Local mobilisations against waste disposal sites in Greece

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Very first draft-Work in progress
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Introduction

This paper deals with the grass-roots protest mobilisations concerning the siting of municipal waste landfills (or HETA, their Greek acronym) in Greece over the last 15 years, with a special focus on the Greater Athens (Attica) region where the most and the more important protests occurred over the period. Due to the pre-selection of six potential sites within Attica, we have the opportunity to study two grass-roots campaigns, occurring within the same geographical and administrative region and developing through time in tandem.

The paper consists of three (uneven) sections. Section 1 offers a national overview of municipal waste treatment practices and of the related protest events and claims for the period 1990-2003, with an eye on the Greater Athens region. In Section 2, I narrow the geographical span in order to discuss the HETA siting debate for Northern and Eastern Attica as it evolved over the last 13 years. In section 3, the largest of them all, I further limit my focus on the years 2002 and 2003 –the peak years of the protest presenting in detail the findings on the grassroots mobilisations in Attica and investigating (a) the role played by scientific arguments, vis-à-vis political ones, in framing the protest and (b) the protesting communes’ interactions, relations with state authorities, alliance building and mobilisation of resources in sustaining their protest.

This paper explores two related issues: first, why a grass-roots campaign has lasted for 15 years? And second, how did these protest-campaigns develop through time and what factors have influenced their development?

On the first question, the major reason has been the Greek State’s handling of the HETA issue for Attica. Without too much exaggeration it can be described as a blueprint for policy failure. As it will become apparent in the following sections, the major blunder has been that, from the very beginning, the search for suitable sites was politically-framed in two ways: spatially and technically. On the former ground, all the scientific teams employed were asked to evaluate the adequacy of pre-selected potential sites and not given the chance to ‘scan’ the region themselves and coming up with an ‘adequate’ site themselves. Furthermore, the only politically-allowed site for a new HETA had to be within the region: any suggestions of exporting Attica’s waste to neighbouring areas were out of the question. On the latter ground, the only disposal
technique deemed appropriate (again by the politicians) had to be landfiling: any thoughts of i.e. waste incineration were branded ‘unacceptable’. The situation complicated even further when on the one hand different scientific teams gave divergent rankings to the pre-selected sites (which were (de-) and (re-) ‘pre-selected’ at will) while, on the other hand, most of them suggested between the lines that the most appropriate solution might well be to incinerate Attica’s waste outside the region’s boarders. In the absence of a scientific consensus the government couldn’t persuade the affected communities, in Northern and Eastern Attica, to accept the proposed HETA, which rise in protest. The delays in establishing these very HETAs – and thus reducing the waste volume received up to then by Western Attica alone-triggered more protests in this area as well.

Turning on the second issue, how did these campaigns developed, we can discern two opposing trends: on the one hand, we witness the (relative) ‘radicalisation’ of protest (violent events constituting a higher percentage of all PEs over time). Yet, on the other hand, we also encounter a ‘sophistication’ of protest (cultural/symbolic/participatory events constituting a higher percentage of all PEs over time). Though further research is needed, it seems that which (combination of) path is to be followed for a given campaign is dependent on (the interplay?) of three factors. (a) The campaigners’ ultimate goals: namely, is it a ‘loose-win’ situation or some concessions/compromises are acceptable? (b) The resources available to the mobilizers: namely, can they attract the support of institutional allies, can they mobilize large number of citizens, can they afford professional/expert assistance or not? (c) The ‘start-kick’ conditions: had the campaign opened in full force (thus, ceteris paribus, –unless it succeeds in a stroke- it will scale-down) and employed the whole repertoire of protest actions available or did it have a modest start (thus, it will scale-up)?
Section 1: Municipal waste disposal in Greece

The issues of waste production and disposal in Greece are of an increasingly pressing character, as much as anywhere else in Europe. In line with the axiom stating ‘the richer you are, the more garbage you produce’, waste production in Greece demonstrated a sustained rise over the last two decades. In 1996 the total waste production for Greece stood at 33,130 Ktonnes: the development of the ‘Households, Commerce and Services’ sector is shown in Graph 1

![Graph 1: Household, Commerce and Services waste production (GREECE)](image)

Source: European Environmental Agency (EEA) & Greek Centre for the Environment and the Sustainable Development (EKPAA)

Over 85% of this (and the general) waste ended up in uncontrolled landfills, which posed a health and environmental hazard. Nobody knows exactly how many of these uncontrolled and illegal landfills are out there, although reports talk of over 6,500 in 1997 and less than 1,500 in 2002\(^1\). The most notorious case was the Kouroupitos’ one at Chanea, Crete: Greece managed to become the first EU member-country fined by the European Court of Justice for failing to comply to the Court’s previous rulings on closing down the site\(^2\).

\(^1\) The plan is to phase them out by 2006, a task
\(^2\) The Kouroupitos judicial saga begun in 1988 while the first ECJ ruling was issued in 1992. Greece was sentenced to pay 20,000 euros per day (July 2000) till the rehabilitation of the Kouroupitos’ site was deemed satisfactory
The Kouroupitos’ case speeded up the hitherto crawling governmental attempts to shut down the illegal landfills, replacing them with state-of-the-art ‘Sites for Sanitary Disposal of Waste’, or, as the Greek acronym stands, HETA. By 2001, 23 brand new HETA were operating, receiving about 55% of the total municipal waste produced in the country\(^3\).

Analysing the reporting on municipal waste by one major Greek daily newspaper, *Eleftherotypia*, reveals a long-standing yet low intensity problem (albeit the two distinctive peaks in 1996 and 2003)\(^4\).

![Graph 2: Municipal waste related articles & PEs](image)

Source: *Eleftherotypia* daily newspaper, own coding

One might assume that all this protest identified in the previous graph targeted the unlawful and hazardous operation of the illegal landfills. Yet this was not the case: as it is evident from the following Graph 3, in most protest events the major claim was against the proposed development, the modern HETAs. Furthermore, the majority of protest occurred at the Greater Athens area. This is no coincidence: with almost half of Greece’s population living in a region compromising less than 3% of the country’s area, the Greater Athens region is not only producing more than half the country’s municipal waste but also faces dire problems in finding appropriate landfill sites within its administrative limits.

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3 EKPAA, 2001
4 Further on these two peaks to follow. Note that the following graphs do NOT include data on the 2001 protest events
Graph 3: PEs occurrence by claim and year

Source: Eleftherotypia daily newspaper, own coding

Graph 4: PEs occurrence by area and year

Source: Eleftherotypia daily newspaper, own coding
The protest events of the Greater Athens region, as shown in Graph 5, tell us two different stories, occurring in parallel in Western and North-eastern Attica. For Western Attica the story is quite complicated: it has hosted the only two landfills of the region, receiving the biggest chunk of Athens’ waste, at Shisto and Liossia. In the early 1990s the Shisto landfill closed, leaving Liossia as the only one ‘legally’ operating. The then offered deal (by the State) to the Liossia’ municipality was to eventually close the existing landfill -replacing it with two new HETA- coupled with the continuation of the generous financial subsidies. Also, and most importantly, the promise to create a number of new HETA in Northern and Eastern Attica, accommodating the local needs. Thus, through time, we can see the initial Western Attica’s protest claim of ‘closing down the landfill’ to transform into protesting ‘for delays in planning and development’. On the other hand, in Northern and Eastern Attica, people protested against siting a HETA in their area, despite the existence of a number of illegal, small-scale, landfills throughout the area. As it follows from the graph, the PEs peaked in 1996 and 2003, both (pre-) election years, when the government tried to assign specific sites for the new HETAs.

**Graph 5:**

Source: Eleftherotypia daily newspaper, own coding

5 There is also a small number of cases opposing the development in Western Attica, asking both the Liossia landfill to close and not to be replaced by a HETA
The following section will present in greater detail the evolution of the debate concerning the HETA siting for North-Eastern Attica.

Section 2: The debate about HETA siting in the Greater Athens region

The first organised waste landfills for the Greater Attica region were the ones at Shisto (initiated in 1960) and Liossia (initiated in 1965), in Western Attica, one of the most underdeveloped areas of the country, both then and now: the value of land is the lowest in all Attica, while the unemployment rate is one of the highest. It is an area inhabited mainly by workers and ‘marginal socio-economic categories’ (i.e. land labourers, itinerant salesmen etc.)\(^6\). Thus, the area could not but ‘welcome’ the desperately needed economic subsidies related to the existence and operation of the landfills\(^7\).

In 1970 ESDKNA (roughly translated as ‘Attica’s Municipalities and Communes Chamber’\(^8\)), was instituted, with the main aim of managing Attica’s municipal waste, and in the early eighties, it tried to find new landfills’ sites, while suggesting –for the first time- alternative waste disposal methods, such as composting and incinerating (with energy recovery).

In 1991 the Shisto landfill finally closed, six years after reaching its containing capacity, leaving Liossia as the only landfill receiving almost all of Attica’s municipal waste. That same year, ESDKNA assigned a private firm to assess the appropriateness of two pre-selected sites in Northern Attica, at Avlonas and Grammatiko, to host the new HETA. The next year (1992), the -then -Junior Minister for the Environment, suggested three more sites (to be evaluated), two at Ritsona (at the neighbouring prefecture of Viotia) and one at Varnavas (N. Attica). Based on these developments, TEDKNA (the Local Union of Attica’s Municipalities and Communes) decided to create three HETA for the Greater Athens region, one nearby the existing Liossia

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\(^7\) Reaching about 4.97 million euros per annum in 1996 (current prices) – Eleftherotypia, 6 June 1996

\(^8\) The reader should note that not all of Attica’s municipalities and communes participate in ESDKNA. Most notably, Northeastern Attica’s ones do not, thus they are not depositing their waste at Liossia landfill
landfill (which was to close) while the remaining two at the most appropriate of the sites under investigation. As one might have expected, the announcement of the possible sites triggered the first grassroots mobilisations by the affected communes.

(‘X’: proposed HETA, ‘+’: Existing landfill)

Following the early elections of 1993, and the change of government, the Ritsona option was ruled out by the new Minister for the Environment, Kostas Laliotis, who claimed that ‘one prefecture should not export its waste outside its boundaries’. Furthermore, alternative waste disposal approaches, such as incineration, were ruled out as ‘posing a great risk to human health’.

In early 1996, ESDKNA appointed a team of experts from the Polytechnic University of Athens to review the studies concerning the old five sites in Northern Attica9 plus four new ones at Eastern Attica (two at Koropi, one at Keratea and one at Markopoulo). The same, old idea was still on the table: to establish three HETA accommodating Attica’s needs, one at Liossia (already decided) and one for each of Northern and Eastern Attica. A new round of grass-roots mobilisations followed the announcement of the selected areas in May 1996, while throughout spring 1996, the

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9 Although Ritsona was by now ruled out
Liossia municipal authority was, periodically, shutting-down the only operational landfill, in a dubious attempt to force the government’s hand.


As a result, in summer 1996, the Ministry assigned yet another study to a group of experts in the University of Thrace, which, in December of the same year, announced that none of the 15 sites examined met the criteria and suggested to deal with the problem in co-operation with neighbouring regions, in effect ‘photographing’ Ritsona. In January 1997, the Regional Council of Attica in a landslide vote pre-selected the sites at Avlonas, Grammatiko and Keratea, while it authorised ESDKNA to deliver, within three months, the required-by-law Environmental Impact Statements. In July 1997, two months after the official endorsement of the three sites by the Ministry, the Council of State (CS, the Supreme Greek Administrative Court), initially accepted in principle the appeals of the local communes and ordered a temporal halt, only for the plenary of the CS to finally reject the appeals on judicial grounds (December 1998)

10 A semi-official body presided by a State official and having as its members the three Perfects of Attica, the Mayors of Athens and Piraeus, representatives of TEDKNA and of a number of trade/syndical bodies’ representatives
11 The E Section of the CS had argued (with 3 votes against 2) that the appeals had to be accepted since the country was lacking a comprehensive waste management framework. On the other hand, the plenary accepted that the proposed studies per se did not institute ‘an executable administrative act’ thus the Court could not debate on their legality.
The following three years witnessed no major developments. In 2000, the Prefecture of Eastern Attica was granted permission to manage its own municipal waste by establishing a ‘local’ HETA, yet in September 2001 this was overruled by the Prefectural Council, re-introducing the idea of ‘a comprehensive management scheme for Greater Athens’ municipal waste’.

A major turning-point was reached in 2003. The new Minister for the Environment, Vasso Papandreou, made it clear that if the local government bodies did not manage to decide on the issue themselves, she was willing to pass a law ending the stalemate. Despite the usual mobilisations, in June 2003, the Greek Parliament, following a high-spirited debate, marginally approved to include a clause in the debated ‘Law for [Environmental Impact Studies] Practitioners Registry, Assigning and Conducting [EIS] Studies etc.’ designating six areas which should host the three new HETAs for Attica. Three of them were dully selected over the summer of 2003, the remaining three labelled as ‘reserves’.

Map 3: HETA siting for Greater Athens (August 2003, assigned & reserve)

Today (Spring 2006), all three HETA projects await approval by (and funding from) the EU’s Structural Funds. The communes affected at Grammatiko and Keratea have

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12 And not as a Law specially dealing with HETA siting and development
again appealed to the Council of State. It is by now evident that, despite the governmental promises of two years ago, no new HETA will be operational in 2006.

The following Table summarises the previous discussion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Shisto landfill begins to operate (Western Attica)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Liossia landfill begins to operate (Western Attica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>ESDKNA (a waste management body) is created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>First attempts to secure new landfill sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>• Shisto landfill closes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ESDKNA assigns the first studies for Avlonas &amp; Grammatiko (Northern Attica) to a private firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>• The Ministry for the Environment includes three more sites: Varnavas (N. Attica) and two at Ritsona-outside Attica’s boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• TEDKNA agrees to establish three HETA - one of them at Liossia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Ritsona is ruled out by the new Minister, as well as any alternative waste disposal techniques (e.g. incineration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td><strong>Jan.</strong>: ESDKNA assigns new studies for 9 sites to the Polytechnic University of Athens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Spring</strong>: Liossia landfill starts its periodical closures as a pressure technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Summer</strong>: The Ministry assigns new studies to the University of Thrace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dec</strong>: The Thrace team announces that no site is suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><strong>Jan.</strong>: Attica’s Regional Council pre-selects 3 sites in Northeastern and Southeastern Attica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>May</strong>: The Ministry approves the relevant EIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>July</strong>: The Supreme Court accepts the locals appeals and asks for a temporal halt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td><strong>Dec.</strong>: The plenary of the Supreme Court finally rejects the appeals on judicial ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>The Prefecture of Eastern Attica is allowed to proceed with its ‘local’ waste management plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td><strong>Sept.</strong>: Attica’s Regional Council re-introduces Eastern Attica to the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 3: The 2002-2003 grassroots mobilisation at the Greater Athens’ region

Section 3.1: The characteristics of the protest events

As it is shown in the following graph, most protest events occurred in the period between May & June 2003, when it became apparent which sites were going to be selected and while the issue was debated at the Parliament.

As it follows from the coded 32 protest events of that period, these mobilisations had a strong ‘grass-root’ character: in 74% of all cases the main actor/initiator were local...
inhabitants\textsuperscript{13} while in the remainder we find local government officials. In general, the protest enjoyed strong support from the local government officials: albeit initiating only 22\% of the protest, in 50\% of the cases local magistrates played a (supportive) role. They were also the ones providing logistic support and undertaking a co-ordinating role: there is no mention of ENGOs playing any role whatsoever, a single case were MPs were present while only in 12\% of the cases is there the explicit mention of a ‘Struggle Committee’, operating independently of the local government’s officials.

The most popular tactics employed were road-blockades (34\% of all cases) followed by ‘press conferences/media statements’ (22\%), the blocking of an existing landfill and signatures’ collections (12.5\%)\textsuperscript{14}.

The newspaper reports give very sparse information on the impacts identified by the protesters: only one third of the relevant articles offer a hint thus generalising these findings would be inappropriate. The most prominent impact categories are negative effects on the built environment (54\%); on the fresh waters (45\%); on the cultural heritage and the local ecosystem in general (36\%)

\textbf{Section 3.2: The role of science}

The scientific debate concerning Attica’s waste management had both a strategic and a tactical aspect. The ‘strategic’ issue concerned what would be the most appropriate method for dealing with the municipal waste produced. Some proposed the waste’s incineration, others landfilling. ESDKNA had suggested that incineration should be considered as part of a comprehensive waste management plan for Attica as early as the eighties, while since 1994 some Western Attica’s municipalities indicated their willingness to accept an incineration plant within their boundaries. Yet the ‘landfillers’ camp carried the day when the Minister of the Environment, Kostas Laliotis, decreed that incineration was not an option for Athens, emphasising that ‘I do not think that will ever exist a Minister for the Environment who will allow for

\textsuperscript{13} The sample is evenly split between protesters originating from ‘a single commune’ and from ‘more than one communes’

\textsuperscript{14} Instances of violence occurred in only 9\% of cases.
such installations [i.e. incineration plants] which degrade the environment’ (Eleftherotypia, 11 April 1996).

The following Table 2 offers a snapshot of the various actors’ views on waste incineration, during the first major mobilisations of the 1996-1997 period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive views</th>
<th>Negative views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESDKNA</td>
<td>Ministry for the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEDKNA</td>
<td>ENGOs (Greenpeace Greece)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientists/Academics(^{15})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Attica Municipalities (Filli, Aspropirgos)</td>
<td>West Attica Municipalities (Elefsina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Attica Municipalities (Keratea)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Attica Prefect &amp; Viotia Prefect(^{16})</td>
<td>West Attica Prefecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE)(^{17})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In brief, the ‘incineration’ option never took off the ground yet it seems that the main reasons behind its rejection were rather ‘political’ than ‘technical’. Without wishing to downplay the method’s high cost and potential environmental risks\(^{18}\), even its stauncher critic, the Minister of the Environment, eventually came to admit that he ‘was not against such solutions [i.e. incineration] for other parts of Greece’ (Eleftherotypia, 26 July 2000). Taking into account that Attica’s municipal waste production made that area the prime, if not the only, candidate for implementing such a costly technology, yet the region’s high population density and peculiar landscape made it also extremely risky to establish an incineration plant within its boundaries, if such a plant was ever to establish it had to be close to Athens yet outside its

\(^{15}\) Although some academics highlighted that incineration was ‘a modern technology’ other studies stressed its increased production of dioxins, while everyone agreed this was a very expensive technique

\(^{16}\) The two Prefects were suggesting the creating of an incineration plant at Ritsona (Viotia) which would also receive Attica’s waste. This was eventually rejected since (a) the Prefectural Council of Viotia and local municipalities considered the development too risky while (b) the Ministry and Attica’s Regional Council were adamant in not letting Attica export its waste (on the later issue read on)

\(^{17}\) TEE kept the middle ground, arguing that incineration is an option yet the process ‘is very new [and] very expensive’ (K. Liaskas, TEE president, Eleftherotypia, 29 May 1996) while TEE’s board issued a Pythean press-statement reading that ‘[TEE] has reservations concerning whether there exists a “smart” technological solution less disturbing than sanitary landfilling’ (Eleftherotypia, 1 June 1996)

\(^{18}\) Most importantly the toxic residual of the process which has, in any case, to be landfilled
administrative boarders: in other words, the only feasible site was the one at Ritsona, the very one the Ministry was vehemently rejecting from the very beginning. In other words, the decision not to let Attica trade its municipal waste as it thought fit, was a political one.

Further credence to this claim is given by the fact that when the new Minister for the Environment, Ms. Vasso Papandreou, performed a U-turn on the issue, claiming to be willing to consider incineration plants even within Attica, she still objected to exporting Attica’s waste (interview, *Eleftherotypia*, 12 May 2003). As a matter of fact, none of the, previously loquacious, local magistrates picked up the gauntlet: sure, they wanted an incineration plant to receive their constituencies’ waste, yet not too close at home. The only reactions to that change of course came from two Greek ENGOs, Greenpeace and the Ecological Recycling Society, and two political parties, the left-wing SYN and the miniscule Greek Green party, while TEE issued yet another carefully worded, middle ground, statement (TEE press release, 3 July 2003).

In parallel with the strategic (scientific) debate raged a tactical one, on determining the better suitable site for hosting the new HETAs. Over a 13 years’ period, four major studies were assigned, assessing, more or less, the same set of the proposed sites. Unfortunately, they could not agree with one another: different studies, using different numbers of ‘scientific criteria’, assigned different (and conflicting) levels of appropriateness to the same site. Pretty soon nobody trusted the scientists’ appraisals, who themselves drifted into a petty-bickering (in the national newspapers) unbecoming of their kudos. Things were only to get worse: in Summer 1996, the Rector of Athens’ Polytechnic University introduced his team’s ‘appraisal of previous studies’ by making clear that ‘[our] final grading incorporates large uncertainties and can be largely questioned’ [sic] (*Eleftherotypia*, 8 June 1996) while personally promoting the Ritsona scenario. The coup-de-grace for any meaningful scientific debate (in the ‘tactical’ sense) was given in late 1996, when a team from the University of Thrace delivered a report stating that no site in Eastern Attica was appropriate, also suggesting (in between the lines) the Ritsona option.

Thus, it is only for the Ritsona site –which the Ministry continued to reject- that we can monitor a, fragile, scientific consensus. When it became clear that this was not an alternative, all the scientific teams involved made clear that from now on it was not
going to be a technical issue, but a political one\textsuperscript{19}. On their behalf, the local mobilisers had assigned private studies, trying to contradict the Ministry’s ones\textsuperscript{20}. Yet, even the latter could not agree with one another while the ‘employed’ scientists highlighted the political character of the decision making. In a nutshell, by 1996 ‘Science’ had lost its legitimising potential: in the future the different actors would simply juxtapose their conflicting and inconclusive studies, trying to ‘prove’ their area’s (in-) appropriateness.

\textbf{Section 3.3: The protesting communes’ tactics, interactions, relations with state authorities, alliance building and mobilisation of resources}

An important point we should bear in mind while investigating the Greater Athens’ region mobilisations is that three different campaigns were underway, one for each of Attica’s regions:

- For \textbf{Northern Attica} the first priority was not to have a HETA in their area.
- \textbf{Eastern Attica} shared the same goal yet it could live with the opportunity of establishing a local HETA, accommodating only the local waste-production.
- In \textbf{Western Attica} the situation has been more complex, with the local government aiming to close down the existing landfill, replacing with it a HETA, while for a minority of citizens –and their ‘Struggle Committee’– even the HETA development was not welcome.

Albeit different, these campaigns were highly inter-connected. For example, the mobilisations in Western Attica for closing down the landfill and replacing it with a HETA, were spurred by the Ministry’s inability to establish new sites, itself a result of Northern and Eastern Attica’s unwillingness to accept a HETA within their boarders.

The following two tables give an overview of the tactics employed for the years 1996 and 2003 by area

\textsuperscript{19} A view shared by the private firm undertaking the first studies (Eleftherotypia, 7 June 1996), the Polytechnic’s team (Eleftherotypia, 8 June 1996), ESDKNA (Eleftherotypia, 24 November 1996) and the Thrace’s team (Eleftherotypia, 6 December 1996). Seven years had to pass before the new Minister for the Environment, Ms. Vasso Papandreou, took that political decision –and the accompanying political cost- of designating these same sites that the University of Thrace report had labelled as ‘not quite appropriate’

\textsuperscript{20} Especially the North Eastern Attica communes
We observe than through time the protest level declined, a result of the drastic drop of protest events occurring in Northern Attica. Yet the protest became more violent, up to 10% of all PEs in 2003 from 3.7% in 1996, indicating a radicalisation process. Also, the protest became more sophisticated and better organised: this does not follow simply from the introduction of new, demonstrative actions (such as the public referendums, signatures’ collection and cultural events) but also from the fact, not presented in Table 3, that the communes of North and Eastern Attica formed in 2003.
an alliance. This alliance organised separate PEs\textsuperscript{21} -as well as a big demonstration before the Greek Parliament while the HETA siting was debated\textsuperscript{22}- while during the communes’ joint press-conference their scientific advisors presented their findings, argued against the HETA sitings and answered the journalists’ questions (\textit{Eleftherotypia}, 10 May 2003). Also, they were quite active in parliamentary lobbying: at the parliamentary vote held in June 2003, four of PASOK’s governemnt MPs voted against the siting, siding with their constituencies and not their party.

What Table 3 also fails to demonstrate are the two different campaigns occurring in parallel in Western Attica. The first one, the offspring of the 1996 campaign pressing for replacing the existing landfill with a new HETA, -for heuristic reasons I shall call it the ‘pro’-campaign- all but withered away in 2003, a fact hardly surprising since by then it was clear that the Ministry was going to establish the long-awaited alternative sites: thus, only two PEs occurred, a press-conference and the, standard, closing down of the landfill. On the other hand, the campaign against the new HETA (the ‘contra’-campaign), gained momentum, accounting for 70\% of all PEs in Western Attica for 2003.

This latter ‘contra’-group had the least chances of success, not only because it had to face the competition of another local (and opposing) campaign, but most importantly because it did not have any institutional allies: only the Prefecture of Western Attica had sympathised with their cause (it helped them establish a struggle committee) but by June 2003 that support was withdrawn. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to examine whether a protest-learning process occurred. In other words, did the Western Attica’s mobilisers use the same tactics employed by other communes, both in past and contemporary mobilisations, campaigning on the same issues? Table 4 juxtaposes the different tactics:

\textsuperscript{21} One press conference and two road blockades
\textsuperscript{22} Locals from Western Attica had participated at this demonstration as well, which was marked by the usual road blockade and some violent incidents. For the purposes of this analysis, in Table 3 the relevant PEs were attributed to all three ‘campaigns’.
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<td></td>
<td>Northern Attica</td>
<td>Eastern Attica</td>
<td>Western Attica (contra)</td>
<td>Northern Attica</td>
<td>Eastern Attica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrative actions (N)</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanding/claiming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints to authorities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press conference/Media statements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration/public protest</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public meeting</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Referendum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signatures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court route</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confrontational actions (N)</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike/Closing of shops</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public building occupation</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity blockage/closure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road/Train routes blockades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violent actions (N)</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throw things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to use arms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL of Actions (N)</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An important finding is that Western Attica’s ‘contra’-mobilisers did not use the most easily available protest tactic, the blocking of the existing landfill at Liossia: it seems that this approach was ‘usurped’ by the ‘pro’-campaign which was spearheaded by the
local government officials. On the other hand, they were rather predictable in employing the all-time classic tactic of blocking road and/or train routes. In general, it seems as if the Western Attica’s ‘contra’-campaign of 2003 repeated the 1996 action-pattern: the relative contribution of different kinds of actions is roughly the same if one compares Northern & Eastern Attica in the 1990s and Western Attica in the 2000s, save the increased importance of the ‘violent’ module for the latter case. Yet, as the campaigns developed through time, North and Eastern Attica followed different paths: the latter’s protest level slightly increased and assumed a more ‘demonstrative’ character while the former’s decreased and became more violent. To that extent, Western Attica’s pattern resembles more Northern Attica’s one. This is no coincidence: while Eastern Attica has indicated that it was willing to accept a new HETA under the condition that it will receive only that area’s waste, for the other two this was a zero-sum game. Accordingly, their protest gradually assumed a more radical character.

Apart from the similarities between the Northern and Western Attica protest-campaigns, there also exist important differences. To that extent, while they ‘share’ a comparable percentage of ‘demonstrative’ protest it is nevertheless of a different character. As I have mentioned at the beginning of this section, Northern Attica’s protest became more sophisticated (and more resource-demanding) through time: thus the protesters organised cultural events, assigned scientific studies and gave professional press-conferences. For Western Attica’s ‘contra’-campaign, its low resources as well as the absence of any institutional ally, conditioned its tactics’ repertoire: only actions that required simply the protesters’ ‘physical presence’ were largely pursued.

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23 For 1996, closing down the landfill accounted for 57% of all PEs tactics for Western Attica’s ‘pro’-campaign. For 2003, it was down to 30%, yet still at first place, in par with the ‘Road/Train routes blockade’ category

24 An option that the Ministry wished to consider

25 And to that extent, Eastern Attica’s one as well

26 Western Attica’s low resources could also explain the ‘premature’ radicalisation of protest: while for Northern Attica this could well be the next ‘logical’ step in intensifying the protest, for Western Attica it was simply one of the few options available. [Yet keep in mind, also, my earlier remark on the strategic goal of the different campaigns]
A (tentative) assessment of the HETA mobilisations

Throughout the period under investigation, this was in effect a four actors’ game (the three Regions’ municipalities plus the Ministry for the Environment) while the other involved players had a de facto peripheral role. From the very beginning – and I refer to the early nineties – it should have been obvious that the way the discourse was formulated was a blueprint for failure and discontent: faced with the pressing problems of closing down the existing illegal landfills and dealing with Attica’s waste the Ministry for the Environment did not simply offered its expertise and/or its good services to the affected actors: in a typical ‘rule-and-command’ fashion, it decided (a) that the only option had to be landfiling and (b) that it had to occur within Attica. After deciding so, it tried, unsuccessfully, to cover its crude interventionism with a mantle of scientific (never to occur) consensus and public (pseudo-) deliberation. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the affected communes denied to play along. In making the specific political decision, the Ministry shot its own foot. Instead of legitimising the agreement reached by the affected actors, it tried to impose one. Not surprisingly, all those involved, instead of being at each other’s throats, consistently criticised the government’s (in-) actions.

On the issue of protest-campaigns development, we witness different paths undertaken by the different alliances: we find a general theme of ‘radicalisation’ of protest over time, coupled, in cases, with a ‘sophistication’ process (more resource-demanding PEs, political alliances) etc. The factors conditioning the campaign’s development are suggested to be (a) the campaign’s own ultimate goals, (b) the resources’ available (and their mobilisation) as well as (c) the ‘starting-point’ – in terms of volume and militancy- of the individual campaign. Further research is needed, to clarify / adjust this (crude) model, which is currently underway for similar mobilizations in two major Greek cities, Thessaloniki (Northern Greece) and Ioannina (Northwestern Greece).

Such as ESDKNA, TEDKNA, the different Prefectures and Attica’s Regional council. This was due to the simple fact that even when consensual decisions were reached they failed to get implemented at the ground level: the affected municipalities would simply not cooperate.
Can we denounce the mobilizations I have described as typical ‘Not-in-my-Back-Yard’ (NIMBY) ones? Certainly the Western Attica main campaign is not such a case, while for Northern & Eastern Attica this looks more plausible. Then, again, such a harsh critique has to be somehow conditioned: it is especially interesting to note that in both areas a number of illegal –and considerably more dangerous- landfills were in use, usually quite near to the proposed HETA sites. Nevertheless, the local magistrates were quite happy with the situation, even claiming that their illegal landfills were in any case better than the proposed HETAs! This latter claim is quite important since it points to the underlying lack of trust to the administration’s decisions and ability to deliver. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of risk perception: an existing, low level –albeit negative- situation is preferred over a positive, high level –yet uncertain- development. Another important issue is the mobilisers’ past knowledge: for the Northern and Eastern Attica inhabitants, well aware of the third-world condition of the Liossia landfill and the string of broken promises, it made perfect sense that they were next in line of perspective ‘victims’. On the other hand, for the people of Western Attica, these very same reasons made it imperative to accept the proposed HETA: any change would have been a change for the better.

28 Take also into account the results of a survey in Athens reporting that although 71% of the respondents agree on the introduction of HETA and 77% can see clear differences between the existing landfills and the proposed HETAs, 52% would disagree with the siting of the latter in his/her area of domicile (Eleftherotypia, 22 June 2003)