1. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this article is to study the relationships between social movements and the academic community. Therefore, these terms are intentionally used in an “open” way, in order to be able to include various aspects of both fields.

Strictly speaking, the academic community cannot be regarded as merely a single, homogeneous body, since it is permeated by various oppositions and conflicts, all of which concern the relations among its heterogeneous parts (professors, administrators, students). At the same time, there are crucial connections between the students and the precarious workers in the universities, as far as their class interests are concerned.
This article focuses on these social movements that are formed and developed in a non-hierarchical way, outside and against the dominant institutional framework, since the structure and activity of such movements challenge the strictly hierarchical institutional fields—such as the academic one—and thus provoke tensions and contradictions of great theoretical and practical importance (Shukaitis, 2009; Katsiaficas, 2001). Unlike the traditional class movements, the movements of social antagonism are not formed exclusively in the realm of production, but on the basis of various social confrontations, that refer to Michel Foucault’s critique of power relations (including the power relations that are re-produced within the academic environment) (Melucci, 1996; Foucault, 1990).

Specifically, Chantal Mouffe’s analysis is particularly useful, since she refers to Carl Schmitt’s classic “friend / enemy” distinction to highlight the antagonistic dimension of social relations and consequently of the political phenomenon. In this way, while agonism is perceived as a “we / they” relation, in which the opposing sides are adversaries who accept the legitimacy of the other side, antagonism is perceived as a “we / they” relation, in which the two sides are hostile and have no common ground; they are “enemies” (Mouffe, 2005; Schmitt 1996).

Therefore, the movements of social antagonism usually develop self-education projects, outside of and against the academic institutions, since they perceive them as integral ideological mechanisms of the dominant system and thus as institutions which are hostile to their values and purposes. However, there is an undeniable timeless function of the student subject as a basic “link” between social movements and the academic community.

2. THE STUDENT AS A SOCIAL SUBJECT

In the 1960s, social struggles interacted with student protests in an international level, including Greece (“1-1-4 Movement”, “Lam-
Uniconflicts

brakis Youth Movement” and “Ioliana” / “July Events”) (Papanikalopoulos, 2015). This interaction was equally characteristic in the case of the anti-dictatorial movement, where the students’ role in the overthrow of the Greek military junta was very important, especially during the Athens Polytechnic uprising (1973), which is probably the most emblematic social event that took place inside university premises (Kornetis, 2013).

Stergios Katsaros presented an extremely crucial parameter for that period: “Through the events of the School of Law it had already become obvious that without mass participation, the student movement was completely ineffective. A significant part of students were aware that the student movement should be connected with the labour movement. There were lots of discussions on the matter. Various solutions were proposed. But some preferred to solve it in the simplest way: They chose to work in factories or construction sites”. Katsaros argues that from such procedures emerged a new type of proletarian subject, which pioneered along with the student movement, both during the anti-dictatorial struggle and in the massive demonstrations of the early period of the Third Greek Republic, and clarifies that “most of them were middle school graduates, students of technical schools, scholars and even graduates who preferred to work in factories rather than to “kiss ass” and “sell out” by taking a “decent’ job” (Katsaros, 2008).

In the above quotations, the interpretation of such radical choices –such as to willingly abandon the safe academic environment and its prospects of class advancement for the sake of a conscious accession into the working class– was attributed both to a kind of political strategy that attempted to bridge the gap between students and workers, and to a kind of cultural predisposition that seemed to favour personal independence at all costs.

This predisposition—in the sense of habitus (Bourdieu, 1998)—was gradually strengthened through the impact of the “Situation-
niste Internationale” (S.I.), the emblematic theoretical-practical collective that decisively influenced the events and the whole spirit of May 1968 and became a reference point regarding various issues for the movements of social antagonism at an international level. During the last years of the Greek military junta, the anti-authoritarian publishing group “International Library” translated and released *Society of the Spectacle* (Debord, 1972) and the brochure *On the Poverty of Student Life*, which had caused the so-called “Strasbourg Scandal” in late 1966 (heralding in a way the events of May 1968). The effect of the Situationniste Internationale’s approach *On the Poverty of Student Life* on the Greek antagonist movement resulted in the prevalence—for nearly three decades—of a particular concept of the student as a subject that is organically dependent on basic “sovereign” institutions, such as the family and the State, and therefore as a “reactionary” and “counter-revolutionary” subject (Situationniste Internationale, 1973).

3. THEORY AND PRACTICE

When assessing the consequences of the “Strasbourg Scandal”, the S.I. stressed that its unequivocal condemnation by the majority of professors and the judge Leabador was more rational than its approval by famous French social scientists, such as Alain Touraine, Henri Lefebvre and Jean Baudrillard, which in their view was a somewhat cunning attempt of an unauthorized applause. After having dismissed academic education as a ritual initiation in the system of commodification and criticized science as yet another social sphere that was separated from everyday life, the S.I. promoted a negative attitude towards both university professors in general and the possible appropriation of radical ideas in the academic establishment (Situationniste Internationale, 1973).
At this point, however, it should be noted that this furious critique was not produced solely within a theoretical framework, but also through important social experiences at a very intense period. In particular, it is worth noting that during the academic year 1957-1958, the founding member of the S.I., Guy Debord, and the subsequent member, Raoul Vaneigem, attended the presentations of Jean Baudrillard and Henri Lefebvre in the Institute of Sociology of Nanterre (Paris). Friendly ties and interactions had been developed among the four of them, especially as regards their critical approaches on daily life (Shukaitis, Graeber & Biddle, 2007). However, given S.I.’s opposition to the concept of intellectual property, Lefebvre’s initiative to present in the text for the Paris Commune (Arguments, #27-28, 1965) the conclusions of their collective processes as his personal work, would inevitably end their relations (Home, 1991).

Nevertheless, the interaction between some leftist professors and the crucial social protests of this period reached its peak during the “global 1968”. The top case is that of Herbert Marcuse – although it should be noted that Marcuse himself refused the role of the ideological leader of the New Left and even pointed out that such a role is unnecessary (Marcuse, 2005).

However, it is common sense that the spirit of this period influenced theoretical production, as many thinkers focused on the events and some of them were actively involved. For instance, Michel Foucault acknowledged that the experiences of that time acted as a catalyst for further theoretical elaboration of a wide range of issues (Rousselle & Evren, 2011). These issues included the fundamental distinction between “political” and “politics”, a typical issue within the social movements, and their accumulated experience did in fact affect the relevant theoretical discussion, which was developed to a greater extent after 1968. In practice, this discussion is connected with the feminist groups of the 1960s and the 1970s and with their famous slogan “personal is political”.
It could also be argued that the incorporation of the theoretical
discussions of the feminist movement in the academic literature in
the form of “gender studies” is a prime case of fruitful connection
between social movements and formal knowledge.

On the other hand, at the dawn of 1968 (31/01/1969), the ad-
ministrators of the Social Research Institute of the famous neo-
marxist “Frankfurt School” called the police to suppress the
students that had occupied their Institute. This initiative caused
a particularly interesting theoretical debate between emblematic
members Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, which dealt with
the limits, the oppositions and the connections between social
movements and the academic community, between practice and
theory, medium and purpose, violence and social emancipation
(Adorno & Marcuse 2012).

4. ON SELF-EDUCATION

Such cases as the denounced Lefebvre’s plagiarism or Frankfurt
School’s collaboration with the police seem to reinforce an “an-
ti-academic” (but by no means “anti-intellectualistic”) tenen-
cy within movements of social antagonism. Thus, these move-
ments usually develop self-education projects that are formed
outside of and against the academic institutional framework.

However, this tendency seems somewhat confusing, since
while these movements scorn the status of the professor and
the formal education system in general, they selectively adopt
pieces of academic theories and quite often identify themselves
as individuals who move between social movements and aca-
demia.

Specifically, it is claimed that while a lot of activists of-
ten refer to professors with radical political activity, such as
Cornelius Castoriadis (founding member of the group / journal
Socialism or Barbarism), they maintain an ambiguous attitude
towards the work of theorists who are–quite abusively– categorized as post-structuralists (Shukaitis, Graeber & Biddle, 2007). So, there is the paradox that while post-structuralism is usually rejected as a kind of academic defence against “surrendering” before the existing system, Baudrillard’s critique on the media or Foucault’s analysis of contemporary forms of surveillance and power are often incorporated without hesitations in radical self-education infrastructure. It should be noted that such collective theoretical-practical elaborations of these analyses often have interesting results, confirming those interpretative approaches of social movements as fields of cultural production (Souzas, 2015).

Such a “paradox” –as the simultaneous rejection / adoption of academic knowledge– can probably be interpreted on the basis of an –either way– contradictory attitude towards the academic community. Specifically, while many activists consciously reject university institutions, they often rely on them for a series of crucial personal and collective activities. In Greece, it is quite characteristic that a lot of activists are students and that the university premises are fully utilized for the social movements’ purposes. To a great extent, this fact is connected with the spatial positioning of universities in the centre of the cities, as well as with the academic asylum (now abolished), which reinforced the perception of the university as a socially protected area. So, it is worth noting that the majority of the squats in Greece were public buildings which are legally owned by academic authorities and that a huge number of protests and events take place inside the university premises. It could reasonably be argued that the history of social movements in Greece has been largely written exactly there; in 1973, the uprising started with the occupation of the Athens School of Law and exploded some months later with the occupation of the Athens Polytechnic; in 1979, the autonomous student occupations spread nationwide;
in 1985, the double occupation of the School of Chemistry (May and November) appeared to be a big deal for the Greek public sphere; in 1985, 1990, 1991 and 1995, the Athens Polytechnic was occupied by the movements of social antagonism for various social-political reasons of great importance; in June 2003, university buildings were occupied in Thessaloniki by protesters against the European Union Summit; in 2006-2007, a lot of universities were occupied by the massive student movement; in December 2008, the occupations of university and other public buildings were integral parts of the revolt (Souzas, 2015; Kitis, 2015; Evangelinidis & Lazaris, 2014, Vradis & Dalakoglou, 2011).

After the crisis has emerged, the issue of self-education seems to become even more complicated, since the devaluation of the university is henceforth linked to policies that disintegrate social achievements. Under these circumstances, the timeless rejection of the university as a supposedly “public” institution that actually “serves” capitalism, somehow seems anachronistic and needs to be reorganized in order to avoid being a “left alibi” for the utter commercialization of knowledge. In this context, the university could be approached as a common good under threat and the movements’ great experience could articulate—and not separate—mobilizations around crucial social issues such as education. Given the fact that there is a growing research interest for collective action, the overcoming of various ideological filters and the collective recording, analysis and theoretical-practical elaboration of social movements seems to be a highly necessary task. Pierre Bourdieu’s proposal on forming reflective collective scientific subjects seems extremely interesting for a country in crisis, where there was never an influential “School” in the field of humanities, as there have been in other countries (e.g. the above-mentioned Frankfurt School) (Bourdieu 2004).
5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it could be argued that the limits between movements of social antagonism and academia are sometimes clear and sometimes a bit obscure. In particular, there is an evident opposition to the institutional framework of the university, since these movements are formed outside of and against the dominant political and economic structures. A kind of collective and horizontal self-education is opposed to the hierarchical division between “experts” and “non-experts” and to the neoliberal education system.

At the same time, however, crucial connections indeed exist between social movements and academia. With regard to their theoretical production, there are various interactions with fruitful results for both communities. Indicatively, Michel Foucault was inspired by the spirit of ’68 and in return he inspired social movements about crucial issues, such as the microphysics of power.

In the midst of a very intense period, constructive criticism on the students’ social roles—who often move exactly around the limits of these communities—and of the academic knowledge—that is similarly often utilized for controversial purposes—is called to be the case study of a collective reflective theoretical-practical elaboration that will focus on the encounters and conflicts in the cities in crisis.

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