

## **‘Crazy Waters’: The Sliding Bridge in Chalkida, Greece**

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### **Abstract**

Drawing on historical sources, visual documentation, ethnographic research and autobiographical narratives, this presentation examines the significance of the Sliding Bridge in Chalkida, Greece. Located at the narrowest point of the Evripos Strait, a narrow channel of water separating the island of Evia from mainland Greece, the bridge’s history unfolds over 2,500 years.

The first written record of the bridge dates back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC when the Chalkideans, following their withdrawal from the Athenian Alliance and fearing a naval blockade in retaliation, decided to fortify the city by cutting the sea route between Athens and Thessaly. From the Roman--Byzantine period and the arrival of the Venetians, to the period of Ottoman rule and the emergence of the modern Greek nation state, the strategic and commercial importance of the bridge has been indisputable. In 1963, the sliding bridge – the first of its kind globally – was built. Today, it continues to simultaneously unite and separate the two parts of the city of Chalkida.

In addition to tracing the biography of the bridge and its central role in Chalkida’s economic and political history, this paper also underscores the social and cultural meanings attached to the bridge, by focusing on the notion of ‘crazy waters’ (*trella nera*), as the unique local phenomenon of strong tidal currents is known. While ‘crazy waters’ have sparked local imagination by contributing to the city’s mythology, they also have practical repercussions: the opening of the bridge for ships and vessels, regulated by the Port Authority, depends on the flow of currents, which normally reverse direction approximately every six hours. In recent years, however, due to climate change there is an inconsistency in the movement of seawater, something that complicates the scheduling process of the passage of ships.