
Who Gets to Tell the Climate Story? Narrative Research in Practice from Greece

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**What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “climate change”?
How about “climate crisis”? And “climate justice”?**



My research topic: Narrating Climate Change in the Greek Civil Society

Ethnographic research with grassroot collectives and civil society groups in Greece , in order to understand how they narrate and make meaning of the climate crisis and climate justice.



The research examines how their narratives are reflected in their discourses, images they use, as well as in their practices and relationships, how they constitute and express collective identities, values, and forms of political participation.

My research questions

How do groups describe/narrate the climate crisis?

How do they define climate justice?

How do they engage with transnational narratives?

How do they engage with institutional discourses?

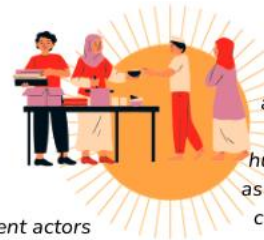
How do these narratives construct collective identities?

Who am I focusing on?

ATHENS
group dedicated to advocating for systemic change, social and climate justice and the inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable populations in society since 2018.



XXX ISLAND
group bringing together different actors working against an extractivism mining project on XXX island, such as a social spaces, trade unions and individuals.



ATHENS+
a self-organized collective kitchen active since 2008, that cooks and distributes hundreds of meals daily, not as charity, but as a political act of solidarity challenging the commodification of basic needs and fights against social exclusion and injustice.



EPIRUS
self-organized, community-led social cooperative formed by locals, returnees, and solidarity members who are actively resisting the destruction of their land while building a self-sufficient future.



ATHENS
a grassroots, community-rooted initiative born from a deep response to spatial injustice in Athens with, by, and for the people most affected by gentrification, exclusion, and the disappearance of shared civic spaces, reclaiming spaces not just as sites of restoration, but as living commons.



ATHENS
a grassroots collective founded by migrants, refugees, and second-generation individuals that celebrates and promotes African cultures through events, workshops, and community-led education, while also advocating for social justice and antiracism.



OUTSKIRTS ATHENS
group addressing the long-term, systemic social exclusion of Roma communities including ongoing institutional and police violence, and access to basic infrastructure, such as a secure water supply.

THESSALONIKI

a group of activists with the goal to empower those most affected by housing precarity by creating a collective space of resistance, care, and solidarity-based organizing.



ATHENS
a self-organized, hybrid platform in Athens that explores and promotes queer and transfeminist art, theory, and activism



EPIRUS
research collective exploring the intersection of commons, action-research, and peer-to-peer practices, coordinating Tzoumakers - one of the few rural makerspaces in Europe, where farmers, designers, and locals collaboratively design and build tools for small-scale agriculture.

Why narrative research

Because I am both interested in what members of this ecosystem think about climate change, and in how they tell stories about it, to whom, and why.

Questions I ask:

- Who tells the story?
- Who listens?
- Where is the story told?
- What is emphasised?
- What is silenced?
- What kind of voice is used?
- What power relations appear?



How do I collect narratives?

- **Participant observation in meetings with the groups**
(approximately once a month, either in their assemblies or in separate discussions)
- **Semi-structured interviews with group members**
- **Participation in a shared two-hour meeting with all groups once a month**
- **Fieldnotes from participation in events, public discussions, and the annual Climate Justice Camp**
- **Digital ethnography** *(published collective texts, photos, videos, social media posts)*
- **Reflexivity on positionality** *(both personal and epistemological)*



An example

We are paralysed by the feeling that we need to overturn the entire system, while the work we do is fragmented. How do you talk about energy saving to someone who has no electricity? Energy poverty is more immediate than the 'climate crisis'. These terms need translation and explanation. Degrowth, for example, sounds like we are asking people to go back to living in caves. We have an issue with our language and our arguments. In Greece, saying 'no' is powerful, but we often stop there. We do not always see it as our role to propose a programme or a solution."

- *E., member of an anti-extractivist collective*

- **Who tells the story?**
A member of anti-extractivist collective
- **Who is the audience?**
Me (researcher), but also broader eco movements
- **Where is it told?**
Interview at the side of the annual climate justice camp
- **Voice?**
Critical, frustrated, self-reflective
- **Storytelling technique?**
Rhetorical questions, contrasts
- **Power issue?**
Institutional climate discourses ignore lived precarity.

Another example

The current climate crisis is a direct consequence of the exploitation of racialised bodies and territories by the imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist, ableist, cis-het patriarchal system that the European project of colonialism was built on, and that continues to dominate global society today. Any calls for climate justice must embody this understanding and seek to reestablish many of the things lost through a culture of extraction and capitalist consumption.

- *Collective Abundance, Open Letter, 2024*

- **Who tells the story?**
A collective actor / grassroots movement funder organisation
- **Who is the audience?**
Grassroots movements/other intermediate actors within the climate justice movement
- **Where is it told?**
Open letter
- **Voice?**
Radical, confrontational
- **Power issue?**
Rejects technocratic climate framings; defines climate justice as structural transformation

Some first findings

- Justice is often articulated as an experience of inequality, loss, state violence, racism, precarity, sexism, and homophobia/transphobia.
- Many collectives, however, do not want to speak in terms of climate justice, as climate discourse is often associated with institutions, technocrats, and NGOs, and therefore does not function as a shared point of reference.
- Distrust toward institutional and philanthropic discourses emerges as a recurring pattern.
- Translating climate justice into lived relationships is critical for creating meaningful connections between groups.



Thank you!

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