeks to critically explore, highlight and discuss the deep-seated and pervasive patterns, representations, attitudes, beliefs, ideas and norms, within Greece's instituting social imaginary. These will be examined as they came to the fore on Twitter live streams, during the mass 'Macedonia rally' in Athens on February 4, 2018. Drawing on the complex dialectical interaction between Twitter posts, sociopolitical behaviours and the interpretative analytic frames linked to interdisciplinary theoretical discourses[4], we attempt to discern, understand and interrogate the intellectual structures, value system and operational categories of a large number of Greek groups on the 'Twittersphere'.

There have been mass popular mobilisations in Greece against the use of the name 'Macedonia' by the country's northern neighbor, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/FYROM (see Sofos and Tsagarousianou 1993; Demertzis, Papathanassopoulos and Armenakis 1999). Over time, the tension has been reduced, not only because of static diplomacy and the so-called intermediate agreement, but also because of a severe and protracted financial crisis, which has led the Greek society into deep recession and widespread collective suffering (Tsoukalis 2013; Karyotis and Gerodimos 2015; Tsekeris, Kaberis and Pinguli 2015; Tsekeris, Pinguli and Georga 2015; Markantonatou, Aulenbacher and Riegraf 2018; Kesisoglou, Figgou and Dikaiou 2016).[5]

Nevertheless, the restart of the diplomatic negotiations in early February 2018 between Greece and FYROM to settle the name dispute under the auspices of the U.N. and the E.U., within the framework of the European Security Strategy in the Balkans (Ioakeimidis

[4] Generally speaking, Twitter contributes to the dynamic diffusion of ideas (or practices) and facilitates protesters' collective organisation and capacity for both offline and online action, thus enhancing the "repertoires of contention" (Tilly 1978), in a highly unpredictable and nonlinear fashion (for better or worse). As a result, the famous old slogan of the 1970s "The Revolution will not be televised" has been rapidly transformed into "The Revolution will be Twitted" in the 2010s (Vatikiotis & Yörük 2016, p. 6). But given that the mass mobilisations or protests are also performed in the physical terrain of the streets, we need to shift the analytical focus "from the determining networked nature of social media to the interplay between physical and mediated facets of action" (Vatikiotis & Yörük 2016, p. 1; see Milioni 2009).

[5] "Nine years after the outburst of the financial crisis, Greece remains mired in it, still arguing internally about its causes. Contempt for the press, weaponised information delivered through social media and gullible institutions make for a toxic mix that stifles progress. Greece remains the canary in the coalmine and should be watched more carefully" (Bletsas 2017, p. 13).

2018)[6], triggered a sudden, emotionally charged uprising of the Greek society against the use of the name 'Macedonia', or its derivatives, in an internationally recognised arrangement. According to a recent quantitative survey on Greek public attitudes towards the name dispute, with nationwide coverage and multi-stage stratified sampling, a large majority of participants "reject any reference to the term 'Macedonia' as a part of any future solution (71.5%), while 22.5% responded that they could accept a composite name that would include the term 'Macedonia'" (Armakolas and Siakas 2018, p. 15)[7].

Interestingly, this survey shows that the "non-accomodative/rejectionist" or "un-comprising" camp (i.e., no reference to the term 'Macedonia' or a derivative of that word) "has had a sharp increase in the last two years" (Armakolas and Siakas 2018, p. 16). It is evident that it was not the mass media that affected the Greek public opinion and contributed to the previous set off of its unrest against FYROM's name claims. In the meantime, new generations of Greeks have been added, who have no substantive access to the near and distant past, as well as to actual historical experiences concerning the disputed issue. To a large degree, these generations are also against the use of the term 'Macedonia' in any solution to the decades-old row between Athens and Skopje. The following parts of the paper consist of a brief description of the past and present of the Macedonia naming dispute, an investigation of the so-called Greek identity crisis (*who are we?*) in contemporary digital society and the Twittersphere in particular (drawing from empirical material), an examination of the effects on the internet and the specific cyber-realm of the 'Macedonia rally', and a Twitter network analysis, which demonstrates the dynamics pertaining to the activity of Twitter users in the topic under study, the group formation in the network of shared information, and main statistics of those Twitter users.

[6] The new momentum has been partly gained by the arrival to power (in F.Y.R.O.M.) of the pro-solution coalition, led by the political parties SDSM and DIU, with the new Prime Minister Zoran Zaev declaring his strong determination to resolve the long-standing dispute with Greece.

[7] See also http://www.lifo.gr/now/politics/185190/dimoskopisi-kapa-research-oxi-se-lysi-me-ton-oro-makedonia-leei-to-56-5

2. Past and Present of the Macedonia Naming Dispute

The protracted dispute over the use of the name "Macedonia" by FYROM, a claim which arose with the declaration of its independence in 1991 after the dissolution of Yugoslav federation, is originating from a complex bundle of reasons with a profound historical emotive background (Danforth 1995). Macedonia is a wide Balkan region officially shared by Greece and parts of Serbia (today's FYROM) and Bulgaria after the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 (Sofos 2010; Vlasidis 2017). During antiquity, it has been emerged in this region the ancient kingdom of Macedonia, which lays within the current Greek province of Macedonia. Under Alexander the Great, the forceful expansion of the Greek kingdom of Macedonia implied, at the same time, the extension of a flourishing Hellenistic culture and thought. Over the centuries, Macedonia had become a multicultural region, whereby the slaves lived since the 7th century. At the end of the 19th century and after the state-building of Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs, Macedonia was transformed to a theatre of wars and armed struggles, expulsions and resettlements of populations, ecclesiastical disputes, communist dominance conflicts, and so on (see Houzouri 2018; Sofos 2010; Vlasidis 2017).

During this period and the first half of the 20th century, the Slavic-speaking part of the Macedonian region had been caught up in the machinations of left and right ideologists, Bulgarian communists, Tito's Yugoslavia (both Bulgarian communists and Tito competed for domination over the whole Macedonian region), Slavic-speaking autonomists and Greek governments. After the Balkan wars, the Slavic inhabitants of Greek Macedonia suffered from the activities of the Bulgarian nationalist communists and the Slavic-speaking autonomists, as well as of the persecutions by the Greek governments (Pentzopoulos 2002). The majority of the Slavic-speaking people of Greek Macedonia was expelled to other Balkan regions, whereby the remaining Slavic-speaking population was "subjected to a systematic process of Hellenization" (Sofos, 2010, p. 5); in particular, their oppression boiled up under the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas. After the outbreak of the Second World War and the development of the resistance movement in Yugoslavia under the leadership of Tito and its communist party, a group of Slavic speakers of the Greek communist resistance passes to Yugoslavia. After the liberation, the competition between Tito and the Bulgarian communist leader Georgi Dimitrov for

domination in the Balkans has led to the establishment of the federal state Yugoslavia (that is, the Communist Yugoslav federation) in 1946, having as a constituent the People's Republic of Macedonia (and later the Socialist Republic of Macedonia).

The Greek civil war during the 1940s makes things more complex. A part of local Slavs of Greek Macedonia joins the communist-led partisans; their villages become destroyed by the National Greek Army; many Slavs find refuge in the Yugoslav Macedonia. The post-war Greek governments denied to several thousands of refugees from Greek Macedonia to return to their homes and confiscated their properties, but also violated the human rights of the Slav minority which remained in Greece and was not allowed to speak their language, to sing their songs, and so on (Sofos 2010, p. 12; Cowan and Brown 2000). In response, a nationalist and irredentist outburst is broken out in the Yugoslav Macedonia that finds expression in the schoolbooks, the historiography and the propagation of a 'Macedonian' identity.

In 1991, it has been followed the breakup of Yugoslavia and the declaration of independence of Yugoslav Macedonia under the name 'Republic of Macedonia'. After decades of ignorance of the existence of this state and the turbulent history of south Balkans, the Greek public opinion woke up and began to deplore the 'usurpation' of the name 'Macedonia' by the new neighbor in the north (Karpozilos and Christopoulos 2018, p. 29). The public opinion had no idea what happened in the Macedonian region for hundreds of years. Most people claim uncompromisingly that the name "Macedonia" and the Macedonian past belong exclusively to Greece (Houzouri 2018, p. 7). Greek nationalist networks, which often pertain to the clergy and the so-called "underdog culture" (Diamandouros 1983, 1994), have used to stir up outrage against the alleged usurpation of Greek history and fear over irredentist plans of the neighbor state. The name dispute has broken out and lasts for almost three decades with unpredictable outcomes.

The mass mobilisations in 1992 were focused exclusively on the name 'Macedonia' and expressed a deeply seated affective stance, which seemed to render any conflict resolution perspective almost impossible. In 1993, the new state was admitted to the United Nations under the name 'FYROM' until the name dispute is resolved. In 1995, an Interim Accord between Greece and FYROM took place, which ameliorated their

relationship by potentially ruling out the name solution. Nevertheless, the stalemate continues, as shown by the Greek blockade of FYROM's accession to NATO in 2008[8], but also by the so-called *antiquisation* of the society of FYROM, the irredentist references in school textbooks, and so on. From the other side, many generations in Greece are studying versions of Greek history in which the Macedonian and Hellenistic past are an important and essential part (Sofos 2013, p. 228). Based on the aforementioned sociohistorical approach, in combination to an analysis of Twitter streams, we will hereinafter attempt to thoroughly investigate the following specific assumption: the Greek rigidity and intransigence on the Macedonia naming dispute has brought to the fore a *complex identity problem*, which relationally refers to the internal workings of the individuals, the psyche and the unconscious, but also to hidden and unreflected symbolic and macro-social processes (Castoriadis 1991)[9]. In other words, the Greek societal stance appears to be characterised by path-dependency[10] and cultural legacies.

3. Individuality and Identity Crisis in the Twitter Era

The dynamic appearance of the Macedonia naming dispute has taken place in a turbulent era of fundamental transformations in the knowledge infrastructure of contemporary societies (see, for example, Gibbons et al. 1994). These transformations imply rapid and radical changes in the life-world of everyday experience, as well as in the self-construction of individuality, subjectivity and identity (Giddens 1991; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Tsekeris 2015). Understanding such influential sociocultural developments is important for our research objectives. This involves a careful reading of the public discourse articulated by the users who participated in the anti-FYROM Twitter activities, using hashtags like #MacedoniaIsGreek and #Syllalitirio, during the mass mobilisation in Syntagma Square in Athens, where the Greek Parliament is, on February 4, 2018. Therefore, it is required a theoretical grasp of how the users perceive themselves and their sociocultural environment, the past and the future, drawing on their persistence on the name of Macedonia. The detailed empirical examination of the internet discourse is much appropriate because, in the new media era, reality is

[8] For this point, see the analysis of Yannis Kechagiaras (2012).
[9] Cf. Ramfos 2011; Evangeliou 2005; Prevelakis 2017.
[10] "The development of human societies is path-dependent, with no 'laws of motion' that hold at all times and places" (DeCanio 2017, p. 134).

mediatised by the new techniques of simulation and virtualisation which make our understanding of the factual world uncertain, contingent and precarious.

For our research purposes, we focus theoretically on two overlapping research strands. First, we analyse the social architecture of digital spaces and the transformation of the individual within a mediatised public sphere. This analysis aims to decipher how the opponents of the use of the name 'Macedonia' perceive their self-identity and its relationship to the world and the Other in the digital realm. Second, we examine Castoriadis's concepts of the "instituting social imaginary" and the "social imaginary significations" (Castoriadis 1991: 144 ff.), emphasising the way that these significations are incorporated in the individuals who express themselves within the online/offline public sphere against the use of the name 'Macedonia'.

For the aim of understanding how the mediatised significations of the diverse views over the Macedonian issue were interlaced with the self-perception of the Greek identity in the age of the new (internet) communication order, it is needed to briefly reflect on the cultural conditions of this order. Nowadays, reality is overwhelmingly 'mediatised' by digital communication platforms, so that the online discussion plays an important role in the process of public opinion formation. In parallel to the increasing complexity of the so-called network society (Castells 1996), it is emerging an era of "new orality" (Bolz 2017, p. 17). That is, an acentric flow of circulating emotional discourses, where reflective observation is dynamically substituted by the aesthetic personalisation in the public communication.

Technical media and apparatuses produce "derealisation effects" (Waldenfels 1998, p. 231), where reality is turned into a "construction", something that impedes the substantial capacity-building of the individual. Individuality evolves now beyond the (enabling) constraints of material reality and the collectively mediated social ties; henceforth, it is transformed into a "texture" with different connection options (Ladeur 2005, p. 141). The decay of the everyday world of experiences (i.e., the social cognitive infrastructure), which is linked to self-reflection and self-understanding practices, has undermined the shared framework of accepted social rules and common efforts[11]. This

[11] According to Yascha Mounk (2018), before the advent of the so-called Web 2.0 revolution, the citizenry had a relatively similar worldview; even diverse groups and communities were part of a shared

fundamental change in the network society intensifies the problem with the self-observation of the society and the citizens, as well as with the inherent self-reflection on their changes (Ladeur 2012, p. 2).

The self- and hetero-observation (or other-observation) of the individual and the society, which constitutes the self-understanding of modernity, is weakened and results in an alienation process between citizens and the democratic state, a political disenchantment. The political disenchantment is constantly perpetuated and reinforced by the media, which do not try to process themes of public importance and contribute to the public opinion formation. On the contrary, they are oriented to the intense dramatisation of risk and uncertainty, the production of attention through events, and the continuous transition to the next events that will attract more attention (Kaufmann 2012, p. 196).

The transformation process of the cognitive structure of contemporary society, on the one hand, and the mediatised construction of individuality, on the other hand, are directly linked to the problem of identity and the dynamic relationship between the individuals and their collectivity. Almost the absolute majority of Greeks believe that the name 'Macedonia' belongs only to them, and that Macedonia is an essential constituent element of their identity. Similar beliefs are accordingly shared by the citizens of FYROM, who claim for themselves the national identity of the Macedonians. But identity can be "a complicated matter", as Amartya Sen (2006, p. xi) rightly puts it.

During the recent years, we have witnessed strong identity explosions and identity fundamentalisms (Kaufmann 2015), like religious fundamentalism, racism, or aggressive nationalism[12]. These arguably have to do with the new position that the individuals occupy in the network society, as well as with the subsequent psychological processes (Tsekeris 2015). In the reflexive self-transformation of the complex social structure, identity becomes more self-referential (or more narcissistic) and associated with the

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conversation based on shared facts. The rise of social media, however, allowed people to hear only the news, facts, opinions, and stereotypes they want to hear, thus expanding the reach of radical or fringe ideas and conspiracy theories. Such development seriously destabilises the foundations of liberal democracy and the political public sphere (cf. Demertzis & Tsekeris 2018).

[12] Various "anti-establishment" and "anti-conformist" versions of aggressive nationalism are nowadays gaining ground in Europe, often termed as ethnic nationalism or ethnonationalism, which directly oppose to cosmopolitanism and the EU's integration project (see Castells et al. 2017).

cultivation of new, atomised modes of the "self"[13]. Nevertheless, identity is an uncertain and contested notion, which is anchored in the present; it does not concern our history, memory or roots, but mainly our subjectivity, which in turn produces life meaning and purpose with an incessant reformulation of subjective elements (Kaufmann 2015). The choices and preferences of the individual consist in the belief of anything that substantiates their existence (ibid).

In the reality of global digital networks and the supranational institutions, the objective foundations of the national identification process become very abstract and volatile (Kaufmann 2015). The national reference in the processes of the subjective identification is very rare. Despite the invocation of the national identity by the right extremists and the cultivation of an aggressive nationalism, the national identity has become so abstract and volatile that the nationalist extremists do not attempt to define it (ibid). From the other side, in the collective, political level, identities signify a commitment to the particularities of interests and beliefs at the public sphere level, over against the universal, the general will, and so on (Gauchet 2010).

Within the cultural setting of globalisation, Greek identity-formation shares almost the same characteristics with any other contemporary social context. That means, as described above, it is abstract, volatile, and anchored in the present. It does not concern our history, memory or roots, but mainly our subjectivity, which develops future scenarios and produces the meaning and goals of our life, with an incessant reformulation of subjective elements. But, how does such identity fit with the highly emotional invocation of 'Alexander the Great' and 'Ancient Macedonia' by the 71% of the Greek people in the polls and the twitter streams?

The advent of the (Greek) "private individual" (Gauchet 2016) does not mean that the individual is not social. The socialised individuals, as Castoriadis (1997, p. 266) puts it, "are walking and speaking fragments of a given society, in the sense that they embody actually or potentially the essential core of the institutions and social imaginary significations instituted every time by their society". Castoriadis refers to the importance of social life for an already instituted society and points out the fundamental implicit

[13] See, e.g., the relevant analysis of Ioanna Tsivacou (2017).

“power” that precedes any exercise of political authority (Descombes 2016, p. 194). He names it “instituting power”, which has historical character and pertains to the *instituting social imaginary*, a whole (or network) of language patterns, representations, narratives, ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values, customs, habits, rules and norms, whose production and evolution involves social members’ participation and action (Castoriadis 1991, p. 168).

The instituting power is neither locatable nor formalisable; it plays an essential role in social life, a role that is much more important than the superficial political phenomena. It is also the groundwork for the instituting social imaginary and for the creation of freedom and truth as social imaginary significations (Castoriadis, 1991). Individuals cannot aim at autonomy and are not able to reflect on the reasons for their thoughts and the motives of their acts, if they have not made a psychic investment in freedom and the search of truth (ibid). But in order to be invested by individuals, freedom and truth need to already exist as social imaginary significations within society, as well as to be exposed to interrogation without bounds. The instituted society can be autonomous and democratic only if it allows itself to be interrogated by the collectivity, which enables it to exist and by its individual members in the process of its self-transformation (Castoriadis 1991). The idea of autonomy as such involves the idea of democracy defined as the effective possibility of equal participation of all in instituting activities and explicit public power (ibid).

Since the appearance of the Macedonia naming dispute in Greek politics, most political parties and the vast majority of Greeks have been against the right of an internationally recognised country, FYROM, to choose its name. However, the right of self-determination is institutionalised in the Greek law (Karpozilos and Christopoulos 2018). It is thus evident that a fundamental freedom, as a *social imaginary signification*, does not belong to the Greek subterranean instituting social imaginary. Although such freedom is formally constituted in law, in this case, it has not been accepted or become an object of reflectiveness, neither in the explicit instituting activity, nor in the exercise of explicit political power and politics as the project of democracy requires (Castoriadis 1991).

In this conceptual framework, we proceed to interpret, highlight and discuss core representations, attitudes, beliefs, ideas and affects coming to the fore during the Twitter discussions over the Macedonia name dispute, focusing on specific posts that mention any of the two major hashtags, #MacedoniaIsGreek (368 tweets examined) and #Syllalitirio (446 tweets examined)[14], produced during the mass mobilisation, also known as the 'Macedonia rally' on Sunday, February 4, 2018. Such analytic task will arguably help us understand that the rigid refusal of the majority of the Greek people to accept a 'composite name' solution is connected with the tacit social imaginary of the Greek society and, subsequently, with a complex identity problem – i.e., a collective identity largely shaped by the lack of embodied modern values in this imaginary[15].

From the hashtag #MacedoniaIsGreek (all tweets in English), 214 tweets referred to Alexander the Great, with aestheticised images representing the Vergina star, or the head of Alexander the Great, and the remaining 154 tweets were emotionally loaded and motivational comments concerning the organisation of the rally, the Greek Orthodox Church, "drugs in Skopje", Tito, and so on, but without any knowledge evidence about the historical background of the Macedonian issue: *"Welcome to civilization! True Greek Macedonia! Land of Alexander the Great! Thousands of years of Greek history!"*, *"Macedonia and Alexander the Great will be always Greek"*, *"Welcome to civilization! True Greek Macedonia! Land of Alexander the Great!"*, *"Welcome to Civilization! True Greek Macedonia! Who made Slavs Christians! Greek Apostles!"*, *"Thessaloniki Greek capital of Macedonia"*, *"Thousands of Years of Greek Civilization and history!"*, *"Macedonia was, is and will always remain Greek whether some people like it or not. Justice will prevail"*. This was the tenor of all the tweets referring to the (idealised) ancient past[16].

Regarding the hashtag #Syllalitirio, all tweets were in Greek, and the only one in English referred to Alexander the Great: *"It's obvious that Macedonians were Greek and that Alexander the Great considered himself to be a descendant of Achilles and Hercules"*. All

[14]The collection and identification of the relevant hashtags has been helped by using www.hashtagify.me.
[15] Unlike other European nations, Greece has a collective identity firmly grounded on factors like family, education, language, and religion (Prevelakis 2017).
[16] The ancient past constitutes an active element of the contemporary Greek identity and shapes the self-image of Greece as a "small big" cultural power (Moschonas 2016).

the other tweets (445) criticised members of the Greek government and politicians who asserted a compromise with FYROM in the name issue. From a close and careful analysis of the Twitter posts, we can see how the discussants perceive and understand the past and tradition of their society from the viewpoint of the present, as well as how this past becomes active part of the institution of the society (Castoriadis 1997).

This implies that the distant past of Greek antiquity concerning Alexander the Great and the ancient kingdom of Macedonia is transformed by the discussants into a 'present past', in the sense that this past is relevant for the 'living present' (Stacey 2003). In other words, it is re-interpreted, re-shaped and re-thought according to the social imaginary and the social imaginary significations of the present. Most of Greek protesters in the Twitter chats reduced the complex issues of contemporary and ancient Macedonia, as well as of the eventful, turbulent history of the region, to the name of Alexander the Great and the slogan *"Macedonia is Greek"*. There is not any sign of self-critical reflection and reasonable interrogation on the foundation of their views and understandings, as the principle of democracy demands. For instance, nobody has posed crucial questions such as: Why do the people of FYROM call themselves Macedonians? Why one hundred forty countries have officially recognised FYROM as 'Macedonia' and world politicians name this country 'Macedonia', as well? Is there any truth-value in what the people of FYROM or the Greek people think about the name issue?

As Castoriadis (1991, p. 17) puts it, "freedom and truth cannot be embodied by the individuals of a society if they have not already emerged as social imaginary significations in this society". In addition, they cannot be invested by the individuals if democratic politics do not pave the way to enable the manifestation of the instituting subterranean imaginary, combined with the greatest possible reflectiveness in the public instituting activity and in the exercise of politics. The lack of self-interrogation in Twitter interactions, as well as in the whole online/offline public sphere, is arguably associated with the lack of effective collective reflectiveness. It is ultimately a matter of individual and social autonomy, that is, a matter of democracy in Greece (Zeri 2017).

In the context of the Greek case, we could say, accordingly, to be free means that one can determine oneself and built a future only through acts of choice, without deterministically obtaining self-definition from what happened thousands of years ago.

But this construction of a free, yet relational, self "requires from every individual a psychological work of an incredible complexity and intensity" (Kaufmann 2015, p. 8). Thanos Lipowatz (2014, p. 113) suggests that exactly this hard work is missing in the Greek identity-building: "the main problem of the Greek identity is the neurotic dichotomy and the negation of a hard work for its self-transcendence … This dichotomy is linked to a fundamental phenomenon of the psychic structure: the disregard of reality"[17]. Interestingly, there is a psychic mechanism that functions through displacing the unresolved social problems to political or national issues. The unconscious insecurities of the Greek people, concerning their social life, are thus ascribed in an imaginary way to foreigners (Lipowatz 2014). This seems to be the case with the Macedonia name dispute, as well as with the Greek people's perception of the people of FYROM.

In this analytical setting, Lipowatz (2014, p. 110) rightly points out the "myth of Greekness", mainly based on the ideological domination of the cult of antiquity. The lack of integration of the modern value system in the Greek social imaginary (individual responsibility, respect to Reason and difference, the rule of law, human rights, civic liberties, etc), obviously results in the system's incapacity for self-reflexivity and the prevalence of defensive and phobic attitudes towards the Others, the present and the future, as well as of ethnocentric and xenophobic myths. The imaginary structure of the Greek society thus casts its heavy shadow to the reformist culture's anticipation of the modern European humanistic values and Enlightenment thought.

From the thorough examination of the tweets, it follows that the participants in the Twitter streams make an incredibly simplistic and oversimplified reading of the Macedonia name dispute. In specific, they seem to be overwhelmingly captured by the alluring power of the symbols and images of the Vergina star, Alexander the Great, the Macedonian antiquities, and the like. This is rather about an inexorable increase of an

[17] This "neurotic dichotomy" refers to a sort of *cultural dualism* that permeates the entire social fabric in Greece (Diamandouros 1983, 1994; Mouzelis 1986). The notion of cultural dualism is used to describe the distinction between an introverted, traditional "underdog culture" and an extrovert, modern "reformist culture" that embraces European values, the Enlightenment and the Western mentality in general. Critically reflecting on this sharp distinction, however, Nicolas Demertzis (1997) advances a picture of a multifaceted cultural reality of the country by introducing the concept of "inverted syncretism" (designated to thematise the *articulation* of tradition and modernity in Greece). Concerning the aforementioned "disregard of reality", see also the superb analysis of Stelios Ramfos (2011).

identarian closure pertaining to some massively shared ancient myths (Lipowatz 2014). It has nothing to do with our actual historical experiences, our memory, or our origins. In Kaufmann's words, identity "is with the side of the subjectivity and the production of meaning in a given moment, not on the side of roots" (Kaufmann 2015, p. 22).

TwitterTrails research (see below, section 5) has created an extended dataset demonstrating the most retweeted images displayed in the context of our investigation[18]. A picture is always one of the most powerful and influential ways to promote and disseminate a message because it has strong emotional impact on people. Figure 1, for example, shows a tweet mentioning the hashtag #Συλλαλητηριο (#Syllalitirio) and depicting Alexander the Great, a Greek flag and a motivational slogan stating that *"If you don't fight for what you want, don't cry for what you lose"*, ending up with the prompt *"Greeks rise up!"*. In a similar spirit, in the tweets shown in Figures 2 and 3, the images contain the same message: although Alexander the Great is dead 2339 years now, he is able to motivate mass of people to protest in the streets. These most liked tweets, which reproduce Facebook messages (thus demonstrating the high connectivity between social media platforms), present Alexander the Great as national leader and mention the hashtags #Συλλαλητηριο, #Μακεδονία, #MacedoniaIsGreek; in addition, they are re-posted in similar tweets, with mentions to hashtags like #identitythiefs, #realhistory, #greeks, #thetruth, #culturalkleptomaniacs, #Alexanderthegreat, #MacedoniansAreGreeks, which variously combine Alexander the Great with a glorious, crystallised and idealised/essentialised past.

Interestingly, the image in Figure 2 refers to "traitors" (unveiled by Alexander the Great), thus reinforcing the ideology of the *friend-enemy scheme* (positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation),[19] which often motivates populist (or exterminatory) politics and is linked to conspiracy theories (Fuchs 2017; Oliver and Wood 2014; Sullivan,

[18] In TwitterTrails, hovering the cursor on the top of each image shows the tweet that used that picture. Usually, there are many pictures used in any story.

[19] Under conditions of economic crisis, inequality, material deprivation, existential precariousness, or extreme scarcity, we often witness authoritarian reactions, xenophobic phenomena and the rejection of outsiders, a divide between Us and Them (Inglehart 2018). Interestingly, discourses of victimisation, associated with an "external enemy", are very popular in contemporary Greece, albeit not homogeneous, unambiguous and solidified; they interact with self-blaming patterns, thus leading to hybrid reactionist perceptions of the national self-image, which are adjusted to particular political actors' strategies (Lialiouti & Bithymitris 2017).

Landau and Rothschild 2010). Many other tweets mentioning the hashtags above make use of animated images or animated gifs, or links to relevant YouTube videos, which fictionalise and romanticise the personality of Alexander the Great. In terms of research deontology, our work strategically attempted to avoid *both* the extreme of simply ignoring internet ethical questions *and* the extreme of "internet research ethics that wants to prescribe obtaining informed consent for every piece of data one collects online, which can censor critical studies", following the relational or critical realist approach of engaging with research ethical principles and applying them to a feasible extent (Fuchs 2017, p. 231-232). No username has been mentioned in this paper.

Figure 1. An emotional tweet urging for action.

#Συλλαλητηριο Τα λόγια είναι περιττά…

8:14 a.m. - 3 Feb 2018
29 Retweet
57 "Like"
0 replies 29 retweets 57 "Like"

Figure 2. An emotional tweet “recruiting” Alexander the Great against “traitors”.

#Μακεδονία #MacedoniaIsGreek #Συλλαλητηριο Σύνταγμα

5:06 a.m. - 4 Feb 2018
11 Retweet
26 "Like"
0 replies 11 retweets 26 "Like"

Figure 3. A tweet stating in its headline that "Because the issue is not political… it's national".

Γιατί το ζήτημα δεν είναι πολιτικό....είναι εθνικό **#Συλλαλητηριο**

1:30 a.m. - 4 Feb 2018

6 Retweet

16 "Like"

0 replies 6 retweets 16 "Like"

4. Effects on the Internet and the Macedonia Naming Dispute

From its beginning, the emergence of the Macedonia naming dispute has generated enormous outrage in the Greek society against FYROM, which has allegedly given to itself the name 'Macedonia' and appropriated the ancient Greek history and symbols (Armakolas and Siakas 2018). The institution of the society, i.e., the social imaginary significations, according to Castoriadis (1990, p. 57), is at the same time a dense web of representations, affects and intentions. Every society has not only an image of the world, or an idea of the world and its values, but also a fundamentally affective relationship with its own ways of living in the world, with the world itself, and with life itself (Castoriadis 1991, p. 154). It is a specific mood, a nebula of effects that soak up the totality of social life (Castoriadis 1997, p. 272).

It is just this 'nebula of affects' that stirs up negative emotions in the Greek society every time the Macedonia naming dispute comes to the international negotiation table (Armakolas and Siakas 2018). In addition, this inherent (within the Greek society) character of affects and emotions becomes amplified by the dominant in the digital age media techniques of virtual reality, online advertising, and data- and affect-mining[20], as well as by global connections that contribute to the rapid emergence of the era of "new orality" (Bolz 2017, p. 17). The new media, described as *social media*, have opened up an enormous impact field to hate, lies and intolerance, and triggered disinhibition effects: "The social media are perfect emotions networks, they are made to trigger and disseminate emotions" (Lobo 2017).

The social media have also helped the worldwide visibility of the Macedonia naming dispute and the polarisation of the opponents of the 'Macedonia' term in the official name of FYROM. Negative emotions were explicitly directed both inwards (towards the Greek government) and outwards (towards Skopje, Greece's Western allies and their alleged conspiracies against the Greek nation)[21]. Given that the world today is extremely

[20] Big data information increasingly becomes personalised and heavily influences our attention, emotions and behaviours, mostly in subconscious ways, especially in combination with neuro-marketing (Zurawicki 2010; Sampson 2012), social bots and other autonomous agents (Shorey & Howard 2016).

[21] More specifically, Twitter discussions de facto took place on a global level and, in some sense, had the character of a reminder to the Greek and international public opinion that only the contemporary Greeks are the direct descendants of Alexander the Great and the legitimate owners of the name "Macedonia". Addressees of these messages were mainly the countries that have officially recognised FYROM with its constitutional name "Republic of Macedonia", the European leaders, who allegedly exercise pressure for

complex, speedy, unpredictable and, mainly, inaccessible, it is impossible for anyone who is feeling outrage, hate, fear or indignation to be enlightened through relevant information, because the excitement stirs up cognitive biases and sociocultural prejudices, misconceptions and stereotypes that cannot be overcome (Bolz 2017). It is therefore consistent that the participation of the Greek society in the digital age, despite its potential benefits, reinforces profoundly conservative and reactionist—rather than radical—political orientations and behaviours (Capelos, Katsanidou and Demertzis 2017), as well as the underdog culture and the aforementioned deficiencies of the Greek identity-building (Lipowatz 2014).

Furthermore, as discussed above, the new media techniques make uncertain the understanding we have about (objective) reality, because the events, information, data, and so on, are becoming "media constructions" and the result of choices which could be extremely contingent (Bolz 2017, p. 20). The space of true pluralism, that is, of an ambivalent conflict with realities commonly accepted by all sides, becomes increasingly narrower. There is no possibility to control the 'reality' (or the multiple realities) constructed by the media, because the information we get from them (and other data sources) do not possess any context (Postman 2005), meaning any social-historical context. It is only on the basis of free associations and prior knowledge that one can attempt to perceive the context and make sense of the outer world: "There can be no question of enlightenment" (Bolz 2017, p. 20). How many of the social media users know about the complex history of the distant and near past of the Macedonian region? What kind of reasonable associations can they do if they have no valid information? How can they possibly assess the social-historical contexts and the political actors when they have unsolid knowledge, combined with information overload[22]?

From the other side, in the contemporary social Web, there is an inherent process of segregation into groups of like-minded people that further fuels a dynamic mechanism according to which users deeply and closely connected to other users who think like them are less likely to come into contact with groups who think differently (Slaughter

a compromise on a "composite name" solution, as well as the Greek politicians, especially the SYRIZA government party, and the intellectuals who supported from the beginning of the dispute the acceptance of such solution (Karpozilos & Christopoulos 2018, p. 8).

[22] Both information overload and limited individual attention substantially contribute to our inability to distinguish between low- and high-quality information, or between fake and real news (Qiu et al. 2017).

2017). Interestingly, there is an increasing number of empirical studies which show the same pattern: people tend to share untrue stories encapsulating what they believe about the world around them. Most people also tend to be exposed only to information that confirm their cognitive biases, discriminatory tendencies, negative attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices (Tucker et al. 2018; Papacharissi 2009)[23]. Paraphrasing Marcel Gauchet (2018), one could speak of 'Macedonosphere', just like 'feminosphere' or 'fascosphere'. Not only in the internet sphere, but also in the mass media field, people want "to be comforted rather than challenged" (Sunstein 2017, p. 66ff). In our media-saturated societies, therefore, the chances of unplanned, unanticipated encounters, as well as of sharing common experiences (and shared public spaces, online or offline) have been dramatically decreased (Sunstein 2017, p. 13, Del Vicario, Vivaldo, et al. 2016).

In addition, the chances for diversity and genuine pluralism, as an interplay of realities shared by all social groups and communities, become enormously restricted. These cyberphenomena are being reinforced by the weakening of the general-interest intermediaries (newspapers, magazines, broadcasters), which have exercised an intellectual filtering with ethical rules and professionalism in the information processing. What now dominates in the social media landscape is a snotty discourse. But the problem is not so much the segregation of the people in like-minded groups and online echo chambers, but the amazing spread of their negative attitudes, emotions, beliefs or actions in an anonymous way through "informational or reputational cascades" (Sunstein 2017, p. 99) worldwide by the simple press of a button – a network effect that leads to polarisation and bigotry.

The Greek Macedonian organisations of diaspora participated vividly in the Twitter streams in the form of slogans which were salient, e.g., *"True Greek Macedonia! The Land of Alexander the Great"*. It is observed that the limitation of the Greek Twitter groups to a pool of same views and narratives, the lack of opposite, alternative, or different opinions, and the worldwide building of closed, like-minded Greek groups,

[23] Exposure to content is then "the primary driver of content diffusion and generates the formation of homogeneous clusters, i.e., 'echo chambers'. Indeed, homogeneity appears to be the primary driver for the diffusion of contents and each echo chamber has its own cascade dynamics" (Del Vicario, Bessi, et al. 2016, p. 554; Sunstein 2017). This involves what Manuel Castells (2011, p. 9) calls "constellation of tribes", which directly resonates Frank Webster's (2011) and Cass Sunstein's (2006) idea of "information cocoon". See also Demertzis & Tsekeris 2018.

through the so-called *cybercascades*, inevitably serve as a breeding ground for hate attacks and polarisation[24]. The highlight of the prevailing hate feelings was an extra-judicial document sent by Greek Pan-Macedonian Associations (from Giannitsa in Northern Greece, from Canada, South Africa and Australia) to four MPs warning them with life imprisonment, or even with death sentence, if the term 'Macedonia' is finally included in the new name of FYROM[25]. This arguably reveals the "authoritarian populism" (Fuchs 2017)[26], the uncontrolled affect, and the extreme irrationalism of a part of Greek people, as well as the impossibility to come up against their as public debate shows with evidence, hard facts, empirical data, scientific findings, logical proofs, or counter arguments[27].

The Israeli sociologist of emotions Eva Illouz (2015) comprehensively elaborates on the structural existence of emotions in the political process, as well as on the affective registers which are settled in a society and produced by myriad media messages, images, stories, narratives, international relations and state policy measures[28]. In this sense, the

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[24] The like-minded believers tend to create the virtual equivalent of gated communities. Of course, this renders the social media irrelevant from the idea of the ancient Greek *agora*, as well as from the ancient democratic practice of *ekklesia*. What we actually witness here is culturally impermeable and fragmented communities of users rather than a reflective, inclusive community of citizens. It therefore seems that the wisdom of crowds does not work in the increasingly mediatised public sphere – albeit its "radical ambivalence" (Demertzis & Tsekeris 2018). In contrast, democracy becomes deconsolidated (Foa & Mounk 2016) and the communication of nationalism is nowadays taking on new forms (Fuchs 2018), while the historical objective reality is ignored and absorbed in the digital realm. The latter is profoundly nurturing the culture of the private individual (Gauchet 2002).

[25] http://www.keeptalkinggreece.com/2018/03/20/macedonian-organizations-death-threats-mps/

[26] In the 2017 Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index, "authoritarian populism" is growing faster than any other ideology and has already surpassed liberalism in European politics (see https://timbro.se/allmant/timbro-authoritarian-populism-index2017/). According to Harvard lecturer Yascha Mounk (2018), authoritarian populists have increasingly seied power (from India to Turkey and from Poland to the United States) and seem to dominate ideological discourses on the Facebook feeds and the Twitter timelines. The rise of the authoritarian populists has already changed the social, economic and foreign policies pursued by many countries, thus creating new tensions between nation-states within Europe (Eiermann, Mounk & Gultchin 2017). In the same line, Cas Mudde (2016) observes populism's success to be a negative democratic response to decades of illiberal democratic policies, facilitated by the increased mass access and participation to debates and information available on the internet. This access makes criticism of traditional elites and parties easier than ever. In particular, a large percentage of internet users in Greece seem to be susceptible to populist conspiracy theories and "fake news" or disinformation (see Newman et al. 2017), which is resulted from "cascades" of faulty/weaponised information within entrenched groups and reinforced by the absence of political education and the lack of digital and specifically web literacy skills. According to Cass Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule (2008), such condition may ultimately lead to violence.

[27] Very often, pre-existing beliefs are so powerful that paradoxically outweigh corrective information and fortify misconceptions, i.e., the "worldview backfire effect" (Nyhan & Reifler 2010).

[28] According to Illouz (2015), over against the traditional assumption that the public sphere is a site of rational deliberation, "modern politics is particularly proned to the display, the diffusion and the manipulation of emotions". Through social media and their cascading effects, individual anger becomes a

dominant affective registers and emotional moods or climates, which are structural to the Greek political psyche, are arguably connected with the glorious Greek antiquity whose assertion by foreigners trigger strong emotional meanings and deep, diffuse and enduring emotional effects on the citizens. This structural character of the collective anger of the Greek people against FYROM is vividly expressed in the Greek public sphere, the media, and the mass mobilisations, but also in the performative way of producing emotions through rituals that point to the ancient Greek Kingdom of Macedonia and Alexander the Great. In this case, emotions as politics fanaticise and even block almost any possibility of deliberation, public discussion and fruitful reflection.

5. Twitter Network Analysis

A Macedonia-related mass rally took place in downtown Athens on Sunday, February 4, 2018. This event has been communicated in an extensive and varied manner by Twitter users. Henceforth, our Twitter network analysis relies on the collection of data about the internet activity of Twitter users and concentrates on such selected hashtags as #MacedoniaIsGreek and #Syllalitirio (see Section 3) using TwitterTrails (http://twittertrails.com/)[29], during the mass mobilisation in Syntagma Square in Athens on February 4, 2018. In this way, the qualitative analysis of Twitter users is supplemented here with the quantitative dynamic analysis of the activity, interactions and clustering among them. Specifically, this type of analysis allows us to examine the dynamics pertaining to the activity of Twitter users in this topic, the group formation in the network of shared information, and main statistics of those Twitter users.

In turn, this quantitative network analysis can provide further insight into the hermeneutic interpretation of the social phenomenon under investigation, as it helps to identify the key motivating agents, the type of underlying dynamics and the multidimensional (group-wise) character of the collective behaviour of internet users in communicating and publicly debating the Macedonian issue. Moreover, TwitterTrails

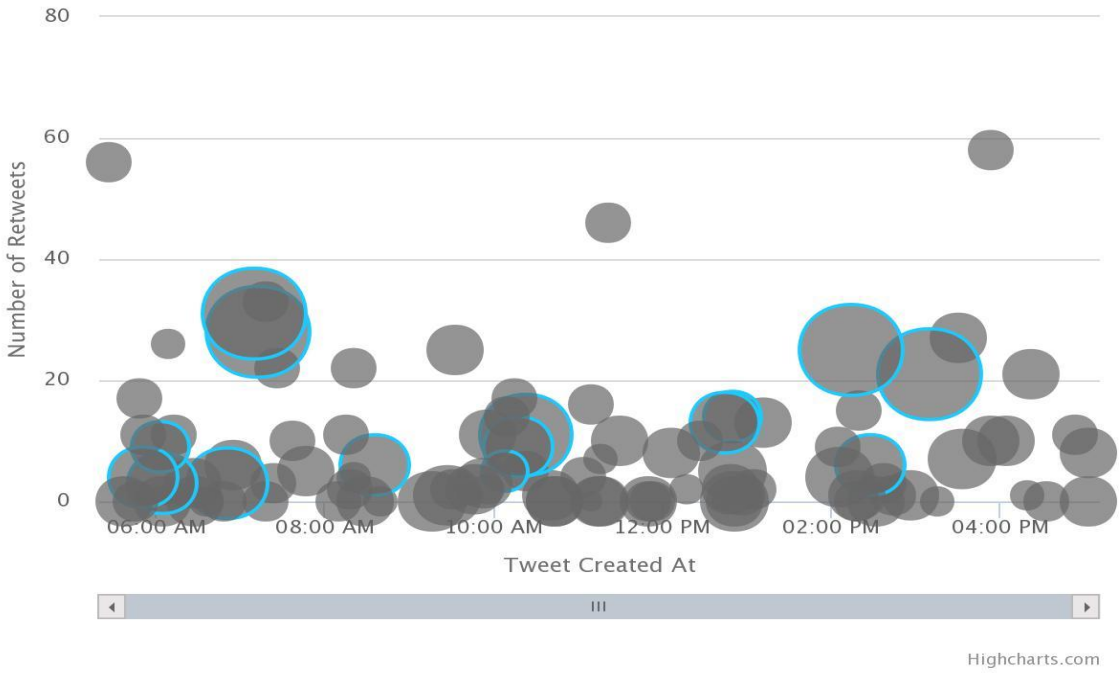
collective or political anger – that is, a structural phenomenon. In addition, fear, known as the emotion of pure survival, is increasingly becoming a dominant feeling in contemporary democratic societies (albeit not compatible with them) – a feeling which "justifies the aggressiveness and violence that are at the heart of a certain view of international relations" (Illouz 2015).

[29] TwitterTrails is a novel Web-based interactive tool that gathers data about news stories, rumors, events, and memes on Twitter, in order to present them in useful and meaningful visualisations that can substantially help media users answer questions about how the story spreads (http://twittertrails.wellesley.edu/~trails /index.html). Professor Panagiotis Takis Metaxas's contribution of data and understanding has been more than valuable.

can offer qualitative information about some more esoteric features of the information propagated through the internet, such as those of accuracy, reliability and rumor propagation (Metaxas et al. 2015).

Figure 4 illustrates the propagation graph, which highlights the tweets which were influential in "breaking" the story on Twitter, and the independent content creators. Each circle on the Propagation graph represents a tweet. Tweets are plotted on x-axis of the graph based on the time they were posted, and on the y-axis by the number of retweets they have received (at the time of data collection during the mass mobilisation in Athens on February 4, 2018). Circles are sized based on the number of followers the user who posted the tweet has. Circles are drawn by default as gray. Circles with other colours represent tweets with nearly identical texts. Additionally, circles with a bright blue border indicate tweets written by verified accounts. This graph verifies the existence of various independent content creators with a considerable number of Retweets aiming at mass mobilisation throughout the day of the rally.

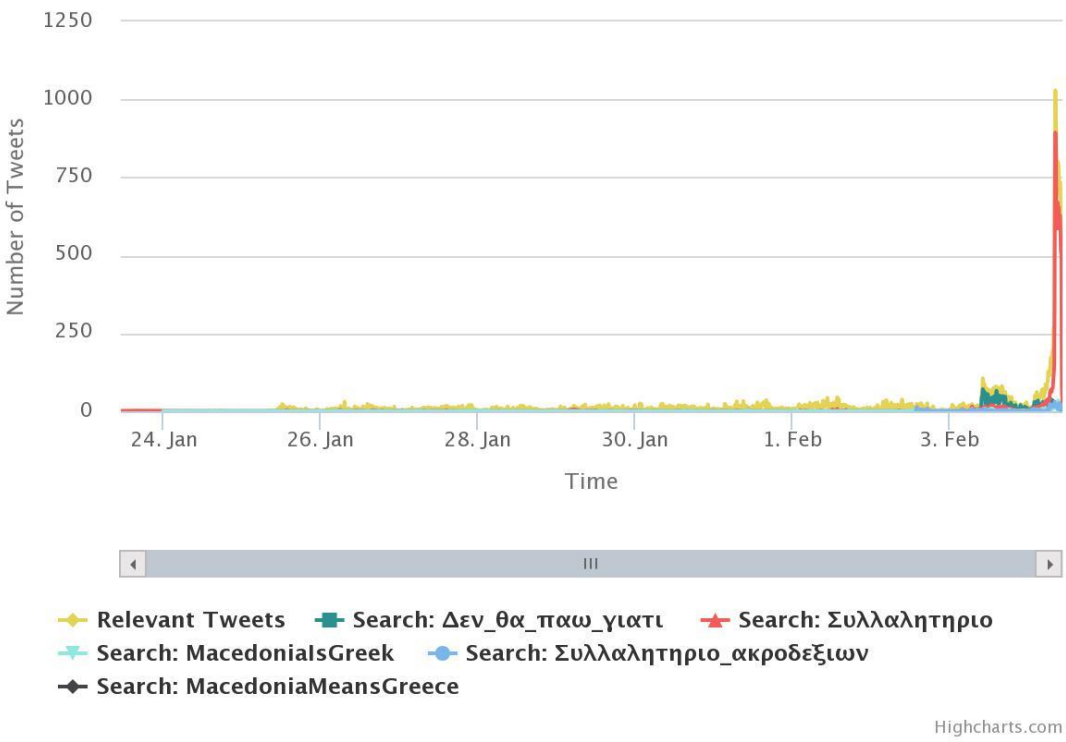
Figure 4. Tweet Propagation graph



Source: http://twittertrails.wellesley.edu/~trails/stories/investigate.php?id=2401494675#propagation-0

In Figure 5, the time series show the activity over time of relevant data collected. Time is on the x-axis and the number of tweets generated is on the y-axis. Each point represents a ten-minute time span. The tweets are sorted by the number of retweets they have received, highest on top. During the week before the Macedonia-related mass rally in Athens, they demonstrate gradually a substantial increase and rapidly reach a peak on February 4, the day of the rally. This graph stresses the intense role of internet activity in Twitter in shaping the mass mobilisation and its increased dynamics during such a large-scale, bottom-up public event.

Figure 5. Time series of relevant tweets

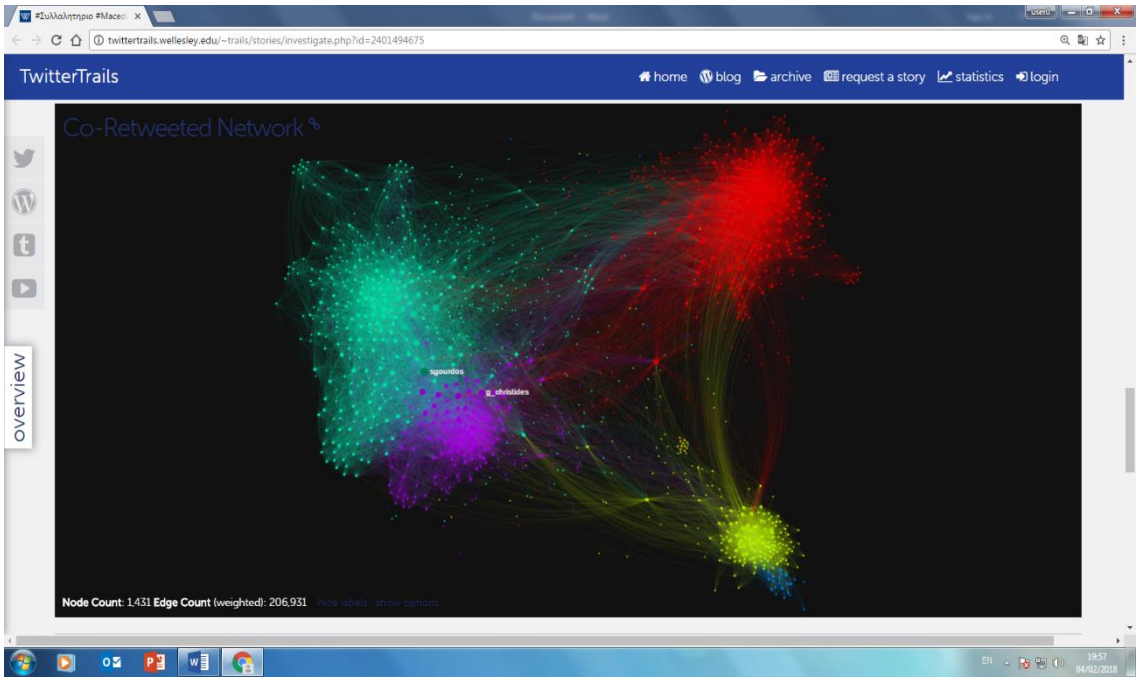


Source: http://twittertrails.wellesley.edu/~trails/stories/investigate.php?id=2401494675#timeline-1

Next, the activity of Twitter users on this topic is investigated through the implementation of social network analysis and visualisation techniques. This approach is considered as particularly useful for identifying emergent hierarchical patterns, groups and communities in both real-life and virtual, online social networks (Katerelos et al. 2013; Koulouris et al. 2013). The co-retweeted network in Figure 6 shows the

existence of clusters and communities that participate in this investigation, and highlights influential accounts in the retweet network. It is generated by connecting and clustering accounts based on mutual retweeting by other users. That is, if User A and User B in the co-retweeted network are connected by an edge, it means at least one other user (part of the 'audience') has retweeted both User A and User B. The more members of the audience are retweeting both User A and User B, the stronger the edge among them, and the closer they appear in the cluster.

Figure 6. Co-Retweeted Network and Groups



Source:

http://twittertrails.wellesley.edu/~trails/stories/investigate.php?id=2401494675#co-retweeted-network-2

Clusters look like clouds and are forming automatically, based on the force-directed algorithm (see Holten and Van Wijk 2009). They essentially indicate the strongest agreement regarding the topic being investigated. Communities are often parts of the cluster clouds and are coloured automatically, based on the Louvain algorithm (Blondel et al. 2008). They indicate similarity between users in the community: they have stronger connections within their community than outside of it.

In total, there are 25 detected communities of similar users in the Co-Retweeted Network. This considerable number of communities emerged in Twitter depicts the conditions of opinion fragmentation of the public which breed ground for hate attacks and polarisation. It is noted that a few of these groups refer to Twitter users who have a negative attitude towards the demonstrators or posting pictures from the centre of Athens where the crowd was thin and challenging the organisers' claim to participation of hundreds of thousands. The largest community has 506 users in it, and the smallest has 2. Nodes in the co-retweeted graph are colored based on their community. The graph suggests that there are only a few sources associated with the formation of large communities to which the spread and clustering of information about the Macedonian rally can be attributed.

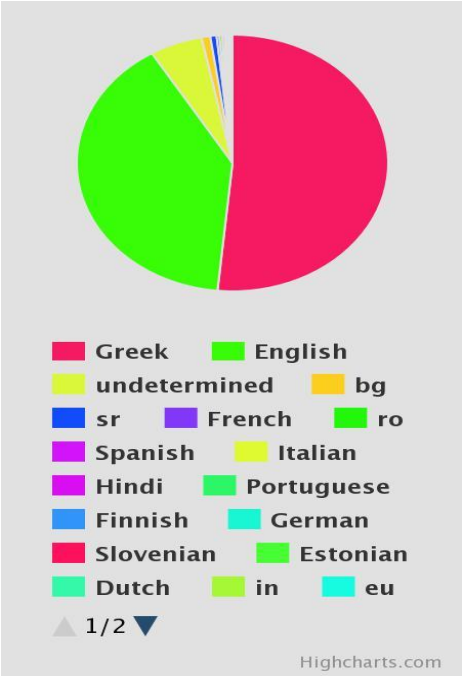
Figure 7 shows the total group statistics, including information about the number of users, tweets written, original tweets and retweets, the times co-retweeted and the times co-retweeting users retweeted users in the group. The large number of times co-retweeted demonstrates the significant spread of information about the specific topic. Figure 8 indicates how the graph is partitioned by user language. More than half of the users tweeted in Greek, suggesting the strong locality but also the international interest concerning the specific issue.

Figure 7. Total Group statistics

Users	1,431
Tweets written	9,425
Spread	0
Original tweets	5,773
Retweets	3,652
Times Co-Retweeted	206,931
Times Co-retweeting users retweeted users in group	1,856

Source: Authors' work.

Figure 8. Partition graph by user language



Source: Authors' work.

6. Concluding Remarks

This paper sociologically and interdisciplinarily focused on the Macedonia naming dispute, an ideologically loaded, internationalised topical issue, which remains unresolved for decades now and reappeared in February 2018, dynamically triggering a sudden and emotionally charged uprising of the Greek society in its vast majority against FYROM's use of 'Macedonia'. On the basis of Cornelius Castoriadis's (1991, 1997) core theoretical conceptions of "autonomy" and "social imaginary", we casted some light on the complex and multifaceted ground of Greek society's refusal to accept the right of another country to self-determine its name in the context of its nation-building. Given that we live in the era of digital information and Web 2.0, where the standards of communication and the public sphere are largely set by the structure of the social media platforms (Lobo 2018; Tsekeris and Katerelos 2012), the analytic emphasis was put on elements of the Greek social imaginary, as they emerged in Twitter social streams happening in real-time, during the mass 'Macedonia rally' on Sunday, February 4, 2018.

It was argued that the absence of embodied modern values from this imaginary significantly influences the relevant discursive and identity processes.

We consistently followed a sociohistorical approach and took into account the fundamental transformations in the cognitive infrastructure of the (Greek) digital society, namely, the decay of the world of experiences, as well as in the construction of individuality, subjectivity and identity – that is, the weakening of self-reflection and of the perception of the collective being, the abstract and volatile identity-formation without reflection on the historical as the deliberate self-production over time (Gauchet 2007). The majority of citizens in Greece (and FYROM as well) believe in an unreflected and emotional way that the name 'Macedonia' belongs only to them. The tenor of the most tweets here was that Macedonia and Alexander the Great will be always Greek. Most Greek users seem to perceive themselves deterministically on the basis of a vague self-definition pertaining to what has happened thousand years ago and not to what they are today – a fact that points to the ignorance of the turbulent history of the region and the lack of a self-critical interrogation on the foundations of their thoughts.

Our analysis comprised an elaboration on the fundamentally affective relationship of the Greek society (as happens with any society) with its own way of living in the world. Actually, there are dominant affective registers' (Illouz 2015) settled in the Greek society and linked to the glorious Greek antiquity, the ancient Greek Kingdom of Macedonia, and Alexander the Great, whose assertion by FYROM has triggered collective anger, outrage and hate. Of course, this heavily blocks almost any possibility of genuine deliberation, unbiased public discussion, and consensus.

Furthermore, the strong negative feelings against FYROM were largely amplified by the dominant mechanisms of the digital infrastructure of the social media platforms, which are networked affect-machines driven by emotions (Lobo 2018), with noticeable effects on the offline social world and Greek politics. The worldwide building of Greek like-minded groups (cultivating anger and hate against FYROM through the so-called cybercascades in the Twitter streams) arguably reinforced the issues that pertain to the self-perception of the Greek people – i.e., the Greek identity problem. The network analysis that focused on selected hashtags, concerning the 'Macedonia rally', showed the micro-macro linkages and vividly illustrated and ascertained the online social

dynamics of a fragmented and polarised Greek cyber-public which was involved in an affect-driven discourse.

The sociohistorical approach also demonstrated that the hidden causal and reactionist power of the Greek social imaginary, as reinforced by the social media architecture, is much more influential than, for instance, the underdevelopment of civil society and the dysfunctional political system's operation as a "partocratic democracy" (Mouzelis 2018, 2009; Lyrintzis 2011). To put it differently and more generally, the present research perspective champions a "social imaginary" approach over the "partocratic democracy" approach in explaining the Greek identity processes and the chronic vicissitudes of the Greek society. Obviously, the Macedonia naming dispute triggered reactionist political engagement (Capelos, Katsanidou and Demertzis 2017), which spans across the left/right ideology spectrum and pertains to a clear, militant desire to preserve tradition (or the *status quo*) and return to the idealised past (to the way things were, a previously existing model of social, cultural and political order). To borrow Michel Crozier's (1970) terminology, contemporary Greek society seems to be a dynamically *blocked society* where conservative and reactionist attitudes and behaviours of any kind impede qualitative social and cultural change[30]. Such attitudes and behaviours are arguably associated with the tendency of many people to misunderstand democracy and adopt 'authoritarian notions of democracy' (Welzel and Kirsch 2017), as well as to confuse the absence of democracy with its presence (Kruse, Ravlik and Welzel 2017).

[30] In his book *Europe in the Global Age*, Anthony Giddens (2007) also coined the "blocked society" category.

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