

Network “Mesochora - Acheloos SOS”

Acheloos river is in danger of total destruction

Acheloos river, also known as Aspropotamos, whose tributaries are located in the Pindus mountain range, is the second longest river in the country (280 km), and on it, four large hydroelectric dams with major impacts on the ecosystem have already been constructed, since the 1960s. Three of them (Kremasta, Kastraki, Stratos) are placed in the middle and downstream of the river and the fourth one (Tavropos) in a tributary of Acheloos. Along with the above mentioned projects of the state electricity company (DEI), large private companies have begun to build dams and hydroelectric projects throughout Acheloos.

The greatest threat to Acheloos though is the constructions that the state electricity company (DEI) and the Greek state are trying to build in the upper reaches of Acheloos. In order to make their implementation easier, they combined these with the diversion of Acheloos' waters to the neighboring district of Thessaly, in order to irrigate vast agricultural land. These are the dams - hydroelectric projects of Mesochora (150 m height - 160 MW) and Sykia (175 m height - 130 MW) and the diversion tunnel - from Sykia to the plain of Thessaly (18,5 Km). The artificial lake of Mesochora dam is about to flood most of Mesochora village.

The diversion of Acheloos' waters is the largest water planning project in Greece. It was first announced in 1964, it was designed on the principle of unlimited and unchecked capitalist "growth" and it has been a bi-partisan project. The political system of the country, all governments since 1964, the state electricity company and other energy companies, all view the Acheloos river and the surrounding forests, mountains as well as the sea and all natural resources, as their own private property.

The constructions began in 1985 and, to date, the Mesochora dam, a small part of the Sykia dam and the diversion tunnel have been built. However, artificial lakes have not been created yet and it has not been possible to operate hydroelectric works and diversion. This is due to the hard struggle given by the inhabitants of the village of Mesochora, but also to a very wide nationwide support movement that was created. It is also due to the six successive decisions of the Council of State (Supreme Court of Cassation), which barred the project. The constructions have reached the present point, because DEI and the Greek state - for a while - have ignored the aforementioned court decisions.

The current government, against its pre-election promises, continues the project, partly through the segmentation method. On August 2017, the country's ministry of environment signed a permit to operate the giant dam, next to the Mesochora village. This authorization was granted on the pretext of the production of hydroelectric power, despite the fact that the dam's estimated contribution to the country's energy reserves would be miniscule and that large hydroelectric dams –worldwide- are not considered as Renewable Energy Sources (RES). By this decision, instead of canceling the diversion - as the government claims - the risk is coming back.

For at least 30 years, the residents of Mesochora resist the destruction of their village and environment, with the support of a dynamic movement, emerged all over Greece, against the plunder of the remaining water of Acheloos, proposing the social ecological management of water as an inalienable natural common good. This struggle is continuing.

From 2017 the Mesochora residents and citizens from all over Greece created the Network "Mesochora - Acheloos SOS", initiative to strongly express their opposition to the operation of the Mesochora dam and the diversion of the river. In this context, given the ecological impacts of the operation of major dams and the desolation evident on the river banks and stream, they demand the definitive cancellation of the project and the demolition of the dam. They consider that the issue of water and energy management is a profoundly social issue and it cannot be left to the arbitrary plans of governments that treat their citizens as simply voters, neither to the appetites of energy companies which are only interested in increasing their profits.

The technical characteristics of dams

	MESOCHORA	SYKIA
Barrier height (meters)	150	175
Tank's surface (square kilometers)	7,8	12,8
Useful volume of tank (million cubic meters)	228	502
Total tank's volume (million cubic meters)	358	
Station's electric power (MW)	160	130
Energy produced (GWh/year)	384	154

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