

'Tobacco for Atoms': Nuclear Politics, Ambivalences and Resistances about a Reactor that was Never Built

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s there has been a continuous discussion about the nuclear future of Greece and the introduction of nuclear technology to secure the increasing energy demand.¹ Greek engineers, scientists and foreign consultants, along with politicians and political activists, shaped the conditions for the emergence in Greece of what Gabrielle Hecht called 'nuclear exceptionalism'.² Gabrielle Hecht has shown that following the Second World War the public discourse of Western societies presented nuclear power as fundamentally different from other technologies. For supporters, the exceptional status of nuclear power was related to the expectation of a nuclear future of low cost and abundant electricity – a utopia of promises within a capitalist and liberal context. For opponents, political activists and sceptics, nuclear power represented a continuous threat of apocalyptic disaster.³ Some state and corporate campaigns attempted to present nuclear power as a domesticated and riskless technology. Hecht argues that 'Nuclearity, like many other categories, can be deployed as a tool of empowerment and disempowerment. Its significance depends on its techno-political distribution'.⁴ She explains that 'nuclearity' varies from country to country and from region to region, as it depends on the socio-cultural and political setting. Different actors configure different meanings and visions and shape different discourses and socio-political agendas in regards to nuclear technologies.