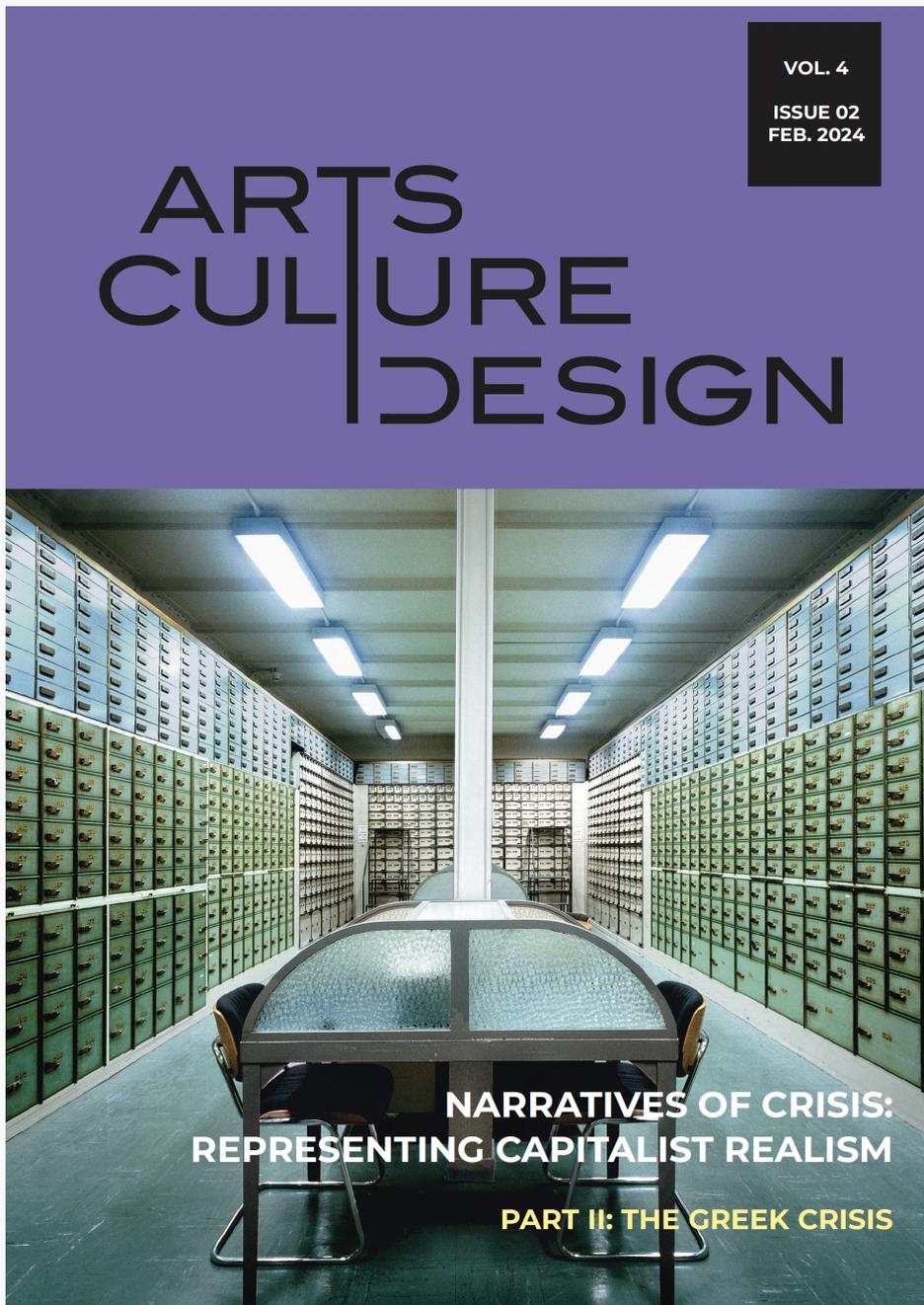


Design/Arts/Culture

Vol 4, No 2 (2024)

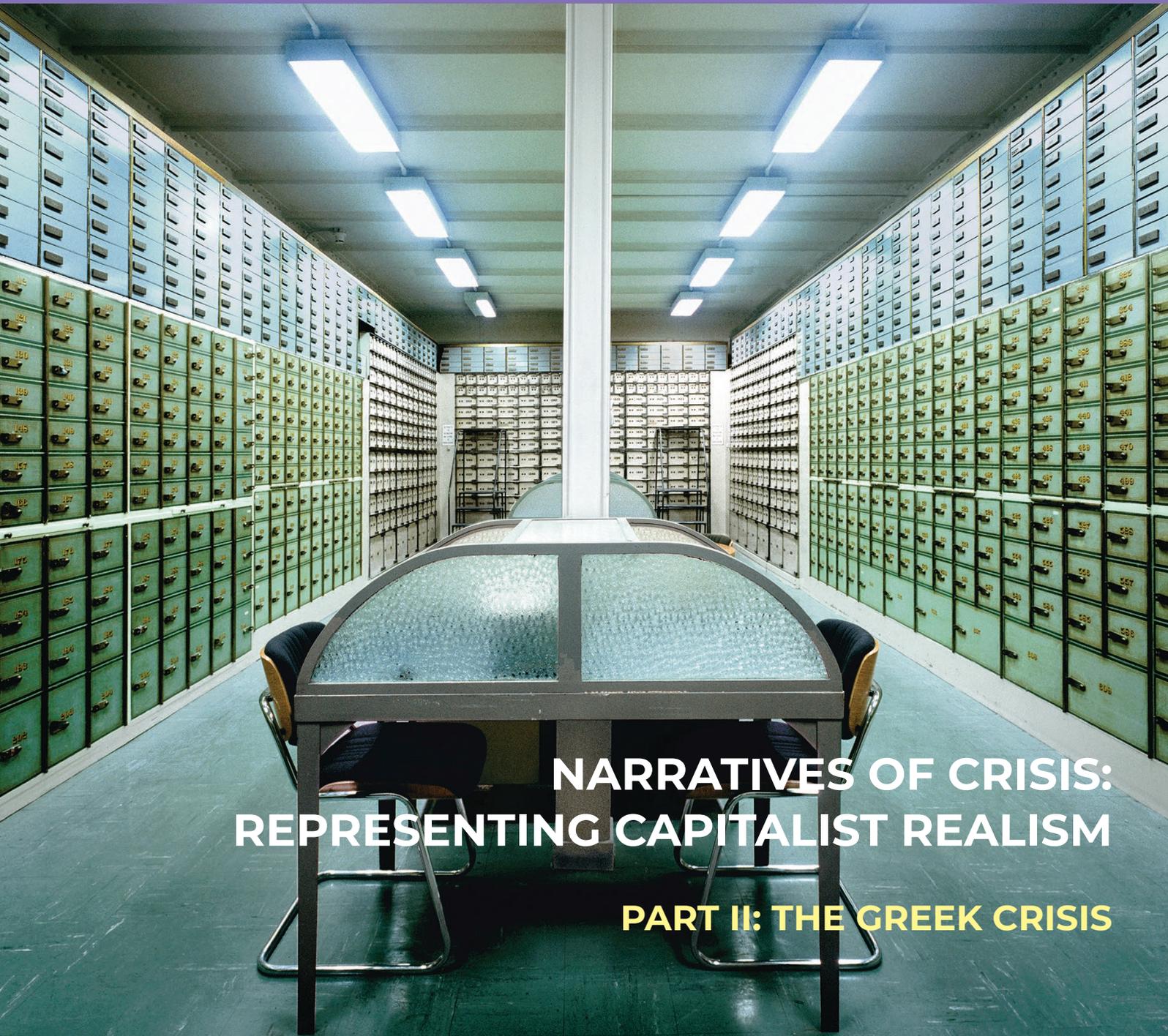
NARRATIVES OF CRISIS: REPRESENTING CAPITALIST REALISM PART II: THE GREEK CRISIS



VOL. 4

ISSUE 02
FEB. 2024

ARTS CULTURE DESIGN



**NARRATIVES OF CRISIS:
REPRESENTING CAPITALIST REALISM**

PART II: THE GREEK CRISIS

NARRATIVES OF CRISIS: REPRESENTING CAPITALIST REALISM

Guest editor: Dr Penelope Petsini





PART II: THE GREEK

CRISIS

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The journal accepts submissions of original research articles including all the topics described below, but not limited to them, as: Aesthetics, Semantics, History, Continuity of cultural heritage, Methodological approaches, Social-Cultural Aspects of Design, Visual Studies Culture, Design and Material Culture, Identity and Heritage, Criticism, Creativity, Innovation, Arts, Audiovisual sequences, Sustainability, Learning strategies and pedagogy, Expertise in design, Visual techniques in the design process, Design tools and Experiential approaches concerning Interior Architecture, Furniture Design, Product Design, Graphic Design, Illustration, Animation, Visual Communication Design, Photography, New Media and Digital Imaging, Preservation of Cultural Heritage, Conservation and restoration, Technologies in Art and Design, Creative and Innovative Media Arts Concepts. All submissions are double peer reviewed.

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The image is a dark, abstract photograph. It features a prominent diagonal line running from the top left towards the bottom right. The background is a deep, textured blue-grey. There are several layered, semi-transparent shapes: a large, light brownish-yellow shape in the upper left, a smaller white shape in the middle right, and a larger, textured greenish-brown shape in the lower left. The overall effect is one of depth and complexity, with various textures and colors interacting in a dark space.

Cover: Manolis Baboussis, *Secrets*, 2001.

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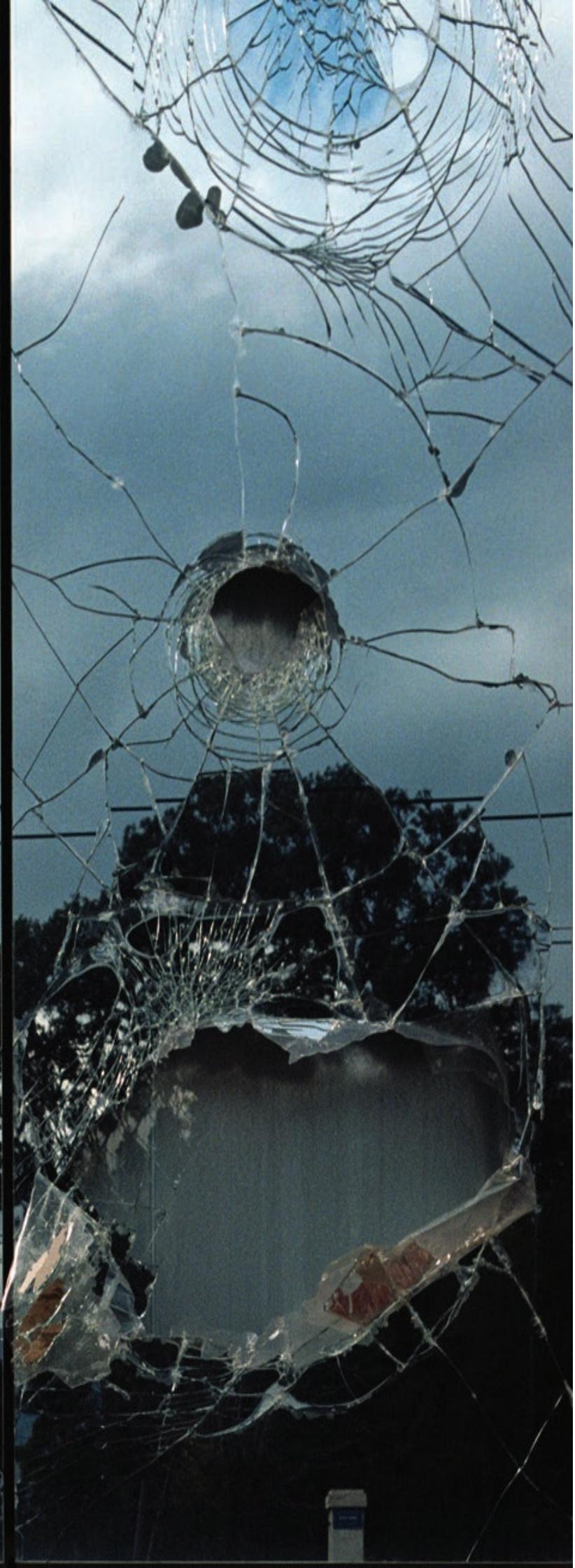
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NARRATIVES OF CRISIS: REPRESENTING CAPITALIST REALISM

PART II: THE GREEK CRISIS

Penelope Petsini

1. Panteion University
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Ayn Rand, whose ideas gained significant traction and extensive discussion in Greece during the crisis, has been labeled as the high priestess of "neoliberal realism," or more precisely, Capitalist Realism. As the architect of a philosophical school known as "Objectivism," Rand propagated her ideology primarily through novels such as the *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). The novel, depicting a dystopian United States in which private businesses suffer under increasingly burdensome laws and regulations, stands as a cornerstone of Rand's literary contributions, wherein she fervently advocated for a utopian vision of capitalism: An individual's life outcomes are solely determined by their abilities; anyone can overcome challenges with intelligence and capability; any form of state involvement in society is enabling unproductive individuals to "leech" off the wealth earned by the industrious.

In 2011, appropriately coinciding with a year since the initiation of memoranda - a period characterized by substantial job losses and economic instability, *Atlas Shrugged* was published in Greek. At that point, savings had dissipated, businesses were shuttering, and entire public sector services were collapsing. The abrupt and violent closure of the national broadcasting corporation (ERT) exemplified the ruthless manner in which these changes unfolded. Universities, nota-

bly in the humanities, faced significant undermining and were labeled as unproductive. The overarching result was a forceful reconfiguration of income, rights, and future prospects.

Simultaneously, this period starkly showcased the absolute dominance of international markets over constitutionally enshrined popular sovereignty. Notions of public welfare and state support were readily sacrificed in favor of vested interests, shrouded in an aura of singular truth. During this time, politicians and journalists openly argued that the crisis stemmed from an excess of distributive democracy, framing talk of elections and referendums as irresponsible populism. Rather than addressing the intricate financial dynamics of neoliberal capitalism, the focus shifted towards public employees, with mass layoffs proposed as a solution to unemployment within the private sector.

As Yannis Stavrakakis (2013) vividly described:

[They] say that the political decline of the post-dictatorship period should certainly be blamed more on those who opposed and certainly not on those who governed; that the solution to the economic and moral pathology of Greek excessive debt is ultimately to increase the public debt and stabilize it in about a dozen years at about where it was at the beginning of

the crisis; that the problems of the state television did not come from the political party's demoralization but from the fact that it was "communist"; that the market is not affected by the recession and the collapse of the citizens' purchasing power, but by the demonstrations and trade union protests and that the solution will be found in the opening of shops on Sundays and so on. [...] These claims attempt, first and foremost, to redefine radically the very social and biopolitical horizon of post-war Europe, to revise the historical path of post-dictatorship Greece. Beware, what is at stake is not the mitigation of the potential failures of the welfare state and social democracy, nor is it the confrontation of the existing excesses of post-independence. The aim seems to be the violent reconstitution of our memory, experience and expect-

tations: the complete reversal of the very value/biographical core that inspired the course of political and economic democratization in post-war Europe and post-dictatorship Greece.

In this vein, Capitalist Realism could now be considered a historical artifact that reflects the prevailing sentiment following the 2007-08 financial collapse and the subsequent crises, including the Greek one -a turmoil that should not only be perceived as an economic event but equally as a political one- exposing the political system's ability to rationalize issues that should have fundamentally challenged it. Since the escalation of the economic crisis in Southern Europe, the dominant moral discourse stressed collective responsibility for the crisis and asked people to "collaborate" by making sacrifices. In Greece, crisis demanded pre-emptive or emergency measures, such as welfare-state



Figure 1: Nikos Pilos, from the series *Youth Resistance*, 2011-16.



Figure 2: Milos Bicanski, from the series *Greek Crisis*, 2010-16.

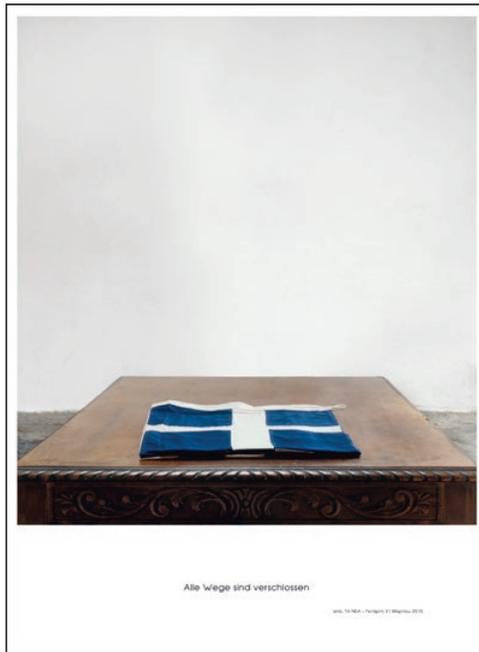


Figure 3: Lydia Dambassina, *Alle Wege sind verschlossen*, 2010, from the series *Party's over – Starts over*, 2012-13.

All ways are closed
from TANE A – Wednesday March 31, 2010

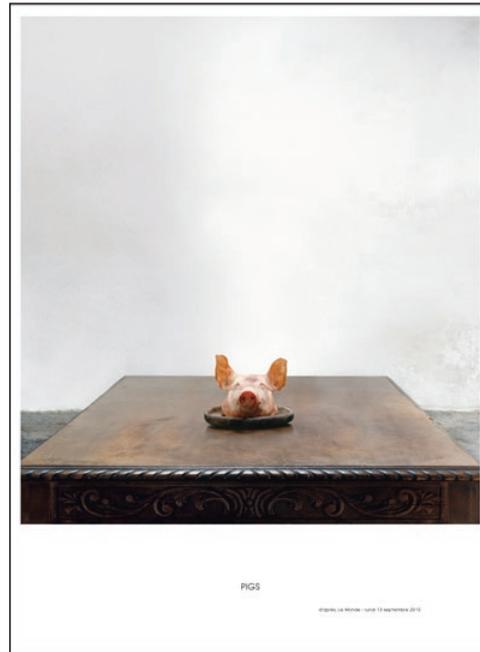


Figure 4: Lydia Dambassina, *PIGS Portugal Italy-Ireland Greece Spain*, 2010, from the series *Party's over – Starts over*, 2012-13.

PIGS
from Le Monde – Monday September 13, 2010

and income cutbacks, under the rubric of national unity. Anger over the crisis triggered an intense blame game. An increasingly self-contained and self-serving political class kept ruling, united in their claim that 'there is no alternative' to them and their policies. Doubts about the compatibility of a capitalist economy with a democratic polity have powerfully returned among ordinary people, whereas the ruling elites claimed that what caused the fiscal crisis has been an excess of redistributive democracy. Diffusing accountability has been manifested in several occasions worldwide, ranging from statements like Phil Angelides', head of the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, likening the situation to "the Murder on the Orient Express: everyone did it" (Chan, 2010), to controversial claims such as Socialist veteran Theodoros Pangalos' assertion that "We-all-ate-together" ("*Μαζί τα φάγαμε*") In the realm of Capitalist Realism, the persistent question remains: who exactly are "we"?

PART II: THE GREEK CRISIS

This collection of essays and visual explorations present the multifaceted dimensions of the Greek Crisis, weaving together threads of cinema, art, literature, architecture, politics, and urban life.

In "Spaces of Capitalist Realism: Representing the Normalisation of the Crisis in Con-

temporary Greek Cinema" **Anna Poupou** offers a thought-provoking analysis of the evolution of Greek cinema in response to the economic crisis that struck the country post-2009, highlighting the intricate connections between film, society, politics, and artistic expression. The new wave of films during the crisis, argues Poupou, was politically charged, employing irony, cynicism, and black humor to criticize institutions, question capitalism, explore gender and sexuality, and engage with audience affect. The analysis of specific films, namely *Patis-sion Avenue*, *Her Job*, and *Pity*, reveals how the dialectics between crisis and normality are depicted through various narrative elements. The examination of space, class, and social representations in these films demonstrates how these works mirror the blurred lines between crisis and normalcy, both in terms of individual experiences and broader societal contexts. By employing different cinematic techniques, these films engage with the political discourse surrounding crisis and its subsequent normalization.

In the series "Billboards," **Nikolas Ventourakis** explores the complex dynamics inherent in interpreting visual art, specifically within the domain of photography. Through the presentation of previously unreleased images captured in 2013 Greece, Ventourakis examines the intriguing role of inconclusiveness within the narrative of visual storytelling. The project seeks to demonstrate how viewers of-



Figure 5: Lydia Dambassina, *Ich war, Ich bin, Ich werde sein*, 2010, from the series *Party's over – Starts over*, 2012-13.

I was, I am, I will be
from Libération – Monday August 23, 2010

ten approach images with a natural inclination toward resolution, influenced by societal norms and collective perspectives shaped by media and personal experiences. Ventourakis challenges this instinct by focusing on instances where visual artworks intentionally omit crucial contextual information. By doing so, he encourages viewers to question their automatic conclusions and embrace a sense of discontentment, fostering a deeper engagement with the images. The narrative unfolds against the backdrop of 2013 Greece, a period marked by financial turmoil, during which billboards conspicuously stood emp-

ty. While widely interpreted as symbols of a nation in crisis, Ventourakis reveals the mundane reality behind their abandonment – a legal crackdown on illegal constructions. The portfolio, rooted in the project "Leaving Utopia," underscores the power of visual inconclusiveness to disrupt prevailing narratives and stimulate critical inquiry. Ventourakis navigates the juncture where perception diverges from reality, highlighting the ability of art to challenge assumptions and provoke a reevaluation of shared viewpoints.

"The Tourists: a campaign", in turn, explores the multifaceted and subversive project



Figure 6: Dimitris Michalakís, from the series *Burnout*, 2009 – 14.



initiated by the **Depression Era collective**, connecting seamlessly with the discourse on Capitalist Realism. Originating as a collaborative research and discussion platform in Athens, the project has evolved into various forms, including public spaces, posters, digital campaigns, publications, and exhibitions. Critically responding to global events such as the European refugee crisis and the surge in tourism, "The Tourists" engages with the complexities of identity, citizenship, and displacement. The project's response to Documenta 14 is highlighted, where it addressed hegemonic stances and post-colonial perspectives, critiquing the exoticization and touristification of Greece. Through images, slogans, and a keen exploration of landscapes, the project navigates the blurred lines between tourism and disaster, revealing a generation marked by conflict, resilience, and displacement in a hyper-mediated world, and echoing the critical inquiries into societal norms and shared viewpoints characteristic of Capitalist Realism.

Paraskevi Kertemelidou's essay addresses the intricate relationship between avant-garde artists and museums in the 20th century, particularly focusing on the Museum of Cycladic Art's exhibition of Jannis Kounellis' works. The exhibition, conceived as a response to Greece's economic crisis, employed raw materials and objects from Athens' junk shops to comment on contemporary socio-economic conditions. The essay analyses Kounellis' artistic trajectory, his use of unconventional materials, and the impact of his interventions on the museum space. Additionally, it examines how Kounellis' artworks served as a narrative of the crisis, evoking emotions of empathy and discomfort in visitors. This exhibition, Kertemelidou claims, captures the essence of Greece's cultural and societal state, prompting viewers to associate their own lives with the exhibited materials and fostering a participatory, interpretive experience. Ultimately, Kounellis' art mirrors the collective human experience in the face of crisis while imbuing a sense of humanism and hope.

In "Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960: Unveiling Political Phantasma Through Mnemonic Performance and In-Situ Light Installation" **Maria Paschalidou** explores the intersection between art, history, and politics. Paschalidou presents an engaging narrative on the practices and conceptualizations of a public mnemonic performance, transforming a specific geographical location into a canvas for confronting historical trauma and challenging conventional mnemonic representations. The essay addresses twenty-one selected cases of lethal political violence in Greece from 1978

to 2020 through an in-situ light installation, mapping out a complex and often haunting trajectory through time. In this sense, *Clepsydra* aspires to serve not only as a platform for acknowledging historical memory and mediating political narratives, but also as a catalyst for envisioning alternative futures. The author's ambitious goal of creating an archaeology of the political phantasma, encourages readers to consider their responsibilities to the past and contemplate the role they play in shaping a more just and equitable future. Furthermore, the article's emphasis on countering the rise of neo-fascist movements in Western capitalist societies adds a layer of urgency to its significance. By seamlessly merging artistic expression with a call for heightened political awareness, the author empowers readers to critically engage with pressing contemporary challenges and actively contribute to positive societal transformation.

Maria Moira's essay turns to literature, to explore the representations of habitation in Athens during the financial crisis and subsequent challenges, emphasizing the profound impact of economic turmoil on urban spaces and the lives of its inhabitants. The analysis showcases how literature serves as a medium for understanding the profound effects of crisis on the concept of habitation and the dynamics of urban life. Moira presents five (plus one) stories that illustrate different facets of habitation during this period: "The City of the Streets" discusses Rea Galanaki's novel "Absolute Humiliation", which portrays the vulnerability of homeless people in the city, contrasting the concept of "street" as humiliation with the dignity of a "street" denoting a proper address; "From Eutopia to Dystopia" shifts the narrative to Vangelis Raptopoulos's novel "The Man Who Burned Down Greece," highlighting the transformations of public spaces in Athens due to the crisis; "Forms of Disconnection" explores the work of Lila Konomara and Alexis Panselinos, where the focus shifts from private spaces to the struggles of urban apartment living, showcasing the deteriorating condition of middle-class apartments and the impact of the crisis on family dynamics; "For Sale – For Rent" discusses Diamantis Axiotis's short stories and Vangelis Frangeskaki's novel present an Athens inundated with "For Rent" and "For Sale" signs, offering a glimpse into the deteriorating urban landscape marked by economic decline and social decay; "The City Ablaze" discusses the representation of resistance and protests in the city through the works of various authors. Demonstrations and the reclaiming of public spaces become focal points of the narratives, capturing the

social response to the crisis; "The Floor Plan" is a plus-one story focusing on Manolis Lydakakis' novel: it presents a symbolic reconstruction of a demolished family home through a younger brother's drawing on an empty lot, which highlights the longing for a past that has been lost due to economic turmoil. Throughout the essay, the narratives depict a city in flux, where economic crisis, homelessness, and uncertainty reshape urban spaces and challenge individual and collective identities.

The next contribution is also about urban space: "Athens: A Text Under Editing?" is a visual essay by **Io Chaviara**, which invites readers to explore the dynamic and ever-evolving urban landscape of Athens as a living text constantly undergoing revision and editing. Drawing parallels between the city and a text being edited, the essay examines the non-institutional interventions that disrupt the city's narrative, from political slogans to artistic expressions. Chaviara navigates the complexities of these interventions, comparing them to annotations, deletions, and corrections in the editorial process. The essay unfolds with vivid examples, such as the phosphorescent pink markings documenting clashes between protesters and security forces, the controversial vandalism of the Polytechnic building, and the creative correction of police uniforms with pink paint during a protest. Through these instances, the visual essay reveals how the city becomes a negotiated text, continually reinterpreted with each editorial act, reflecting the diverse voices and perspectives of its users. This exploration offers a fascinating lens through which to understand the intricate relationships between citizens, the state, and public space in the vibrant tapestry of Athens.

Ioanna Barkouta's essay discusses the multifaceted nature of crises, particularly in the context of contemporary society where the concept of "normalcy" intersects with various crises ranging from financial and economic to health, ecological, and geopolitical upheavals. Focusing on the spatial interpretations of crisis, the essay explores the evolution of the term "crisis" from its historical roots to its current economic connotations. Barkouta utilizes the Marxist theory of crisis as opposed to conventional economic theory, emphasizing the spatial dimension of crisis as highlighted by geographers and urban planners. With a specific focus on Greece, particularly Athens, the essay examines the intersection of the economic crisis with habitation practices, shedding light on the housing issues exacerbated by austerity measures. Through narratives and case studies, the essay reveals the spatial transformations within households

and the everyday struggles faced by individuals in navigating the housing crisis.

Several of Carl Schmitt's ideas, such as the *katechon*, the *nomos* of the Earth, and his political-spatial concepts, have been thoroughly examined and incorporated into discussions within international political discourse. One such concept is the notion of *Großraum* which, in the case of next portfolio (a collective project by **Yannis Karpouzis, Yorgos Karailias, Yorgos Prinós, and Pavlos Fysakis**), is actively integrated into the artists' own critical practice. The interest in Schmitt's *Großraum* resurfaces after the Cold War, with discussions in the 2000s focusing on two main threads. Firstly, efforts within international relations theory to recover Schmitt's thought and connect it to broader theoretical discussions, including political geography. Secondly, the use of *Großraum* as a genealogically relevant concept for theories describing a globally interconnected yet divided world, potentially moving toward a multipolar order. In this vein, "Grossraum C21" stands as a critique of the current dominant economic model and its expansionist policies. It suggests that both war and economic control are rooted in the same doctrine of creating a *Großraum*, which expands a state's interests and influence. This expansionism, whether through military or economic means, is seen as part of the same economic model that divides people into classes. The project, thus, highlights the global and intangible nature of modern capitalism, much like Fisher's notion that capitalism has become an all-encompassing system that's difficult to escape or challenge. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need to challenge and reclaim public spaces as a means of countering the prevailing economic and political order, which aligns with Fisher's idea that capitalist realism can be disrupted through acts of resistance and alternative thinking.

Myrto Marini's article, in turn, explores the role of museums in preserving and presenting collective memory, particularly in the context of difficult cultural heritage. It discusses the concept of memory, especially in relation to traumatic and painful historical events, and how memory is constructed and interpreted. The article first explores the interest in difficult heritage worldwide and its representation in museums. It then focuses on Greece and its history, particularly the use of exile and repression against political opponents. Marini studies three specific cases of political exile: Ai-Stratis, Chios, and Anafi, highlighting their historical significance and the challenges in preserving their memory. The conclusion suggests that these sites of difficult heritage should receive more attention



Figure 7: Panos Kokkinias, *Urania*, from the series *Here We Are*.

and support from the state for preservation and educational purposes. Overall, the text explores the complex relationship between memory, history, museums, and societal perceptions of difficult historical events. Finally, in the last contribution of the issue, **Dimitris Kechris** chronicles the evolution and impactful interventions of the MedPhoto Festival, a lens-based initiative conceived amidst the refugee and immigration crisis in 2016. By ingeniously combining photography with critical discourse, MedPhoto transcends conventional artistic boundaries to foster a socially engaged cultural community. Kechris critically reflects on the festival's exhibitions, from the poignant focus on displacement in "Borders - Crossroads" to the critical examination of European identity in "Europe: The Faces and the Territory", unpacking its explorations of power dynamics, democracy, and the role of the technical image in shaping reality. The

culmination in the latest edition, addressing the essence of democracy, reveals MedPhoto's unwavering commitment to challenging the status quo through lens-based media. In this sense, Kechris' narrative not only serves as a comprehensive overview of MedPhoto's trajectory but also highlights its transformative potential in shaping dialogues around pressing contemporary issues.

Overall, these diverse perspectives converge to elucidate the complex fabric of the Greek Crisis, illustrating how artists, filmmakers, writers, and activists engage with and respond to the challenges posed by socio-political and economic upheaval. Together, at the same time, they aspire to paint a nuanced picture of resilience, resistance, and the constant negotiation of identity in the face of crisis. Seen collectively, they might ultimately suggest that perhaps *There Is An Alternative*.

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PENELOPE PETSINI Born in Bucharest, 1973. Studied Photography in Athens and UK (University of London, Goldsmiths College –MA in Image and Communication; University of Derby –PhD) sponsored by the State Scholarship Foundation (I.K.Y.). She is a Doctor of Philosophy in Arts and Humanities, specialized in photography. Her research interests, both in terms of theory and practice, focus on photography and its relation to personal and collective memory, history and politics. She has exhibited and published extensively both in Greece and internationally. She curated a series of photography and visual art exhibitions, the most recent being "Another Life: Human Flows | Unknown Odysseys" (Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, 5-11/2016) and "Sites of Memory" (Benaki Museum, Athens, 6-7/2016). She also curated Photobiennale 2018, that is two international group exhibitions at the Museum of Photography and the Center of Contemporary Art/MOMus entitled "Capitalist Realism: Future Perfect | Past Continuous" (28/9/2018 - 29/3/2019, Thessaloniki), and the eponymous book (University of Macedonia Press, 2018). Recent publications also include *Sites of Memory: Photography, Collective Memory and History* (Athens: Hellenic Center of Photography & NEON Foundation, 2016); the collective readers *Censorship in Greece* (Athens: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2016) and *Companion of Censorship in Greece: Weak Democracy, Dictatorship, Metapolitefsi* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2018) co-edited with Dimitris Christopoulos; as well as *Photography and collective identities: Greek Photography Studies I* (Athens: Koukkida 2021) and *Photography and the anthropological turn: Greek Photography Studies II* (Athens: Koukkida 2023) co-edited with John Stathatos. She has had affiliated appointments as lecturer of photography theory and contemporary art since 2004. From 2018 to 2023, she was lecturing in the MA course "Censorship: Interdisciplinary approaches" in the Department of Political Science and History, Panteion University, Athens. She is currently teaching at the Department of Photography and Audiovisual Arts, University of West Attica.

SPACES OF CAPITALIST REALISM: REPRESENTING THE NORMALISATION OF THE CRISIS IN CONTEMPORARY GREEK CINEMA

Anna Poupou

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

ABSTRACT

Taking as a starting point the idea of capitalist realism as formulated by Mark Fisher and associated with the power, or the inabilities of contemporary cinema to imagine alternative realities, this paper explores the representations of crisis through the elements of space and class in contemporary Greek films that were produced within the context of the Weird Wave and reveal the process of “normalization” of the crisis.

Keywords:

Greek cinema

Weird Wave

Representations of crisis

Neo-realism

Urban spaces in cinema



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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary cinema of the era of 'late capitalism' becomes for Mark Fisher the perfect tool in order to visualize his thoughts about Capitalist Realism: drawing examples from sci-fi fiction films that depict dystopias, totalitarian structures and ominous visions of a future in which nothing new, radical and subversive cannot be imagined anymore, he supports his main argument that "it's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism". If speculative film fiction is no longer able for utopian thinking, what then about realist, down-to-earth, small scale, and low budget art cinema in a contemporary multi-crisis context? Within the discussion about capitalist realism and the TINA doctrine, Fisher ironically describes 'realism' as "the deflationary perspective of a depressive who believes that any positive state, any hope, is a dangerous illusion" (2009:5). Fisher in this framework gives to the word an alternative reading closer to "pragmatism" than the one we usually associate in film discourse with 'realism' and realist cinema, meaning a cinema focused on social reality and real locations, inscribed to a tradition that goes back to Italian neo-realism and covers a wide breadth from Marxist militant filmmaking processes to the Bazinian concept of a cinema that not only records, but reveals, reality. What happens, however, when this neo-realist film strand collides with capitalist pragmatism?

Looking back from a distance, the official outburst of the post-2009 crisis seemed like the year zero for Greek cinema: young filmmakers started to participate frequently in international film festivals, iconic films were discussed in relationship to the crisis, its symptoms and meanings, while the theoretical framework of film studies in Greece begun to strengthen. At the same time, expectations and hopes for a radical change in the way the films are financed, produced and distributed were raised. In the cinematic field there were vivid discussions about alternative 'guerilla' modes of production, based on the extremely low budget, the volunteer participation of professionals and alternative ways of financing, such as the crowd funding (Chalkou 2012, Nikolaidou & Poupou 2017, Sifaki 2020,

Papanikolaou 2021). One decade later, with the state financial support system for the cinema still very fragile, the contemporary film production has moved towards an even more monopolized landscape, with only a handful of Greek producers still capable and willing to finance an art-house project; subsidies and residencies by prestigious art foundations, or festival film labs appear today as the only path for the funding of a film. Even for awarded filmmakers, with an impressive presence in major film festivals, it remains difficult to assure financing for their next project (c.f. Kokkini 2019). While the reception of this art-house new wave films by festivals and reviewers was warm, the theatrical admissions in Greece were misappropriate and the response of the spectators disappointing, bringing in the surface controversies not only about film cultures in Greece but also about practices of the local distribution and exhibition circuits.

At the end of the decade, and just before the pandemic crisis, one of the major and positive changes was that it showed the possibility for an opening of Greek cinema to transnational procedures and co-productions: almost all films of this new wave did not rely exclusively to Greek funding, on the contrary they participate more than ever to international practices of the art film market, something that was not the case for the Greek cinema of the previous decades (Papadimitriou 2018). Even if the hopes for a more emancipated and independent film production were suspended, what happened during the economic crisis gave the chance to the film community not only to imagine other ways of filmmaking, associating and collaborating, but also to affirm a new cinematic wave, born in a period of trouble. However, the lockdown and its repercussions brought immense obstacles in Greek film market, as international collaborations and production procedures became more complex, cinema theatres closed down in a definite way, while new practices such as online streaming Greek platforms (for example Cinobo), emerged dynamically. At the end of the pandemic crisis international productions shot in Greek locations took the lead in the local film market, and together with an emerging interest for mainstream television fiction series, and the transmutation of traditional TV channels to digital streaming platforms, brought arthouse film production to the background, in relation to the audiovisual landscape during the crisis.

2. GREEK CINEMA: BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND CONFIDENCE

Commenting on Deleuze and Guattari's seminal idea that schizophrenia is the condition that delineates capitalism, Fisher adds that bi-polar disorder is the mental state proper to the 'interior' of capitalism:

With its ceaseless boom and bust cycles, capitalism is fundamentally and irreducibly bi-polar, periodically lurching between hyped-up mania and depressive come down (the term 'economic depression is no accident, of course). To a degree unprecedented in any other social system, capitalism both feeds on and reproduces the moods of populations. Without delirium and confidence, capital could not function. (2009: p.35).

Retrospectively looking at the last 15 years in the Greek cinematic landscape as described above, one can diagnose this bi-polar cycle between phases of depression and lack of financial support for cinema, to triumphs in international film festivals, from a celebration for new and radical crowdfunding and collective filmmaking practices, to mourning about lamentable ticket admissions, from a delirium of institutional strategies for attracting international production through cash rebate and location advertising, to expressions of anger and grief about endangered cinema theatres in the cities centers².

As many researchers of Greek cinema has shown until today, the films of the weird wave were political in multiple ways: in the way they used irony, cynicism and black humor to attack institutions and authorities, to discuss the dysfunctional family and the family archive, in the way they try to capture the immediate effects of the crisis and the possibilities that opened to question capitalism and neoliberalism, in the way they focused on sexuality and gender through disturbing narratives, or in the way they made use of the affect or aggression towards the spectator (Papanikolaou 2018, Psaras 2016, Nikolaidou & Poupou 2017). Dimitris Papanikolaou in his monograph on the Weird Wave highlights the political aspects of these films through the lenses of biopolitics, capturing a universal feeling that became more and more dominant and tangible during the Covid-19 cri-

sis, the lockdown and the pandemic measures. Furthermore, this new wave generated an interest for older cinematic forms, especially those of the New Greek Cinema of the 1970s, as it was clear that the young filmmakers sought in the work of the generation of the struggle against the junta an aesthetic armory that could be used in the films that were made during the crisis. Elements such as the performativity, the distancing effect, the irony, the overturn of the generic conventions, the de-dramatization and the serialization, had immediate references to the political art-house of the 1960s and 1970s. In this context, a group of filmmakers initiated in 2017 a two year film retrospective that was called *The Lost Highway of Greek Cinema*, that screened the less known art films from the 1960s to the 1980s that had stay in the margins of the canon of Greek film history. In these screenings, that took the form of a film club, issues about the preservation of these films, about the politics of film heritage, about the concept of the film archive and about the cinephilic culture in Greece were discussed and made this retrospective a kind of emancipative gesture towards official film institutions. The next step of this initiative took a more official form of screenings and film restorations under the name "Motherland I See You", organized by the Hellenic Film Academy (Nikolaidou & Papanikolaou 2022). If the activist movement of the *Filmmakers in the Mist*³ (FOG, that stands for Filmmakers of Greece) in 2008 initiated the new weird wave, the Lost Highway ten years later proved that the film community was more mature and effective in terms of collective initiations, and re-oriented its focus from the way that the films were produced to the way that they reach the spectator.

The first form of this paper was written in 2019, so it examined three recent – at that time-examples, trying to trace the political discourse of these films focusing on the elements of space, class and social representations, three features that are associated with the heritage of neo-realism. The year 2019 marked a double shift in the political and financial situation of the country: the elections of this year put an end to the left government of Syriza and put forth the conservative party of Nea Dimokratia, reversing the political landscape. Previously, at the end of 2018, the PM had announced the ending of the Memorandum of Agreement, that officially put an end of the long period of the financial crisis. At

that time, I perceived these films as examples of a transition, from a state of emergency related to the conditions of the financial crisis and the memorandum era, to a state where emergency has taken the form of the new normality. Today, after the pandemic crisis, the unstable international geopolitical situation and the perspectives of new debt crisis, the concept of “normality” cannot be perceived but in an ironic way. From a present point of view, the year 2019 seems as the appropriate year for examining the bipolarity of the system, appearing as a threshold that could describe the end of radicalism and the return to more conservative ideological mindsets. Thus, these three films examined through the point of view of space and class representations, described not only this kind of “in-between” transitional spaces, but also featured this mood of contradiction, ambiguity and bi-polar energy from pessimism to delirium, that merges a neo-realist view with “capital realism”. This bi-polarity is also expressed in terms of style and mise-en-scene, that waves from documentary practices of intense participation and immersive qualities to the austere, blank, still and minimalistic compositions attributed to the ‘weird wave’. Finally, it is evident that in films produced after 2021 one can trace different spatial patterns, that are turning to more intimate and personal spaces: at the end of this article I will briefly refer to these examples, in order to compare them with these transitional cases, shot at the end of the period of the financial crisis, or the end of radicalism in *Weird Wave*.

The concept of the ‘return to normality’ that predicted, or even celebrated, the end of the crisis has been used as a political slogan in the last years of the 2010’s, mainly from the conservative government of Nea Dimokratia⁴; at the same time, this idea of ‘normality’ is currently used as an anti-slogan, in an ironic way, to describe a wave of ideological conservatism, ultra-nationalism and intolerance that emerges after a decade of crisis and radicalism, and it is evident in many forms of popular culture and media. Expressions of this retrograde shift can be felt in a multitude of aspects of everyday life after 2019 with an extreme right-wing agenda emerging in public and mediatic discourses; increase of femicides and gender violence, attack to immigrant rights, police violence and control, gentrification and speculation on public space are just a few examples of this shift; in the same vein, this use of

the ‘normalization’ process is not devoid of nostalgia, as it indirectly refers to a fictional, even abstract, past of imaginary ‘normality’ before the crisis. Papanikolaou points out that that the Greek word “kanonikotita” in this context means not only “normality” but mainly “normative”. As Papanikolaou asserts, “the discourse of ‘normality’ as well as the discourse of ‘return to normality’ is precisely what Fisher called capitalist realism. An all-enveloping sphere, an episteme of the now, that make everything look connected and warns everyone to keep labouring so that it can also keep posing as real” (Papanikolaou 2020: 127)

In this perspective, I will focus on three films that take place in an in-between time and space, and in my opinion show the dialectics between crisis and normality. These films, in more cynical or ironical way, illustrate what Fisher describes: ‘the normalization of crisis produces a situation in which the repealing of measures brought in to deal with an emergency becomes unimaginable’ (2009:1), and indicate not only that crisis is a constructive feature of capitalism, but essentially that the capitalist normality is based on a sequence of crisis and emergencies.

3. A LONG TAKE ON PATISSION AVENUE

Patission Avenue (2018) is a short film directed by Thanassis Neofotistos and Yannis Fotou as director of photography, that participated in the official selection of Venice Festival in 2018 and was awarded in Clermont Ferrand film festival. The particularity of the film is that it is was shot in one long take of thirteen minutes; this feature gives to the film the status of a technical achievement, as it follows a difficulty trajectory of the main character walking on the busy Patission Avenue in one sequence shot, without any possibility of correcting or adjusting the image in editing or post-production. The film was shot in a very precise time slot – during sunset – so in these thirteen minutes the action starts with daylight and finishes in early night lighting conditions. The film was rehearsed on location for three months, until it was finally shot in one and only take.

The long take is used here not only for aesthetic reasons, but also for narrative purposes, as it efficiently helps to built up the intensity, the sus-



Figure 1: *Patission Avenue*

pense and the identification with the situation: this sense of emergency has a striking affective power for the spectator, something noticed in all the film reviews (Boyce 2018). Once associated with slow, modernist arthouse filmmaking of a neo-realist descent, nowadays the long take, especially from an immersive first person's point of view brings to mind the aesthetics of digital games and VR artworks, in a sense that completes Bazin's theory about a total reproduction and a simulated lived experience of reality (Wolf 2015). A young actress is walking in a fast pace in a full of people Patission Avenue, talking at the phone; we never see her face, or hear her name, we only follow her as she walks or run. She is going to an audition for a part in a Shakespeare performance. The spectators understand progressively that her six-years old son is left alone in the house as the baby sitter had to leave because of an emergency. She tries to reach friends, her sister, her mother, her partner, in order to take care of the child as she continues her way to Exarhia. The phone does not stop ringing, and her son calls to tell her that he started cooking. At this moment she accidentally finds herself at a clash between the police (MAT – the Units for the Restoration of Order) and a group of protestors while she shouts at her son in order to prevent the accident. An explosion near her makes her run through the tear gazes, and the film finishes as she runs away together with the other protesters, having lost the phone that keeps ringing.

The filming features of *Patission Avenue* can be found in many films of the last decade, that could be described as films of 'social observa-

tion'. In these films (such as *Homeland*, *Wasted Youth*, *A Blast*, *The Daughter*) the construction of space and the *mise-en-scène* differ widely from the branch of the «weird» films that base their aesthetics on minimalism (motionless camera, long shots, deadpan acting). In the above-mentioned films a handheld camera follows the characters through the city streets and real locations, building a tight frame around the body of the actors, who are often filmed from the back, creating an «immersive» impression for the spectator, a framework that borrows its techniques from the observation documentary. This kind of cinematography and use of the setting, capture a raw image of everyday life in Athens, with excessive use of motion, out-of-focus images, shallow depth of field, noises, elliptical and fragmented views of the cityscape. Syntagma square, Patission Avenue, Athens University and the Polytechnic University become *chronotopes* in the Bakhtinian sense, as temporal and spatial indicators fused into one concrete whole – «spaces become charged and responsive to the movements of plot, time and history» (1981:84) – as they usually, in the first years of the crisis, appeared mainly in times of social unrest within specific narratives. The starting point of this climaxing plot starts from a point of the everyday life of the character, a common routine, a so-called normality: she is anxiously looking for her new job. However professional precarity and flexibility is not presented as something exceptional or out of normal, for an actress: she was prepared for one part, and then she is asked to present another part, from long hair she transforms her looks to short her, as she is walking – but that's the spirit of a performer, a

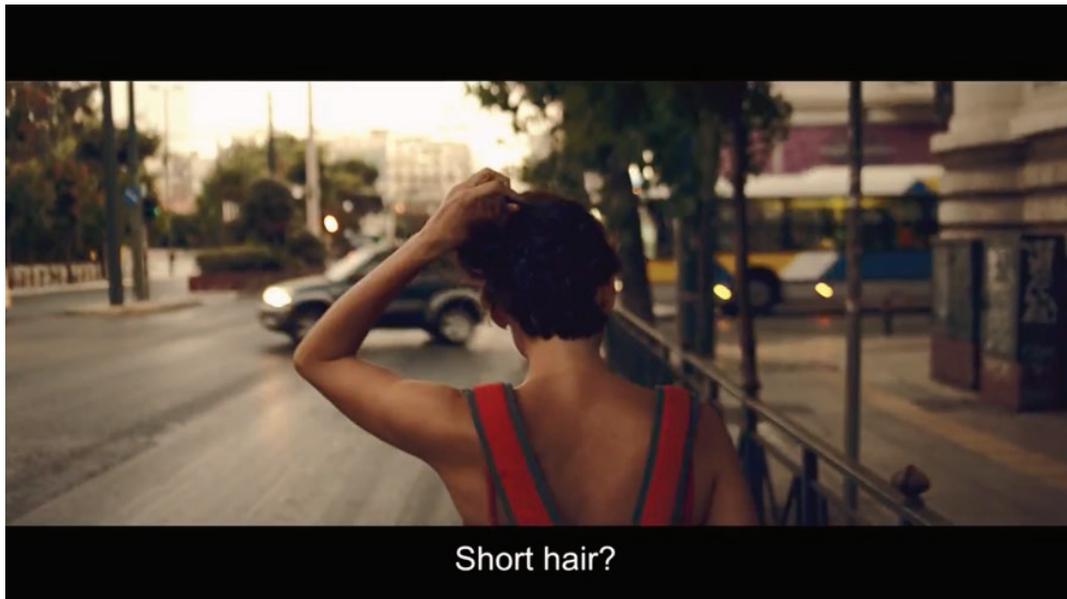


Figure 2: *Patission Avenue*

part of the job. At the same time the problem of who takes care of her son during her absence is presented also in a context of instability: the baby sitter leaves unexpectedly, the friends and family who usually help are not available, however these improvisations and last-minute arrangements also seem as a normality. As she crosses the avenue and directs towards Exarhia, she sees the first signs of a riot, a few tear gazes and the police in alert, however she continues her path, because this tension is also a kind of normality in the district. When she realizes that an accident of her son is very possible, and when a simple riot turns very fast into a streetfight and she is found in the middle, chased by the police, the feeling we get is how this sense of unstable 'normality' is so close to an almost predictable sense of emergency. The long take that unifies the real and the filmic time and space achieves this merging of the personal event with the public space and this short distance between 'normality' and crisis. .

4. WEST OF THE RIVER: HER JOB (2018)

A dominant feature in the films of this last decade was a turn towards new representations of the working class; many films focused on the working conditions and environments of characters who deal with precarity, insecurity, instability and unemployment during the crisis. While in the films of the 1990s there was a preference for middle class characters and liberal professions – many examples with journalists, artists, architects, university professors and doctors – the films of the Greek

wave seem to recreate an iconography of the Greek working class and the precariat. Kassaveti and Nikolaidou in their meticulous quantitative methodological approach have shown that in a significant percentage (72.3%) of the films of the new wave use work and unemployment as a part of their main theme, either as a core thematic element or as a 'free motif'. They present a useful taxonomy of four categories: allegories of work, representation of small business and self-employed workers, representations of in-work poverty and privation and representation of youth unemployment (Kassaveti & Nikolaidou 2019: 164-165). They also highlight the visibility of the figure of the professional female cleaner or domestic help after 2009 and the criminal attack against Konstantina Kouneva, member of the Greek Trade Union of Cleaners and Housekeepers, and discuss it in relationship with the films *At Home* (2014) by Athanassios Karanikolas and *Unfair World* (2013) by Filippos Tsitos (Kassaveti & Nikolaidou 2019: 165-166).

The figure of the cleaner appears as well in the recent, awarded film *Her Job* by Nikos Labôt (2018). It presents the story of Panayiota, a woman in her 30s, an oppressed housewife and mother, who had never worked outside home. The plot is loosely set in the middle of the crisis, during the memorandum years – presumably in 2012-3 – as in the first part of the film we hear information from the radio about the levels of unemployment in Greece, austerity measures and workers strikes. Her husband is unemployed and he is presented as having lost any hope to find a job that would be not too dangerous, too precarious or decently paid. When Panayiota learns from a neighbor that



Figure 3: Her Job

a new shopping mall is opening in the district, she decides to apply for a work as a cleaner. At first shy and insecure, she starts to enjoy her job, she becomes a model of employee and gains confidence, despite the low wages, the short-term contracts and the extra hours of work; she opens her first bank account, she learns how to drive and makes new friends. At home, her husband undertakes all the domestic duties, while she gains respect from her kids. After a few weeks of work, together with her other co-workers she will be fired brutally from this job, as she will be tricked to sign her resignation without any compensation. While she's shocked by this unexpected turn, the film will end at this exact point: it will not show her win again her job, or fighting back with the other fired cleaners. In the last scene, at the same day of her dismissal she's going to the birthday party of a colleague, she meets the other co-workers and they will try to dance and have fun despite their distress. The film's awkward and open ending implies that Panayiota and her friends they will find a new, similar and precarious job somewhere else; The film's end brings to mind the frustrating closure in the film *Anna's matchmaking*, (Pantelis Voulgaris 1972), where the heroine, after a failed revolt, is obliged to make patience with her job as a maid, in order to support her family in the village. Eva Stefani notes about this film "Made in 1972, one year before the Polytechnio events, the film by Voulgaris can be read as a call for an awakening, an apprising, a revolution. But nothing in this film shouts, nothing exceeds the measure of an impressively solid internal pace. This awareness, Voulgaris suggests, is firstly an internal case." She further cites a

review by Vincent Canby stating "No one in this film doesn't suspect a revolution, but the film shouts for a revolution with a voice so gentle, that the real anger of the words can be heard only afterwards" (Stefani 2007:88).

The film could be seen as an example of a cynical depiction of capitalist realism (in the sense of 'pragmatism'): when Panayiota and her co-workers are exploited, tricked and fired, the story tells us that there is not alternative. Her female colleagues, that represent all ages and nationalities, express various attitudes: others are organized to the labour's union, one of them threatens to go to the Labour Inspectorate, others are against collective action and believe they will be spared. The development of this story, while it starts in a context of crisis, doesn't not stay anchored to it: the working conditions it describes are not presented as an exceptional situation, but as normality. The responsible employee announces the dismissal without any reason: it is not because of the crisis, but because they don't need extra personnel after the inauguration and the opening of the mall. The co-workers deal with this dismissal as it was a usual, almost expected situation and not as an emergency, showing that strategies of exploitation that were used during the crisis, end up as a permanent situation and become 'normality'. The film doesn't show any of these attitudes of the colleagues having an immediate result: it gives however the feeling of a progressive maturing of the heroine, an awareness of her working rights as well as the forging of solidarity between her colleagues. It lets us imagine that she made the first steps and that in the future, she will not permit to be exploited.

Figure 4: *Her Job*

The film's image, in terms of cinematography and style, make use of a discreet and realist approach inscribed to the tradition of social realism that brings to mind Ken Loach's style. The cinematography purposely avoids any excessive or eccentric stylistic virtuosity, keeping a down to earth imagery and constructing a "normal" and "ordinary" image of everyday life, that stresses once more the concept of normality. Most of the scenes are shot with a handheld camera, but in contrast to the previous pattern described above, here we don't have excessive, delirious movement or immersive intensity by following the main character. A recurrent iconographical pattern of the film are the close-ups to the characters face, and close-ups of her working tools, such as the vacuum cleaner. The camerawork stresses the acting of Marisha Triantafyllidou that plays Panayiota with an ageless face, an empty gaze, a hunched posture and a tired figure that slowly changes towards a belated emancipation.

The film starts in a low-income neighborhood of Athens that remains unidentified: in the first act we follow the characters in this district, at the supermarket, the school (that is located in Zografou) and the street outside the house. In one of the first scenes we see Panayiotas husband Kostas in a pawn shop that is located in an urban arcade, a passage lined with other gold market stores, pawn shops and jewelry dealers. Kostas, after leaving the pawn shop enters a lottery retailer shop, that is situated in the same passage, just opposite the pawn shop. The passage is at the number 4 of Sofokleous street, near the old Stoke Exchange of Athens, but the way that it is filmed doesn't

make this place recognizable, and doesn't intentionally highlight the semiotics the stock exchange and its relation to the pawn shop and the lottery retailer: however, the reality of the place is there, even if it is captured in a discreet way. In scenes set in iconic urban landmarks (in Omonia and Panepistimiou for example), the director uses shallow depth of field and in this way he transforms them to unrecognizable ordinary places. One more passage of the center of Athens appears a few scenes later: Panayiota goes at her first interview for the job, at the office that is situated at the Stoa Fix, at Omonia. In one shot we see the old sign with the name of the passage, while in the street a scrap gatherer finishes his work, wearing a shirt with the logo "Life is fantastic". Such compositions that express an ironic vision on capitalist realism can be found all over the film, but in a more subtle and unobtrusive way than the one we found in the films made in the first years of the crisis.

From the urban passages of the center of Athens, as predecessors of the commercial center, now in decay, we transit into the new ordinary location of commercial activity, the mega-mall. While in the first act of the film there is a variety of everyday life places, in the following two acts the plot is firmly set in the commercial mall where most of the action unfolds. "Le Marché" is a new mall inaugurated despite the crisis in the western districts of Athens: the real location was the Mall River West in Kifissos Avenue that marks a social frontier between the city-center and the working-class western suburbs. All action is framed by the impersonate and glass surfaces of the mall,

surrounded by low-cost stores of international brands, a representation of a banal, familiar and accessible consumerism.

In this part of the film the *mise-en-scène* shifts slightly as it adapts to the new settings, we have more long shots, empty frames and more abstract compositions of non-places – parking lots, highways, halls, basements, locker rooms – that bring the aesthetics closer to the “weird” films of 2010s. Panayiota is usually framed in wide shots, in transition inside elevators, escalators, or her sweeping vehicle. One of the most spectacular shots of the film – the one that was used also for the promotional poster – is a vertical overhead frame, in which we see Panayiota from above vacuuming a red carpet, giving an abstract quality that breaks for a moment the monotony of the this ordinary *mise-en-place*, probably suggesting a change into how the character perceive herself and her new working identity. Always in a subtle way, the film marks a transition, from the vernacular iconography of everyday life urban locations in decay and crisis to new spaces, consumerist practices and working conditions that become the new normality.

5. THIS FAMILIAR STRANGENESS: *PITY* (2018)

Babis Makridis' directorial debut, *L*, penned by Efthymis Filippou in 2011, emerged as one of the pioneering films, alongside *Dogtooth*, *Alps* and *Attenberg*, that triggered the label ‘weird’ from critics. Makridis' work was from the beginning in the core of what was called the weird wave as he shared common features and also the same collaborators with Yiorgos Lanthimos and Athina Rachel Tsangari. *L* had all the features attributed to the ‘weird’ aesthetics, such as deadpan acting, absurdism, lack of emotional expression, minimalistic looks, natural lighting and geometrical organization of the space, and it stressed to extremes the de-dramatization of the plot and the inexpressive theatricality. Makridis second feature film *Pity* came out in 2018, almost a decade after the outburst of the ‘weird wave’. What was then shocking, unexpected and new in terms of style and narration, in *Pity* has a quality of ‘strange familiarity, or familiar strangeness’ as the reviewers had noticed (Lodge 2018, Linden

2018, Martinez 2019). I don't stress this as a negative aspect of the film, or as a sign of non-effectiveness, on the contrary I believe that is a good example of the transformative process that affected artistic forms and creative and expressive patterns that were born in a ‘state of emergency’ and their mutation into the era of the so-called ‘normalization’.

The main character of *Pity* is a Lawyer – we don't know his name. His wife had an accident and is in a state of coma. He and their son go on with their lives, while friends and people they know express their condolences, giving them gifts and treats. Every morning a neighbor bakes a cake and offers it to the Lawyer, with wishes for the fast recovery of her wife. The Lawyer cannot cry; he is unable to express his sorrow and grief, so he feels fulfilled by the pity of the others, and even enjoys it. When the wife is unexpectedly resurrected, he tries to find again this strange routine of the pity of others, who now don't care about him. Desperate of having lost this affection, he stages the murders of his wife, kid and father-in-law, so as to be again the object of pity. Only the dog survives from the bloodbath.

In terms of style the film bears all the features of the weird wave: planimetric space and geometrical composition, an austerity to camera movements and framing. The iconographical motif of the empty space is one of the most characteristic aesthetic choices of the ‘weird wave’. Filmmakers of this trend express this need to leave naked their locations, to devoid them from their social dimension, giving the impression of a laboratory, as Athina Rachel Tsangari does in *Attenberg*. For example, the screenwriter Efthymis Filippou says in an interview that when he writes a script with Yiorgos Lanthimos he's never interested about where the action will be situated: whether it will take place in Larissa or in Mexico City is their last decision. This non-locality, as well as the feeling of replicability of the national space is characteristic of these films that can be read as a comment about the standard image of the urban spaces of globalization. Another ironic feature of these films is their portrayal of the preferences for spaces and characters of the middle class. During the initial years of the crisis, while media imagery often focused on images of poverty and victimhood, these films instead emphasized the enclosed

Figure 5: *Pity*

spaces of the middle class. This choice sparked reactions that viewed the films of the weird wave as a reflection of society. However, by the 2019 elections, the concept of the 'middle class' had become central to the political agenda of both governmental parties, instrumental to the rhetoric of the 'return to normality' (c.f. Panayiotopoulos 2021: 308-312, 350-351). Thus, the class representations of these films, which highlight exactly this performance between conformism and exuberance, seriousness and the ridiculous, the normal and the weird, become even more ironic and political.

The film takes place in urban spaces of the upper middle class, in privileged and beautiful locations situated in the sea front of Athens. The Lawyer lives in a minimalistic apartment at the Faliro Coast looking at the sea and the Poseidonos Avenue, his wife is cured at the Onasseio Hospital and from the windows we see the Niarchos Foundation, the Hellenicon area and the sea at the background. He spends his free time at the Vouliagmeni beach, and he visits his father-in-law at his villa at Sounio, overlooking the island of Makronissos at the background. These are all locations that in the last years had become a major topic in the political discourse, spaces in transition to gentrification, locations waiting for the investors; the case of the 'Athenian Riviera' as the flagship of the national tourism and the only hope for the financial resurrection of the country, was one of the priorities in the media discourse and the agenda of the election of 2019.

Inevitably, once again, the weird calls for

allegorical readings, despite the fact that the intention of the filmmakers and the scriptwriter do not reveal any sociopolitical nuances. *Pity* is a film about a past crisis - a wife in coma - but the Lawyer realizes all the benefits he can get from the pity of others, and even the pleasure that he feels from the sentiments of grief and mourning. *Pity* is also a film about an unwanted resurrection, that will deprive the Lawyer from his benefits: How he will ensure that this cycle of death and pity will continue? These transitions seem as an ironic comment on the bi-polar cycles of capitalism that are based on recurrent crisis, phases of depression and the rhetoric of recovery, resurrection and boom. Finally, one has the feeling that Makridis in this hilarious black comedy makes a self-parody of the weird wave, of its basic features - such as the performativity, deadpan acting and lack of affect - and of the attention that the Greek films enjoyed in international film festival circuit during the crisis. Now that the particularities of Greek society in crisis are not under the microscope of the global media, and other regions of the planet become the center of attention, will these films continue to have a privileged place in the art film market?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is noteworthy to highlight the contrasting spatial perceptions observed in these recent films compared to those of the previous generation, particularly films from the 1990s and early 2000s, in which the main topics were the journey, the itinerary, the borders, the limits and the exploration of national or nomadic identities, with the road movie genre prominently embraced by filmmakers as Angelopoulos, Panayiotopoulos, Tsiolis, Voulgaris, Goritsas and many others. This wide explorative geography has given way to a typology of spaces that revolve around the concepts of stability, seriality, replicability and delocalisation, offering insights to this 'invisible political geography' of capitalism (Petsini 2018:14). Nonetheless, in recent post-pandemic films we see new typologies of spaces, this time more associated with personal and intimate geographies exploring topics of memory, time, materiality and identity, such as the films *Magnetic Fields*, (Gousis 2021) *Bella* (Th. Petraki 2020) *Moon 66 questions* (J. Lentzou 2021), *Iota Period Omega*, (Alexiou 2022), *Broadway* (Massalas 2022), *Animal* (Exarhou, 2023). While during the crisis the concept of exoticism, crisis voyeurism and discourses of Greek exceptionalism prevailed in the discussions about Greek weird cinema, in the post-pandemic era a need to take a closer look to 'normality', the familiar or the ordinary (in an extraordinary situation) became more evident: this tendency calls for a re-examination of the empiric, realist and familiar space during the cycles of permanent crisis, emergencies and normalization processes.

NOTES

- [1] See for example the petition letter signed by 673 professionals of the film industry and the audiovisual sector against recent legislation and institutional measures announced in 2021. The open letter highlights all the crucial problems issued from the governmental policies and funding procedures involving ERT (Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation), EKOME (National Center of Audiovisual Media and Communication, and the Ministry of Culture. As described, the professionals warn that these actions will weaken the industry further leading to monopolistic practices. They demand the reinforcement of the Center for Greek Cinema as the lead institution supporting the film industry and ask for the design of a national strategy for the cinema. (Flix team 2021)
- [2] Many cinema theatres in Athens closed during the Covid-19 lockdown (such as Oscar), but the most disturbing news were the discussions in 2022 about the closing down of three iconic cinema theatres in the city-center, Ideal, Astor and Aello (see Flix team 2022). For the moment, in 2024, only Ideal faces a direct threat as its building will be restructured as a hotel, raising concerns about the survival of other endangered cinemas in Athens. During 2022 and 2023 this issue was also connected with intense public discussions about urban gentrification and the impact of overtourism in Greece.
- [3] Filmmakers in the Mist (FOG – Filmmakers of Greece) was a movement initiated by 45 film professionals that in 2009 boycotted the Thessaloniki International Film Festival as a protest against governmental strategies and lack of support of the audiovisual sector in the beginning of the financial crisis. This movement resulted to the creation of the Hellenic Film Academy, an institution with the aim to support initiatives regarding the development of Greek film production. See also Karalis (2012: 278, Papanikolaou 2021: 37-39, Sifaki 2020: 29-30)
- [4] During 2018 and 2019 the slogan of the "return to normality" that would mean the prevailing of the conservative party and the ending of SYRIZA government could be found in all liberal and right-wing media. Indicative of this discourse is a recent article in *Kathimerini* in which the journalist makes an overview of the elections after 2015, and reinforces the narrative of a "demand for normality": "the Greeks voted for a return to normality" one can read under the photo of Tsipras leaving the Maximou mansion, the official seat of the Prime Minister. (*Kathimerini* 15/5/2023). However, after 2020 this journalistic slogan took other significations, in the context of the post Covid-19 lockdown period, until it lost any meaning at all in a multi-crisis environment.
- [5] Indicative is the project of Thessaloniki Film Festival *Spaces* that in 2020 called several directors to shoot a short film entirely made in one indoor location, during the lockdown. The project was inspired by *Species of Spaces* by Georges Perec in which the author calls us to question not the extraordinary event, but the most common and unnoticed things, object and habits of our everyday life (c.f. Poupou 2020).

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BILLBOARDS

Nikolas Ventourakis
Independent

ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Capitalist Realism
Crisis
Greek Crisis
Photography

This visual essay explores the intricate dynamics of interpreting visual art, particularly within the realm of photography, and the compelling role of inconclusiveness within the narrative. By showcasing previously unreleased images from 2013, it explores how viewers often confront images with an innate desire for resolution, driven by societal norms and shared viewpoints shaped by media and personal experiences. However, the essay challenges this instinct by focusing on instances where visual artworks, captured through the photographic medium, deliberately omit crucial contextual information. In doing so, viewers are prompted to question their instinctual conclusions and embrace a sense of discontentment. The essay focuses in 2013 Greece, during a period of financial turmoil when billboards stood conspicuously empty. While these vacant billboards were widely interpreted as symbols of a nation in crisis, I argue that the reality behind their abandonment was rather mundane - a legal crackdown on illegal constructions. This disparity between perception and reality served as a foundation for the project "Leaving Utopia," highlighting the power of visual inconclusiveness to challenge prevailing narratives and provoke critical inquiry.



NIKOLAS VENTOURAKIS is a visual artist living and working between Athens and London. His practice situates in the threshold between art and document, in the attempt to interrogate the status of the photographic image. A quest that unfolds in the decisive years of the digital revolution, when a crucial overlap between producers and viewers seems to have reset all previous critical discourses. Central to Ventourakis's visual work is a denial for a one-way resolution and an invitation to embrace an ambiguous imagery, where the photographic is not yet real, and the familiar is a projection of a mix of memory - stemming from both private and media experiences - with abstract thinking. Ventourakis' fascination lies in our need for stories to be conclusive, which cannot but clash with the impossibility for apparent pictures to provide any evidence nor "objective truth".

BILLBOARDS (2013-2023)

My interest in photography lies in how we tend to read images and how there seems to be a requirement for the stories shared through visual means to be conclusive and with clear outcomes. I focus on the misinterpretations and the assumptions that occur when the meta-information provided to accompany visual artworks is partial and inconclusive and the viewer is required - or feels obliged - to fill in the blanks.

Quite often, on the first interaction with a piece of visual communication, this happens using conventional abstract knowledge of similar situations; commonly based on prevailing and dominant shared viewpoints, which are perpetuated either by personal anecdotes or formed into cohesive narratives by the Media. However, inescapably one reaches the realization that there are occasions in works of art presented in the photographic medium where all the pointers that could help resolve the presented narrative are missing. The viewer is asked to reconsider and question what is it that they are looking at in the form of images and even more importantly what is presented to them and by whom. This way a line of inquiry is opened for the viewer to let them use the discontentment of being denied a resolution, towards questioning their instinctive conclusions.

During the height of "The Crisis" back in 2013 billboards in Greece stood empty. The constructs and the frames were still there, but no products or services were advertised on them. For the main line of thought at the time the empty billboards served as the perfect visual anchor of the financial meltdown in the country. There they stood, products of a consumer

and capitalist system, existing without function. A failed state, a failed society, failed people. Articles were written in prominent international newspapers, films were produced, screened and awarded in festivals.

Poetic language was used about this newly discovered continent that was Europe in the beginning of the 21st century, where billboards advertise no brighter lives and the people were offered a multitude of dystopian futures. Meta-narratives were built to support the structure

The reality of what led to the crumbling remains of the billboards, however, was much simpler and mundane. The billboards did not stand empty due to the "Unprecedented Crisis". They had to be abandoned as tools of commerce when the Greek government following pressure from grassroots citizen groups was forced to solve the issue of the innumerable illegal constructions. The new law, instead of fixing the issue, simply made all billboard advertising in public space illegal. The result was that all advertising had to stop with immediate effect and the posters taken down. The potential misreading of the situation with audiences and media projecting back on the billboards, which themselves exist to advertise widely capitalist ideas and to promote products and services formed the bases for a different project that was developed titled "Leaving Utopia". Ten years later, following years of unending crisis, with truly unprecedented environmental destruction, with the cost of living driving even more people into extreme poverty, the billboards still stand empty in Greece.

[The images in this visual essay are presented for the first time and are from 2013]



All Figures:
Untitled, 2013-2023, photographic image, dimensions variable.
Courtesy of the artist























THE TOURISTS:

A CAMPAIGN

Depression Era collective

Independent

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

touristification
visual culture
postcolonialism
immigration
exoticization

"The Tourists" is a subversive tourism campaign by the Depression Era collective, reflecting on the simultaneous influx of refugees and global tourism in Southern Europe. Through diverse media, it exposes landscapes marked by hidden violence, portrays individuals in states of flux, and blurs the line between idyllic tourism and harsh reality.



DEPRESSION
ERA

DEPRESSION ERA Founded as a response to the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis, Depression Era was a collective of 26+ art workers, active for almost a decade (2011-2019) in Greece. It documented the local expression of this crisis as a 'debt terror' leading to unprecedented social upheaval (mass pauperisation, riots, suicides, the enclosure by private capital of welfare, the environment, public urban space, housing, art and education). One of the largest socially engaged lens-based art collectives in Europe in the 21st century, the Depression Era collective presented its text and image-based narratives in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Greece and abroad, as well as organised presentations, public discussions, urban interventions, and a series of free workshops for artists and photographers, among others. The group was constantly exploring issues of authorship, process and self-governance, autonomous curation and unmediated artistic expression, as a collective endeavor.

THE TOURISTS: A CAMPAIGN

"The Tourists" is a collaborative project for those who cross Southern Europe and for those who reach out to or watch them go by. Devised and run by the Depression Era collective, the project operates as a subversive tourism campaign.

Originating in 2015 in Athens as a collective research and open discussion platform, "The Tourists" has since evolved into various forms, including a public space, a poster and digital campaign in Spring 2017 (under the tagline "Make Yourself at Home"), a publication, and a series of exhibitions. The visual, textual, and video works of "The Tourists" were prominently featured in the "Decline of Heroes" exhibition at Basel's Antikenmuseum in 2017, where they engaged in dialogue with ancient works of art from the Mediterranean and were displayed as street posters. In 2018, the project was showcased as part of a house installation or tourist pavilion at the Unseen Festival in Amsterdam. A more extensive pavilion installation was conceived and set up in the "13,700,000km³" exhibition at ArtSpace Pythagorion, Schwarz Foundation in Samos in 2019.

One pivotal event that significantly contributed to the momentum of the Tourists campaign was Documenta 14, which took place in Athens (2017). Within the Greek art community, there was criticism circulating about a certain hegemonic stance. (Documenta was publicly using the catchphrase: "Learning from Athens", which sounded condescending or even ironic, as it was coming from a high-brow German institution, while Greece was still grappling with its Europe-related financial crisis trauma.) As a matter of fact, Documenta's gaze upon a city in upheaval and flux, could not but be perceived as exoticizing the crisis. Another point of criticism was about the manner in which "indigenous" was being used in Documenta's curatorial concept in the context of a city in Southern

Europe. One of the DE collective's responses was mounting some of the "Tourists" campaign posters on the walls outside the School of Fine Arts at the time of the Documenta exhibitions there, and in the streets of Athens. The images that we chose to process and present brought up the issues of the European refugee crisis, the exoticization and touristification of Greece, the relationship between North & South, etc.

"The Tourists" responded to History-in-the-making: the waves of refugees and mass migrations from Asia and Africa to Europe, alongside the simultaneous surge in global tourism in the Mediterranean. These are ongoing parallel and converging global events that have generated states of emergency, distress investment, collateral conflicts and cultural patronage in the same geographical area and at the same time. The Tourist, in this context, resides within a divided, burned-out, hyper-mediated public sphere. Their identity and citizenship remain in flux; they often find themselves adrift, marked by perpetual anxiety, alienation, resignation, or resistance. They become mere simulacra of social engagement, unable to encapsulate history in anything more than a postcard, slogan, or tweet.

Amidst the narratives of power, encounter, arrival and departure featured in Global Media and contemporary art, the images and slogans of "the Tourists" expose seemingly idyllic landscapes containing the debris of unspeakable violence; frame portraits of women and men in alien places, strangers in their land, visitors among ruins, stateless, networked, indolent and conflicted; and document a generation of fearless children. It is not clear whether these images belong to tourism advertisements or disaster news streams.

[Text by Petros Babasikas and Pasqua Vorgia, for the Depression Era collective]

**YOU'VE GOT
A GREAT
FUTURE
BEHIND YOU**

makeyourselvesathome

Figures 1-4: Images from the *Make Yourself at Home* campaign, 2017

EMERGING ECONOMY



makeyourselvesathome

**WE DID
NOTHING**

makeyourselvesathome

HOMELAND



makeyourselvesathome

**CURRENTLY
BASED
IN
ATHENS**

makeyourselvesathome

Figures 5-6: Images from the *Make Yourself at Home* campaign, 2017

SOUTH IS THE NEW NORTH



makeyourselvesathome

**THE STATE
OF EMERGENCY
HAS BECOME THE
RULE**

makeyourselvesathome

Figures 7-8: Images from the *Make Yourself at Home* campaign, 2017

EATING PEOPLE IS WRONG



makeyourselvesathome

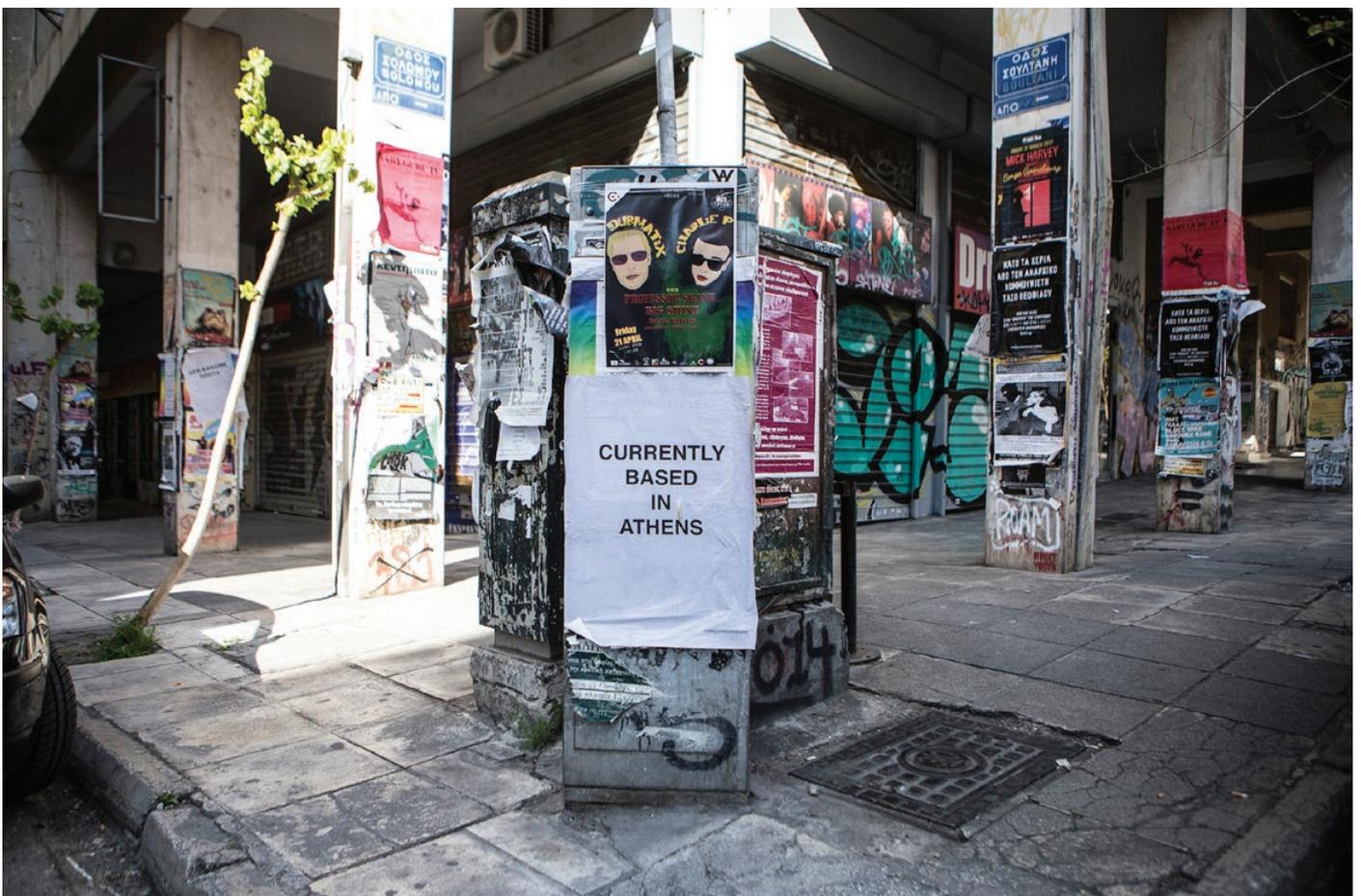


Figure 9: Make Yourself at Home campaign, 2017





Figures 10-13: *Make Yourself at Home* campaign, 2017







Figures 14-17 Make Yourself at Home campaign, 2017





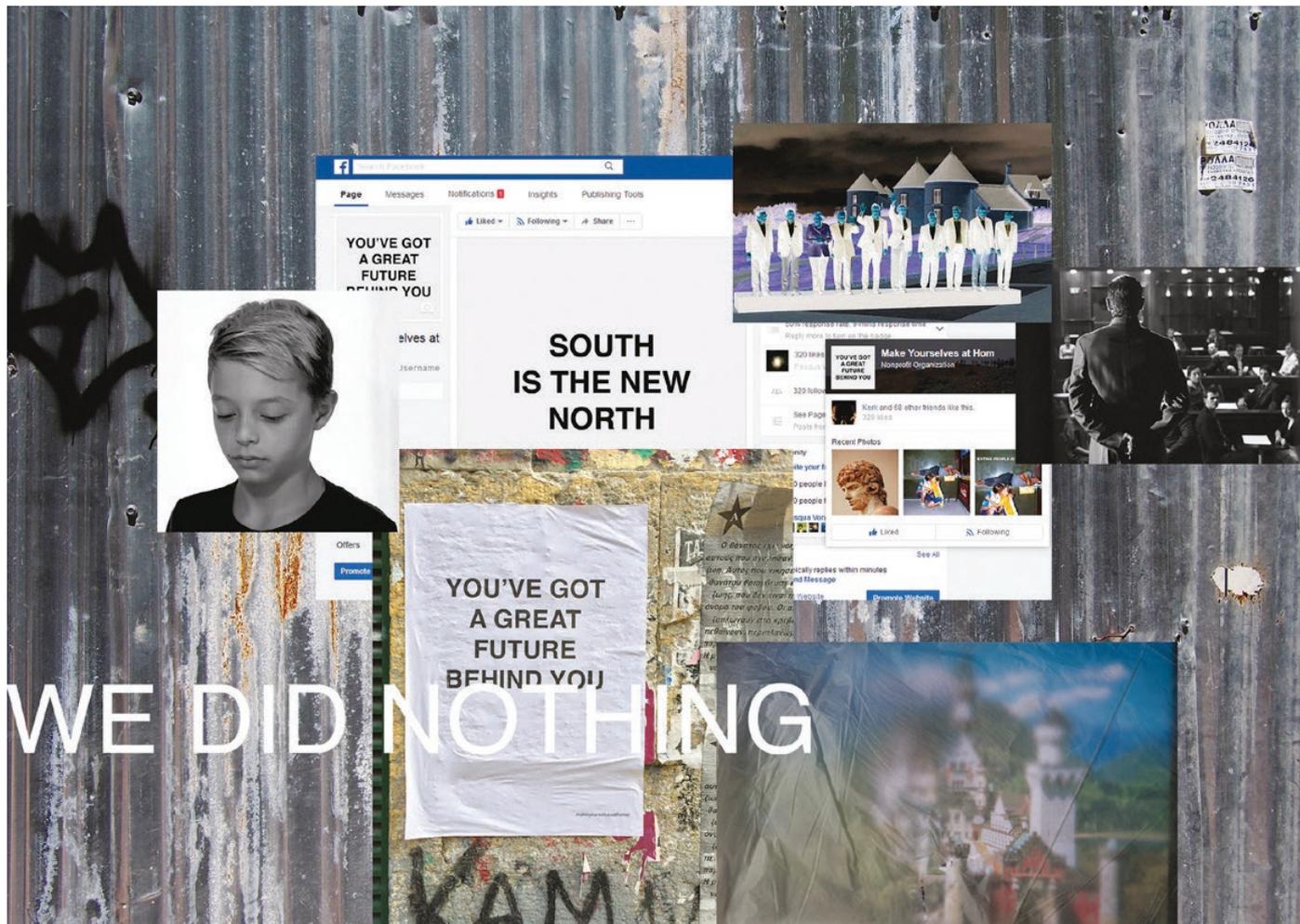
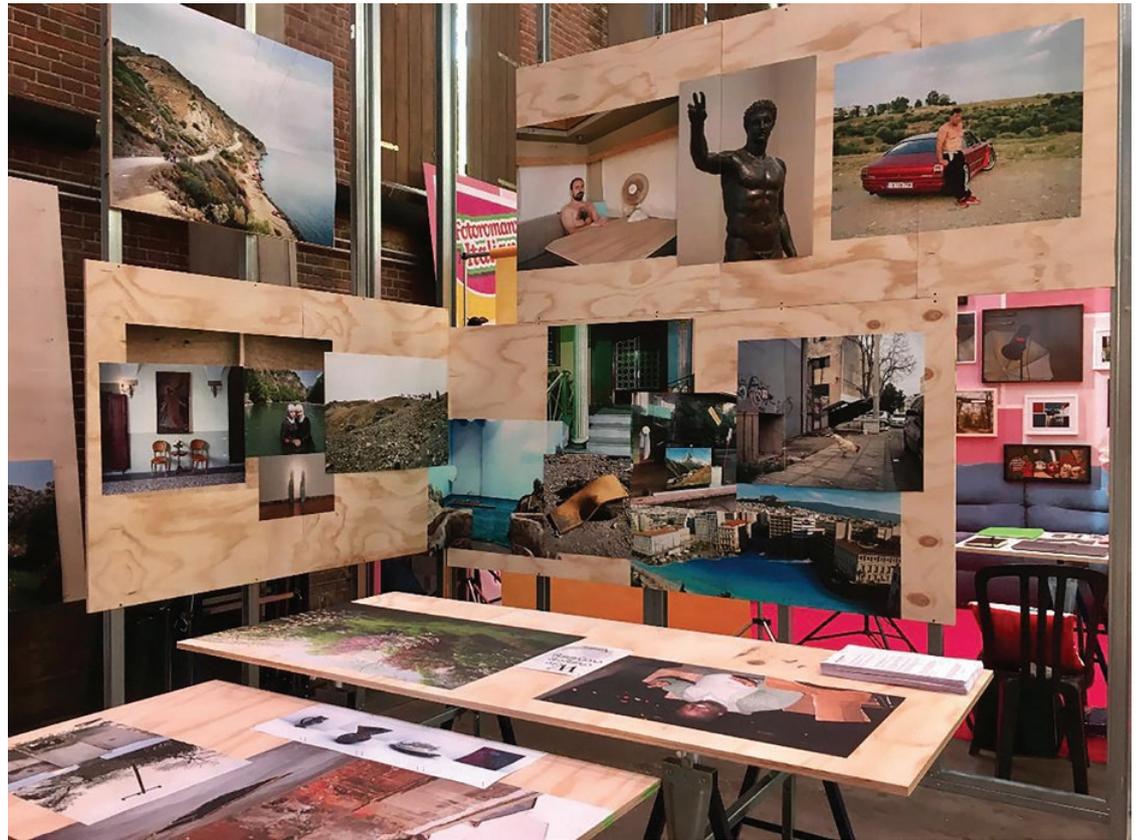


Figure 18: Excerpt from the Tourists Campaign publication for the "Decline of Heroes" exhibition at Basel's Antikenmuseum, 2017

Figure 19 (up right): Installation shot of the Tourist pavilion at the Unseen Festival in Amsterdam, 2018

Figure 20 (bottom right): Installation shot from the 13,700,000km3 exhibition in ArtSpace Pythagorion, Schwarz Foundation in Samos, 2019



MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS AND THE DYNAMICS OF ARTISTS' DIALOGUE IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Arte Povera

Museum

Cultural Representation

Social Crisis

In April 2012, the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens curated a solo exhibition featuring Jannis Kounellis, a radical artist associated with the Arte Povera movement. This exhibition served as a profound "response" to the economic and social crisis engulfing Greece during that period. Kounellis, renowned for his innovative approach, actively engaged with the museum's space by utilizing raw materials and commonplace objects. These objects, sourced from thrift stores in Athens, bore little resemblance to traditional works of art and were chosen deliberately to comment on the prevailing socio-economic conditions. Kounellis's exhibition revolved around the common person who had been profoundly affected by the social and economic turmoil, offering a poignant representation of his fears, losses, and aspirations.



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1. INTRODUCTION

While the institution of the museum has its origins in the 18th century, the interaction between avant-garde artists and museums as spaces for exhibiting contemporary art took on a new and intricate dimension during the 20th century. This relationship evolved into something more complex and multifaceted, representing not just the dialogue artists engaged in with museums, but also reflecting the evolutionary trajectory of the museum itself. Museums began to play a pivotal role in the development of contemporary art, and their perception of the future transformed as they became integral to the production and dissemination of knowledge.

of the traditional white interior space or "white cube," engage with the museum by actively intervening in and transforming its exhibition spaces. They introduce contemporary issues related to wealth, privilege, and societal dynamics through their subject matter and artistic techniques. This dynamic process results in artworks, like other exhibits, becoming objects with historical specificity and intrinsic exhibition value.

The Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens, under the leadership of its president Sandra Marinopoulou, embarked on a mission to curate a politically-themed exhibition. To achieve this goal, they extended an invitation to Jannis Kounellis to engage in a creative dialogue with the museum. The outcome was

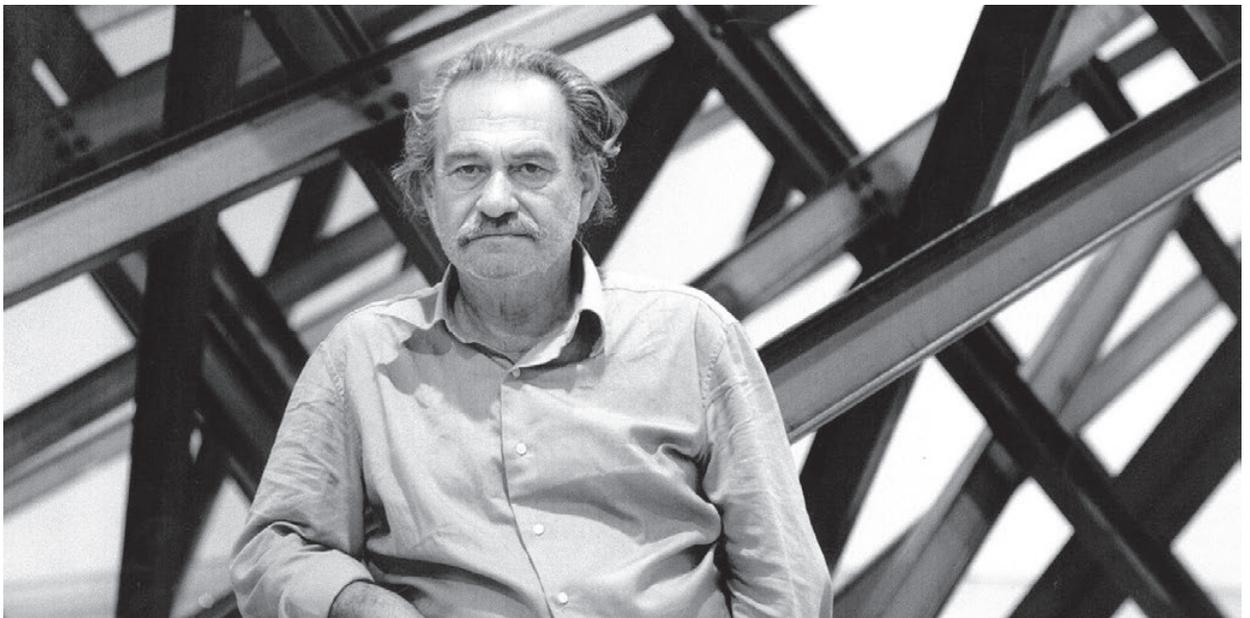


Figure 1: Jannis Kounellis, Athens, 2004. (photo © Manolis Baboussis / Adagp)

The museum, being a fundamentally public space shaped by its social and historical context, serves both a formative and a reflective role in societal relations. It mirrors the visitor's perception of the prevailing social circumstances, while the visitor, in turn, expects these perceptions to be validated by the museum. Consequently, in its pursuit to broaden its audience, the museum formulates policies designed to attract visitors, including those who were historically excluded from its premises due to economic and social barriers. The greater the emphasis on public engagement, the more "open" the exhibitions organized by the museum become, necessitating a closer alignment with the desires and expectations of its audience (Bounia, 2006: 161). Furthermore, artists, moving beyond the idealized neutrality

a remarkable new art installation that served as a thought-provoking response to the economic and social crisis gripping Greece in 2012. Jannis Kounellis' artwork spanned the entirety of the neoclassical building on Vasilissis Olgas Street, known as the Stathatos Mansion. This historical mansion had been constructed alongside the aspirations of Greece's urban elite. Kounellis' intervention involved the transformation of the existing architectural and decorative elements within the building, as well as a reimagining of the museum's showcases. These alterations collectively provided a diverse array of stimuli for visitors, enriching their experience within the museum environment and culminating in a thought-provoking encounter with the artwork.

2. THE ARTIST JANNIS KOUNELLIS

Jannis Kounellis was born in Piraeus in 1936 and relocated to Italy in 1956, where he settled in Rome to study Fine Arts. In the late 60s he joined the Italian art movement of Arte Povera. He began his artistic career by creating paintings that incorporated arrows, numbers and typographic symbols, while at the same time experimented strongly with the juxtaposition of objects and actions, using disparate materials such as stone, cotton, gunnysacks, charcoal, as well as objects such as eyeglass frames, coats and shoes. Kounellis' work exudes a profound sense of poetry. His first ground breaking exhibition, a live installation featuring horses, aimed to metamorphose the exhibition space into a theater, blurring the boundaries between real life and artistic imagination. His experimentation with unorthodox combinations of materials and objects has persisted and evolved over the years, as exemplified in this particular exhibition we will explore in-depth below.

3. CONTEMPORARY ART AND SOCIAL REALITY

In every historical period, art as the reflective and guiding consciousness of its era existing independently and concurrently with empirical reality, essentially mirrors and embodies that reality. Art is itself an empirical social reality as an expressive and aesthetic possibility. Arnold Hauser, in his widely acclaimed books "The Social History of Art" (1951) and "Sociology of Art" (1974), while acknowledging the aesthetic significance of artworks, emphasizes their social function. He underscores the crucial role of the social context, which is shaped by various factors including political and economic variables, institutional frameworks, public opinion, and more. Similarly, Timothy Clark (1974) has positioned the social, political, and ideological contexts of artworks, as well as the conditions of their production, at the forefront of contemporary art discourse. According to Theodor Adorno (1970), the transition of artistic practice from material and form to the aesthetic expression of modern society marks the transformation of art from a spiritual state to a conscious self-determination of society. Wassily Kandinsky (2006) in the first chapter of his book "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" writes that the work of art is a child of its time and has as its historical mission, being at the

top of the pyramid of evolution, to transform yesterday into today and today into tomorrow and thus push forward the whole of society. Modernism promoted the work of art from a simple representation and expression of an era (Kunstwollen) to a conscious and targeted socio-political action. This is how this relationship between art and reality came to be nowadays the main, and sometimes unique, axis and driving force of artistic production and aesthetic reflection.

Today, the primary hallmark of contemporary art isn't just the freedom to choose expressive means but rather its connection and interaction with the social milieu and reality. This privileged relationship with social becoming, the beginnings of which are identified with the birth of modernism in the middle of the 19th century, marked during the 20th century most of the avant-garde currents that contributed decisively to the transformation of the very concept and function of contemporary art. Artistic creation is today considered as an activity equal to all those intellectual and scientific discoveries that promote the evolution and progress of human society, and the work of art is considered not only an aesthetic object but an innovative historical event.

4. COMMON OBJECTS, SOCIAL CRITICISM AND AVANT-GARDE ART MOVEMENTS

The avant-garde and experimental movements of the 20th century modern art showed that art no longer imitates nature but through the aesthetic proposal "constructs" a social reality. The world is no longer a solid perceptual object but a continuous communicative situation for all that we are experiencing or cannot express in words. And the use of common objects in the history of art has always gone hand in hand with judgments of urban aesthetics and urban society in general.

Initially it was Marcel Duchamp with his readymades. Dada was perhaps the most violent and subversive movement, created as a reaction to the irrationality of the First World War and was the requiem of a greedy and completely materialistic society. It proposed actions intended to turn society against its own methods by using the things it valued in an irrational and contradictory way (Argan, 1975: 393). Duchamp, operating on the fringes

Figures 2-3: Jannis Kounellis. The human body seems to be absent but it is palpably present in almost all pictorial positions (author's photos)



of Dada and Surrealism, extracted various humble objects that had no artistic value, from their functional and commercial context, and presented them as works of art, giving them a conceptual dimension. Duchamp's readymades contained the proposition that the artist invents nothing and only uses, shapes, reshapes and repositions what history provides him; that the artist does not create, he simply "takes" what already exists which can be a waste, i.e. garbage.

Surrealism inherited from Dada the hostility towards the bourgeoisie while formulating theories and principles. In the same category with readymades are the *objets-trouvés* which were various useless, old, strange, broken or incomprehensible objects found by chance by the surrealist artist. The fact that they were originally mere commodities, products of capitalist production, which over time had lost their luster along with their usefulness or had undergone successive transformations by their users, made them ideal to reveal through artistic intervention "the sediment of human alienation, social objectification and cultural reification" (Lehmann, 2007: 28). Kurt Schwitters, between Dada and Constructivism, collects and deposits in the *Merzbau*, one of the most important works of modern art, the most disparate things; buttons, strings, stoppers, tram tickets, letters compose the first versions of the *Merzbau* as "small, mutilated disjointed testimonies of an amorphous, dull, messy daily chronicle (...)" (Argan, 1975: 397).

The years following the end of the Second World War brought the flourishing of North American art together with the Cold War and the fear of nuclear destruction, the prospect of a new era of technological progress, austerity and deprivation in England and the countries of Europe, in contrast with the promise of abundance represented by America's mass culture. Academic Modernism and especially Abstract Expressionism which was the dominant painting trend of the time became the target of the avant-garde movements of the time such as the Independent Group and the Pop Art movement. The products of the consumer society, or rather its residues, the garbage, were the means used by the *Nouveau Réalistes* with Arman as the main representative, but also by Claes Oldenburg who, commenting on the American Dream, had already turned his interest to waste as raw material in his installations and happenings. Pop Art artists externalized the individual's discomfort with the homogeneity of consumer society by reconciling the object of painting with the painting-object. Through the depiction of branded objects (brands), Pop Art itself became a "branded" and "consumable" object (Baudrillard, 2000: 132).

One of Duchamp's last works, 'Boîte-en-valise' (1935-41), became a starting point for the reflections of the Fluxus group. Fluxus equated the work with the context, the object with the container, placing the production of the artwork squarely within the realm of consumer culture (Foster et al. 2009: 458). The



Figure 4: Jannis Kounellis. At the inception of the exhibition, a marble the size of a tombstone rests atop a stack of sacks and dirt (author's photo)

total allegiance of Fluxus artistic production to the realm of objects, led to a perpetual dialectical flux between object production and performance. The conditions in post-war Germany of the "economic miracle" on one hand and the crisis of historical memory on the other, and at the same time the rapid advance of consumption with the simultaneous elimination of the individual and social history of the subject, led Joseph Beuys to the creation of his symbolic installations (Foster et al. 2009: 481-82). After 1965 the artists emphasize the process rather than the object itself, giving priority to speech for the dissemination and perception of the work. Ideas can be works of art, as Conceptual Art has shown.

The need for artists to be part of political and social events was certainly one of the main components of the movement that Germano Celant called Arte Povera. With roots in common with Fluxus as well as Minimal and Conceptual Art movements, the generation of Arte Povera artists incorporated conceptual inquiry into material presence. Arte Povera discourse with the viewer through fragments of materials, concepts and words. Raw, insignificant and cheap materials such as stones and old newspapers are transformed into aesthetic products with spiritual energy. One of the main characteristics of Arte Povera was the idealistic belief in the ability of the artist and the work of art to dissolve the separation between art and life. This creative drive to bridge the gap between art and life automatically fueled the desire to become part of history, to engage with history in its

making. In many ways Arte Povera was a highly politicized movement. Its positions and actions did not differ much from fellow artists of American and European Conceptual Art, Performance Art and Land Art such as Joseph Beuys or Richard Long. But in contrast to Beuys, the goal is not the political transformation of society but the sensory experience and critical approach of the artistic practice. And the viewer is invited, often with an autobiographical charge, to redefine his attitude towards them by activating memories and exploiting associations.

The exhibition of various collected micro-objects of industrial or even organic origin, which have little to do with what we traditionally consider a work of art, has led some critics to speak of "post-object" art, an art that has to do more with the activity of the artistic praxis. This modern art obliterates any boundary between the exhibit and the viewer and, removing the need for the frame or plinth, encouraging immediacy and informality

5. GREEK FINANCIAL CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT ON CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: A SYNOPSIS

The financial crisis in Greece, spanning from 2010 to 2018, originated with the country's debt default following the global crash of 2008, garnered extensive discussion and analysis both domestically and internationally, drawing global attention due to the severe austerity measures implemented. These measures resulted in a contraction of the country's GDP by 25 percent, widespread unemployment, the imposition of capital controls, and a significant exodus of young professionals. The recession had a broad impact, affecting health and welfare systems, various economic activities, and other aspects of Greek society (Tziovas, 2017: 15). The crisis and its policies had also a significant impact on incomes, inequality, crime, poverty and the fertility rates; it affected in more than one way the lives of most Greeks. It also led to the rise of Euroscepticism among locals, well above the European average, due to the involvement of the European Commission and the E.C.B. in the imposed austerity programme. The crisis was seen as a national trauma, a retrogression, cancelling the prospect of a continuous development and prosperity.

The impact of the economic crisis on cultural institutions was severe and immediate. From 2009 onwards, efforts to reduce public spending led to substantial cuts in funds allocated to the cultural sector. By the year 2012 the Ministry of Culture budget dropped by 30 per cent and as a result almost all the museums reduced opening hours, closed part of their exhibition areas or even shut down altogether, for periods of a few weeks up to a couple of months. The reduction in temporary personnel, like guards, forced many archaeological sites to completely shut off, to the dismay of visiting tourists.

In the private cultural sector, even large private museums like the Benaki Museum or the Museum of Cycladic Art suffered, as they were also relying on the Ministry's budget to partly cover operational costs and salaries. They had to take measures like reduction in salaries, dismissal of staff members, fewer opening hours to the public, only four days the week. But, being more flexible in terms of management than their public counterparts came up with some innovative ideas for attracting visitors and increases their revenue. The Benaki Museum, for example, launched a 'Support Campaign for the Benaki Museum' as well as an 'Adoption' programme, which enables donors to 'adopt' and support a specific activity from within the museum's departments financially. The Museum of Cycladic Art in turn, introduced a series of measures in order to attract visitors, including reduced prices, free entrance to temporary exhibitions on specific days, special offers to tourists etc. In fact all these measures are reminiscent of those taken by the British museums in the Thatcher era, when they were faced with similar reductions in funding by the Government. In the public sector, several public museum directors have realized the advantages of alliances and synergies, forming 'networks of museums' like the five museums of Thessaloniki. But only a handful of public museums have been given a special regional service status, allowing them to do their own planning, the Acropolis Museum (2009) being the most exceptional case in terms of autonomy and independence.

The "Greek Crisis" has been the subject of a great number of books, articles or reports by scholars, financial and political analysts, philosophers and journalists. A two-year research project titled "The cultural politics of the Greek Crisis", funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), culminated in a book edited by D. Tziouvas (2017). The project investigates the

implications of the economic crisis on Greek culture and identity, exploring how the crisis was captured and portrayed through art and literature. As Tziouvas put it "culture, like sport, is a shared experience. It encourages community and solidarity, something vital in testing times, challenging arguments about funding for cultural activities being a luxury in an age of austerity" (Tziouvas, 2017: 17). According to Rebecca Bramall creativity in a period of crisis can be seen "not as a temporary measure for dealing with government debt, but as an enduring commitment to reshape social relationships" (Tziouvas, 2017: 18). Some argued that austerity may promote a kind of creativity which is about resourcefulness and a desire to restore what is lost. It also led some people to engage in a critical discussion about a new 'narrative' for Greece, a departure from the failed practices of the past, the need for a national catharsis and replenishment with a re-examination of certainties of the past (Tziouvas, 2017: 34). Thus, the role of history and its connection to the recent crisis has been thoroughly examined, leading scholars like Stathis Kalyvas to trace a recurring pattern or Alain Badiou to see crisis as an event, a rupture that creates an opportunity "to rethink the dominant social order" that has encouraged a re-examination and a creative re-thinking of the past, inviting Greeks and non-Greeks to reflect on the role of cultural heritage (Tziouvas, 2017: 35). As Tziouvas concluded, "the crisis has made the past more public, more controversial and more relevant" (Tziouvas, 2017: 71).

6. THE ARTIST'S DISCOURSE ABOUT HIS WORK

During the press conference held on April 4, 2012, in conjunction with the opening of the exhibition at the Museum of Cycladic Art, Jannis Kounellis made a poignant remark, stating that "At this juncture, an ordinary art exhibition in Greece would be unthinkable." For Kounellis, the Greek financial crisis transcends mere numerical statistics and percentages. His concern lies in the profound impact this crisis has on individuals and their surroundings. The artist emphasizes, "Nothing is worth more than the man himself," highlighting the significant effort required to support human dignity amidst these trying circumstances: "Today, of course, this economic culture no longer centers on humanity but rather on the oligarchy, a shift



Figure 5: Jannis Kounellis. The main exhibit, a huge iron easel with coats sewn together (author's photo)

that lacks a fundamental human aspect" (Kounellis, 2012). Focusing on humanity as its core, he crafts an exhibition where, even though the human body may appear to be absent, its palpable presence permeates nearly every pictorial composition. This centrality of the human element serves as the foundational pillar of Kounellis's artistic oeuvre (Lumley, 2004: 34). Acting within the pictorial space - which he considers as a public space - he wants to participate in the real world, in the theater of real life, the everyday and at the same time the extremely unique. Kounellis's entire body of work constitutes a voyage that traverses the realms of memory, history, and the contemporary reality. Through his art, he narrates the tales of ordinary, everyday, and common laborers who grapple with a pervasive sense that "the ship is sinking." This sentiment is strikingly underscored by his connection of a pensioner's tragic suicide at Constitution Square to his art, symbolized by a hovering knife that serves as a poignant punctuation mark within the exhibition space. Kounellis's art, marked by its unpredictability and profound connections with life and the present day, embodies the very essence of reality itself.

Kounellis engages in a form of "communication" not only with the museum but also with the broader context of what is transpiring around us. He does so through his distinc-

tive personal artistic language, which he has cultivated over time, utilizing a diverse array of objects, encompassing both industrial and natural products. Kounellis enables the inherent "weight" of the foundational materials he employs to serve as a voice, addressing the preoccupying issue of identity and the "linguistic challenges" associated with interpreting each of his works. In his own words, "For me, being born in Greece, I perceive that the current issue isn't solely about the economy; it's about the loss of our identity." He goes on to assert that this loss of identity can be attributed to an unchecked and uncritical embrace of Americanism. Kounellis contends that the establishment of boundaries and the recognition of the "other" are essential components in critically evaluating our actions and, by extension, our collective identity (Kounellis, 2012).

Newspapers, charcoal, burlap sacks, worn-out shoes and eyeglasses, coats, soil and iron serve as the raw materials for his compositions. These materials, obtained through diligent searches in thrift stores and Athens' flea markets, starkly contrast with the neoclassical building's ambiance where he displays them. Consequently, personal narratives intertwine with the historical fabric of the place, offering insight into contemporary Athens. These objects serve as vessels for the city's multifaceted story, marked by successive



Figure 6: Jannis Kounellis. A black cloth covers the chandelier of the central space (author's photo)

demographic shifts, evolving ideologies, fluctuations in prosperity, and, notably, recent dramatic transformations.

"Tough art, yes, but not mournful," insists Jannis Kounellis. However, the black cloths, a symbol of mourning for what is happening in his two homelands, Greece and Italy, are everywhere and a marble the size of a tombstone on a pile of sacks and dirt is "at the beginning of the exhibition like a cross". And he adds about what Art can offer in these conditions of cultural crisis, "Art, like poetry, is born from shortage (...) Sometimes you have to suffer to create something with a poetic power" (Kounellis, 2012).

The journey through Kounellis' exhibition begins on the ground floor, where artworks convey a relatively more representational language. As visitors ascend to the upper floor, they are gradually immersed in a heightened and more dramatized expressive vocabulary. This personal, experiential narrative evolves into a visual alphabet with a universally comprehensible character, fostering a captivating progression of artistic expression. Always with humble, common and used materials, is the transfusion of the crisis's image in the museum space, the simultaneous presentation of one reality within another, a new aesthetic which, as we have already mentioned, is in complete contrast to the aesthetic of the refined

building. The artist transforms the museum space into an integral part of the final work, a theater stage where space and visitors participate in a performance "Because these works are also dramaturgies (...)"(Kounellis, 2012).

This exhibition was the distillation of several important themes that consistently run through Kounellis' work. He often combines his previous works into new arrangements while introducing new pieces at the same time. The materials, forms and their interplay together serve as a comprehensive representation of socio-economic reality. On the ground floor, the installations emanate great intensity from the famous burlap sacks full of coal in the role of the tragic dance, which this time enclose, sometimes a stack of eyeglasses recalling the macabre memory of the holocaust, sometimes fragments of casts with contemporary newspaper sheets and sometimes soil. The main exhibit, a huge iron easel with coats sewn together bring to mind the painting surface of Kounellis which always consists of the dark sheets of a certain size, which due to shape, size and color accents bring to mind Kazimir Malevich's Black Square (Roelstraete, D. 2002: 26).

The violent gesture, with which Kounellis hangs a black cloth to cover the chandelier in the central space, resembles the vigor of Jackson Pollock's action painting to which the artist often refers to. Pollock's decision to abandon the wall as a supporting surface of the work opened new horizons in the pictorial space. Painting now became part of reality, itself a reality, rather than merely representing it through the 'critical distance' of easel painting. Kounellis's brand of realism is synonymous with his assertion that his paintings are a reflection of reality itself. He endeavors to shatter the barrier that separates art from life by actualizing what his paintings convey.

While the installations on the ground floor contribute to resolving "the language problem," namely, how his work will be interpreted by visitors, the "empty space" on the floor, adorned with forsaken shoes, coats, and hats, symbolizing a pronounced aesthetic of disappearance, may initially appear to represent the catastrophic loss of a bygone era characterized by humanist culture. However, upon closer examination, these items also express a sense of hope for the resurgence of such a golden age. As Kounellis aptly notes, "We are now saying in Greece that everything is lost. We said the same after the Second World War and the Civil

War, but the country was not lost" (Kounellis, 2012). This sentiment underlines the resilience of the Greek people and the potential for the revival of cultural and humanistic values even in the face of adversity.

7. THE PERCEPTION OF KOUNELLIS' EXHIBITION BY THE VISITORS

Greece underwent a period of profound turmoil, marked by a severe economic recession that had far-reaching social and political implications. This period ushered in a new perspective on self-identity, be it at an individual or national level. Jannis Kounellis's exhibition serves as a reflection of contemporary culture, society, and its people. Denys Zacharopoulos (Kounellis, 2012) aptly describes it as a contemporary "anthropological museum," with its central focus on the ordinary person, the laborer who toils and bears the brunt of these challenges. Remarkably, Kounellis's exhibition offers a direct and unfiltered glimpse into modern Greek reality, possibly more so than journalistic reports or television broadcasts. With a discerning eye, Kounellis paints a vivid picture of society, laying bare its vulnerabilities, anxieties, losses, and also its hopes.

Visitors find themselves among everyday objects, all more or less worn, broken, unused, along with the iconic black sails. Worn coats and shoes, sacks, empty bottles, wake them up and create mixed feelings of embarrassment, discomfort, annoyance. Looking at the works, viewers establish a connection between the remnants of human presence and the materials, such as coal sacks or other utilitarian fabrics, now ensnared within iron frameworks, emptied and compressed to the zero point of its previous existence. A structured narrative is thus constructed and this experiential approach actively engages the visitor as an interpretive participant (Bounia, 2006). In Kounellis's compositions, much like examining the refuse within a household to gain insights into its occupants, we scrutinize the "discard" of a nation's political and economic system during times of crisis. The visitor might feel overwhelmed by the burden of the surrounding tragic daily existence, yet within Jannis Kounellis' humanistic approach, there appears to be a glimmer of hope.

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CLEPSYDRA @ 37.94578, 23.61960: AN EPHEMERAL GEOGRAPHIC INSCRIPTION OF POLITICAL PHANTASMATA

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the practices and conceptualizations of the *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* public mnemonic performance/ in-situ light installation (Lipasmata Drapetsonas, Piraeus, Greece, October 2020). Referring to twenty-one selected cases of lethal political violence in Greece during the years of 1978-2020, *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* endeavours to map a traumatic route in time and unveil the political phantasma as a performative geographical inscription questioning traditional forms of mnemonic representation in the urban environment. It incorporates the idea of the ghost as a nomadic (im)materiality that unsettles the linearity of space and time working both as a political mediator and a holder of historical memory but also framing conditions for alternative futures. It seeks to create an archaeology of the *political phantasma* calling for political awareness against the current rise of neo-fascist movements in Western capitalist societies, and the moving forward by acknowledging and fulfilling the responsibility towards the dead.

Keywords

Counter-monument
mnemonic performance
political loss
rhizomatic nomadism
in-situ light installation



MARIA PASCHALIDOU is a visual artist/researcher and Assistant Professor of Visual Arts and Moving Image at the Department of Culture, Creative Media and Industries, University of Thessaly, Greece. She completed her PhD in Lens-based Media at De Montfort University, UK, with her thesis exploring formations of phantasmagoric subjects. Her MFA in Photography, Columbia College Chicago, USA, focused on the optical systems of human medical monitoring. As a fellow of the Greek State Scholarship Foundation, she conducted her postdoctoral research on performative aspects of political loss in collaboration with the Department of Social Anthropology, Panteion University, Athens. She creates spatial installations and situational events combining audiovisual media with text, participatory interaction and individual performances in the public space. Her artwork has been presented in international and Greek exhibitions and publications. She has curated two exhibitions in Chicago and the participatory performative projects, *Visibility* and *The Bankorgs* in Athens.

1. AN EPHEMERAL GEOGRAPHIC INSCRIPTION OF POLITICAL PHANTASMATA

This essay seeks to reflect on the conceptualization and practices involved for the realization of the *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* public mnemonic performance/in-situ light installation at Lipasmata Drapetsonas (Drapetsona, Piraeus, Greece, October 2020) and the relevant photographic series. The performative event constitutes part of my post-doctoral research¹ which deals with political loss and its public manifestation both as a social traumatic experience and a generator of collectiveness, solidarity and resistance. Studying the case of the 34-year-old anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas who was stabbed to death by members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn² on September 18, 2013, in Keratsini, a suburban area of Piraeus, Greece, the research concentrates on the phantasmal forms of the musician/activist and the production of a performative audiovisual picture of afterwards, created through and intertwined with memories, narrations and series of public actions that were set in motion following and in response to the murder.

Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960 interrelates Pavlos Fyssas' murder with other twenty selected cases of blatant political violence in Greece during the years of 1978-2020, the period of Metapolitefsi which marks the regime transition from dictatorship to democracy.

On October 30, 2020, at the outdoor theater of Lipasmata Drapetsonas, through a performative process that lasted approximately three hours (4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.), a large clepsydra was shaped on the ground using twenty-one white soft sleep pillowcases (Figure 1). Each pillowcase corresponded to a specific lethal incident caused either by the state and/or police authorities, or groups of neo-Nazi fascists throughout the aforementioned period of time. Inside the pillowcases, I had previously inserted transparent prints of digitally manipulated found photographs of each one of the fatally deceased. During the performative act, I added light sources under the prints to illuminate only the eyes.

To offer my own encounter with the (inter)textual and aesthetic alterations of the counter monument discourse and contribute to the idea of "citizen artists, who put as much emphasis on 'being a citizen' as they do on 'being an artist'" (Möller, 2016: 2), I developed

my response to the above racist fatal attacks through the synergy of theory, politics and aesthetics. Working from the position of the anti-fascist 'citizen artist' may make possible to resist against capitalist realism's mechanisms of transforming art products to commodities, artists to entrepreneurs and viewers to consumers (Fisher, 2010); may create space to engage critically with the aestheticizing and spectacularizing of culture life; and maybe, just maybe and hopefully, create conditions for disturbing "the horizons of the thinkable" that "capitalism seamlessly occupies" (ibid: 8) and decolonize our dreams and senses. Furthermore, this position may expose what Wendy Brown (2006) identifies as common ground in neoliberalism and neoconservatism, and which is their interest "to undermine the public sphere and democracy, producing a governed citizen who looks to find solutions in products, not political processes" (Fisher, 2010: 61). While Mark Fisher (2010) describes this interconnection of neoliberal policies and neoconservatism as the American version of the capitalist realism, I believe this version has been spread, finding its similarities in most European countries, and, unquestionably, in Greece.

Embracing this political endeavour, I regularly attended the trial against the neo-Nazi party of Golden Dawn since March 2019 collecting sound testimonies from the anti-fascist audience and working towards the production of an ephemeral counter memory installation that would map a traumatic route through time and unveil the political *phantasma* as a performative geographical inscription questioning the traditional forms of mnemonic representation in the public space.

2. TEMPORALITIES

The conception, preparation and production of the *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* public mnemonic performance/ephemeral installation was marked by the time period of the pandemic COVID-19 and its consequences in terms of social distancing and state authoritarian limitations on the use of the public space. As the whole endeavor took place between two quarantine periods imposed to deal with the coronavirus, *Clepsydra*, as the word implies and for reasons explained below, deals with time; however, in this case it obtains a significant meaning as the realization of the project was actually running after



Figure 1: Making the shape of a clepsydra. Outdoor theatre of Lipasmata Drapetsonas. October 30, 2020. Installation. 6X9 meters. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.



Figure 2: Street protest. Fear will not win. (Greek translation of the protest banner). Athens, October 7, 2020. Photo by Maria Paschalidou.



Figure 3: Police forces attacked the thousands of people gathered outside the Court of Appeals. Athens. October 7, 2020. Photo by Maria Paschalidou.

time, so, it was literally haunted by time.

Time during the pandemic unveils the experience of the non-physical presence and the establishment of a coded public space for interaction in which virtual bodies communicate in specific pre-automated ways while they are capable of being globally 'present'/visible at the same time. This codification of the bodies, or as Donna Haraway puts it "the desire to translate the body into code" (Haraway, 1991: 164), is not politically neutral as it "marks the body unequivocally as the privileged site of capitalism's epochal struggle to reduce all heterogeneity to equivalencies" (Dougherty, 2001: 1). Moreover, Internet technologies are not universally accessible and thus, virtual 'visibility' is still limited and fragmented, and does not reveal the Internet as a democratizing "revived public sphere" (Papacharissi, 2002: 10). Hence, in the pandemic, the realization of the *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* performative event and the construction of the mnemonic installation in a physical, yet an a-somatic site, with no audience present forms a utopian praxis in a disturbed public space governed by fear. This art intervention may visualize the demand of what Nicholas Mirzoeff calls the "utopian imagining" as "a necessary cultural response to the gloom-laden chorus that there is no alternative to the current doctrine of pre-emptive war and the politics of fear" (Mirzoeff, 2005: 25). While Mirzoeff makes this comment in relation to the war of the US against Iraq, his idea of the "utopian imagining" may also apply to the current biopolitics of fear that infiltrates the battle against the coronavirus, while it responds directly to the widespread dogma of capitalist realism, according to which "not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it" (Fischer, 2010: 2).

Subsequently, in the time context of this performative event, fear is in the center of the emotions under the regime of a biological war against an invisible deadly contagious virus that has to be defeated. Not only in the terms of social distancing but also within the rationale of biopolitics "the pandemic intensifies pre-existing and long-term crises within the crisis: poverty and precariousness, decimation of health care systems, structural oppression, exploitation of migrant labour, racism, decentralization and intolerance, homophobia / transphobia" (Athanasίου, 2020: 43). Besides the fear, the police violence casts its shadow over the streets all over the



Figure 4: Inside the pillowcase of *Clepsydra* installation. The murdered Muhammad Al Arab. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

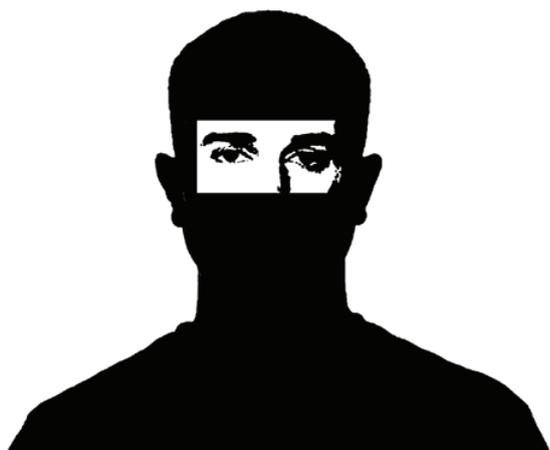


Figure 5: Visual example of named cases. Eyes - Vaggelis Giakoumakis. Digital transparent print. 53X44cm. Photo by Maria Paschalidou.



Figure 6: Visual example of unnamed cases. No-Eyes. Digital transparent print. 53X44cm. Photo by Maria Paschalidou.

country imposing the restrictive measures with excessive zeal (Figure 2).

Along with the horrid economy, which probably leads the country to a second round of humanitarian crisis, the populism is uprising through the increasing numbers of the deniers of the virus and the racist attacks in many refugees' accommodation centers (Keep talking Greece, 2020). As tens of thousands of refugees swarmed into and overcrowded unsanitary camps despite the fact that all other people were specifically instructed to socially distance (Refugee Legal Support, 2020) "... no one can guarantee that accumulated frustrations will not be channeled through exclusionary discourses that scapegoat immigrants or even target the more vulnerable members of society, flirting with a dystopian social Darwinism ('survival of the strongest/younger for the sake of the economy')" (Katsambekis & Stavrakakis, 2020: 9).

Moreover, the antivirus politics has been used by the authorities as an alibi for securing public space from street protests and other forms of public exercise of democracy; an explicit manifestation of an utterly biased attitude. On October 7, 2020, for example, police forces violently attacked the thousands of people gathered outside the Court of Appeals in Athens just a few minutes after the announcement of the Court ruling the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn as a criminal organization in disguise (Smith, 2020) (Figure 3).

People were denied their right to celebrate democracy at a time when the government turned a blind eye to servants of the Greek Orthodox Church who systematically violated the restrictive measures without consequences and fines. While theaters, museums and other art institutions were forced to be closed, priests were allowed to offer the 'Holy' communion without any sanitary precautions, thus risking public health.

Under these circumstances, the video work produced by Clément Gonzalez *As it used to be* (2013), seven years earlier than the pandemic, is prophetic, as it describes the current situation in the context of a fictitious narrative at the time. The video fantasizes a history teacher in the near future, teaching daily only in front of an empty room with a simple webcam broadcasting the lesson on the internet. His routine is unexpectedly disrupted when one day a student enters the room to attend the class physically, a fact

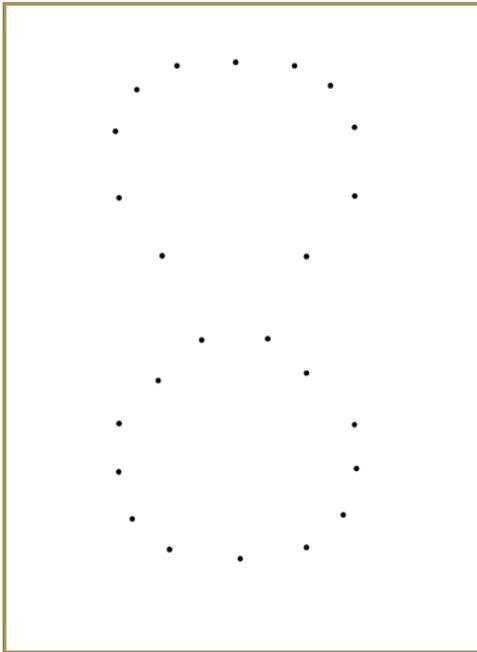


Figure 7: Initial digital sketch. *Time dots*.

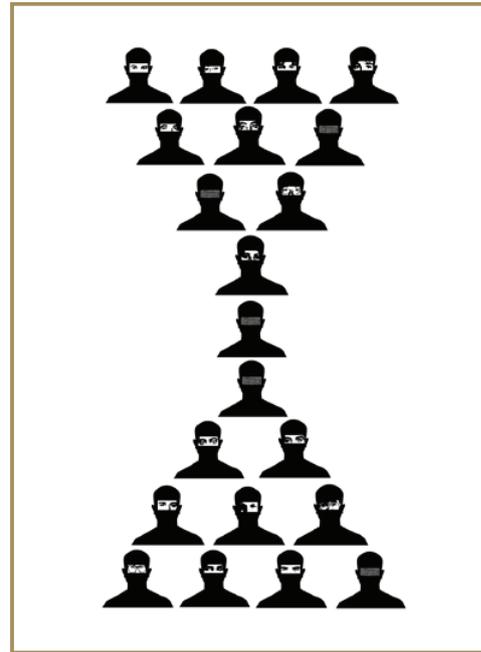


Figure 8: *Clepsydra*. Digital sketch. 'Appearances'.

that changed the teacher's mood (Gonzalez, 2020). The video celebrates the joy of human bodily interaction, the deprivation of which in the current pandemic traumatizes all forms of social life and particularly art communication. Having been stricken by the pandemic measures of isolation and facing empty and closed art venues, as the majority of exhibitions and other public art events were cancelled, artists struggle to survive in an environment without social contact, therefore with no audience as physical participation/interaction has been forcibly expelled.

How is this context of time associated with the time-period of death of each one of the selected cases of blatant political violence in Greece during the years of 1978-2020? And why is this association important?

3. THE KINSHIP OF THE DEAD

As it was mentioned above, *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* interrelates twenty-one selected cases of political murders in Greece during the years of 1978-2020, a period of *Metapolitefsi* which pertains to the regime change from dictatorship to democracy. Over the course of these years, more than a hundred people were killed or disappeared under mysterious conditions for political reasons.

In *Clepsydra* some of these lethal incidents are the result of capitalist state racism that identifies 'enemies' outside the population, regulates on whether they may stay inside or outside the borderlines of the state, and occasionally endorses violence and killing (Foucault, 2003). Twenty-year-old economic migrant Fantil Nabuzi was shot to death by a police officer in the city of Karditsa in 1996 while he was attempting to steal two watermelons. According to her husband's statement to Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2020), Fatma Hakim Isik, a young woman refugee from Syria, had been missing since February 2020 and presumed dead after Greek soldiers fired shots towards her while she was attempting to join their children on the Greek side of Evros/Meriç river, south of Edirne. Muhammad al-Arab, a young man from Aleppo, Syria, was shot to death in March 2020 by the Greek authorities on the Greek side of the border in Evros/Meriç river (Forensic Architecture, 2020). During the first anti-Covid-19 quarantine in April 2020, forty-two-year-old Armenian female prisoner Azizel Nteniroglou suffered heavy coronavirus symptoms and was left to die helpless in Eleonas Prison of Thiva.

The installation also memorializes people who lost their lives to the state executive mechanism (police / special forces). Forty-nine-year-old doctor and anarchist Vasilis Tsironis was shot to death by the commandos of National Security Units in July 1978 in Palaio



Figure 9:
Illuminating the
installation / the
murdered Eleni
Topaloudi. Photo
documentation
by Lambros
Papanikolatos. .

Faliro, Piraeus. Stamatina Kanellopoulou, a twenty-one-year-old worker, was beaten to death by the police in the centre of Athens on November 16, 1980, while she was marching in the memorial protest of the Athens Polytechnic Uprising of 1973.³ Twenty-four-year-old Cypriot student Iakovos Koumis was attacked to death by the Greek police in the same aforementioned protest of 1980. Michalis Kaltezas, a fifteen-year-old student, was shot at the back of the head by a police officer at Exarchia in 1985. Twenty-nine-year-old Christoforos Marinos, an activist anarchist, was mysteriously found dead in a cabin of the ship Pegasus in 1996 while he was transferred by the police from Serifos island to Athens. Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a fifteen-year-old student, was fatally shot by a member of the Special Guard Unit of the Greek police in 2008 in Exarchia (Bounias & Leontopoulos, 2014).

Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960 also includes cases of nationalist hate, racist and homophobic violence to death by citizens attacking either in groups or as individuals. Nikos Temponeras, a thirty-four-year-old high school teacher, was fatally attacked with iron bars, rods and concrete blocks by members of ONNED (a right-wing youth union) during the student protests in the city of Patras in 1991. Twenty-year-old Gramoz Palushi was stabbed to death in Zakynthos Island in 2004 while he was celebrating the victory of the Albanian national football team over the Greek. Alex

Mechisvili, an eleven-year-old schoolchild of Russian origin, was bullied, tortured and killed by his co-pupils in Veria in 2006 while his body was never found. Alim Abdul Manan, a twenty-one-year-old immigrant from Bangladesh, was stabbed to death in Kato Patissia in 2011, after being chased by fascist groups on motorcycles. Anonymous, a nineteen-year-old Iraqi man, was fatally injured by members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn in Omonoia Square in 2012. Twenty-seven-year-old worker from Pakistan Shehzad Luqman was murdered by members of Golden Dawn in Petralona in 2013, as he was going to work by his bike. Thirty-four-year-old anti-fascist musician Pavlos Fyssas was stabbed to death by members of Golden Dawn in Keratsini in 2013. Vangelis Giakoumakis, a twenty-year-old student, was physically, verbally and psychologically tortured by his homophobic fellow students at the Dairy School of Ioannina for two days before he eventually died in March 2015. Zak Kostopoulos / Zackie Oh, a thirty-three-year-old queer performer and activist, was killed in 2018 at Omonoia Square, Athens, savagely beaten by two men, in broad daylight, in full view of the passers-by who did absolutely nothing. Sixty-three-year-old worker from Albania Petrit Zifile was killed with a shotgun by a Greek man, member of Golden Dawn, in Corfu Island in 2018. A victim of femicide, twenty-one-year-old student Eleni Topaloudi was gang-raped and brutally murdered by two men in the island of Rhodes in 2018.

In *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* installation, each pillowcase corresponds respectively to each one of the above lethal cases. All these persons who died unjustly have been presented as solid dark flattened characters placed inside the pillowcases (Figure 4). Intending for a non-figurative remembrance of the lost, I used found-portraits of the murdered, circulated by different online media sources, and transformed them into digital bust silhouettes of transparent prints with a single rectangular opening that made visible only the eyes (Figure 5).

There have been cases in which the name of the murdered was unknown or a portrait of the lost person had not been found. On those occasions, I filled the rectangular opening with imprints of digital noise (Figure 6). As it is known, noise exists in all images as a result of the process of capturing it both in analogue (film grain) and digital imaging (pixels). However, I particularly chose the digital noise to visualize the loss of identity as it stands for the algorithmic component through which vari-



Figure 10: Installation / Dead light but lamps. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

ous applications, from forensic to common uses such as the unlocking of the phone, recognize our identity (Fridrich, 2009).

The silhouette practice can also be found in Kara Walker's *After the Deluge* (2005) series (Walker, 2021). In response to Hurricane Katrina, the artist creates full-body silhouetted characters to expose poverty, devastation and death desperation. In Walker's silhouettes, the gender is recognizable as her figures are usually full-bodied, and through bodily gestures the identity is revealed. In *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.67960*, though, this identity is merely imaginable since only the eyes are visible. Especially the bust portraiture that was chosen does not allow the recognition of identity but rather implicates it, or in other words, it needs encryption to be revealed. This encoded silhouette-bust portraiture demands concentration on the eyes, a human organ that sees, perceives, captures, chooses, imagines, photographs, and holds vision. In the aftermath of a practice used by the majority of the news media when they broadcast interviews with covered witnesses, as well as of image agencies who circulate silhouette patterns for commercial reasons, *Clepsydra* memorializes the violently vanished as witnesses who no longer need coverage. As political spectres, they now have infinite protection for they have become warriors/martyrs who trigger social resistance.

Placed next to one another in the installation, these witnesses generate questions and

associations forming relativities. Here, a bloodline has been created that justifies the dead and calls for the attention of the living. However, this bloodline has been imposed by political circumstances, thus it is not, as the artist Taryn Simon would put it "determined and ordered" (Simon, 2011). In the series, *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters* (2011), Simon uses family grids to systematically order the members of a given bloodline in an attempt to expose narratives of violence. By contrast, in *Clepsydra* the bloodline is not biological, not even an encounter of fate or a result of a "mournful nostalgia" (Athanasidou, 2006a: 229). It is rather compulsory or a chance to see the dead as a political phantasma that resists oblivion by demanding action from the living, that is by demanding the future. In other words, it is a kinship that signalizes/reminds/resists the rhetoric of biopolitics in which bodies are perceived as "symbolic capital of national narratives" (Athanasidou, 2006b: 229) that embrace/celebrate heteronormativity and the continuity of an 'authentic' Greek identity.

If capitalist realism strips culture from its capacity to produce the new; if it "subsumes and consumes all of previous history" (Fisher, 2010: 4); if it gets along very well with neoconservatism exercised by extreme-right wing governments and neofascist movements in Greece and throughout Europe, in regulating the collective memory of the past, even erasing it altogether; and if, by this, it denies

the future “colonizing the dreaming life of the population” (ibid: 8); then, the political phantasma becomes the historicity that challenges all these; an *absent presence* who urges us to look forward to better futures by resisting the erasure of trauma in the past.

4. DEAD “LIGHT BUT LAMPS”

Understanding that time is not a “Newtonian universal constant” (Solomon, 2014: 671), but embodies the knowledge of fluidity in the unmetrical acts, experiences and possibilities of being, I incorporated its mobility and synthesized the above assembly of blood under the shape of a clepsydra that could function as a critical device of evaluating ‘time’ (Figure 7).

Consisting of twenty-one “appearances” (Figure 8), this clepsydra does not measure time, but instead redefines and rearranges it by mapping traumatic knowledge and pointing out discontinuations in democracy; in fact, discontinuations that expose the ways in which the exercising of contemporary democracies is shaped by capitalist dreamwork and neoconservative interests (Fisher, 2010: 59-61). Within a grid of pillowcases in the shape of a time machine, an encounter of *phantasma* has been created to mark not just the specific dead, but the cause of this death which is visually formed as a correlated figure of the political historical time. Therefore, the phantasm is not an entity that belongs to the “metaphysical” realm of spirits, but it is rather a social force that is realized and subjectified daily through memory. With its “appearance” it does not actually (or merely) remind of an individual loss, but it also denounces systems of authority and hierarchies in the capitalist patriarchal realm, such as gender, race, class, etc. (Gordon, 2008).

Time stands out as a fundamental aspect, not only for the killing of the rapper musician Pavlos Fyssas, but also in all other cases of racist attacks that resulted in murders. In their violent pause, victims have been haunted by time endlessly questioning life, democracy, justice, tolerance and solidarity. Thus, there is no circulation inside the clepsydra of this ephemeral installation; no water, air or any other moving substance that captures time, but only an indexical blood chain in a static ground construction as a poetic metaphor of pause, since time for the dead has been stopped and stolen violently. Yet, this pause demands action for hopeful

futures, challenging the capitalist trap of living in a continuous everlasting horrifying ‘now’ (Fischer, 2010). To contribute to the “performative imagination of the political” (Möller, 2016), I attempted to create a utopian dialogue through a glimpse at different times in which the absent becomes visible in a public performative act of a joint memorial service. During the three hours of this service, I made the shape of a clepsydra by placing twenty-one white, soft sleep pillowcases on the ground and inserting the transparent prints of the deceased into each one of them.

Utilizing the pillowcase as memorialized material is not accidental. It indicates class implications to the conceptualization of the *after death*, since this is the material used by the poorest as a storage case for the bones following the exhumation, which particularly in Greece takes place three years after the burial. Nevertheless, this Greek custom applies for those who cannot afford to buy a permanent family tomb, since every year after the exhumation a considerable fee is charged for keeping the bones in the ossuary of the cemetery. For unknown bodies, as is often the case of homeless and abandoned people as well as undeclared refugees and economic immigrants, the bones are stored in large underground common crucibles (Nouskali, 2021). Subsequently, lost in a mass of post-death ‘identities’ and detached from memory, these unknown bones will never be found or relocated, ironically similarly to those cases of the ephemeral installation in which the name of the murdered was unknown or the portrait of the lost person could not be found. So, as ‘bones’ inside pillowcases, the political *phantasma* of this mnemonic performative event “involve[s] a constant negotiation between what can be seen and what is in the shadows” (Gordon, 2008: 17); this implicative exhumation brings the ghosts’ story to the present time.

During the performance, spot lights are placed under the pillowcases illuminating the eyes to make them visible in darkness and from a great height, creating a geographical inscription (Figure 9).

This illuminating inscription proposes a poetic spatial manifestation of the political phantasma (Figure 10). Like Emily Dickinson’s poets who “light but Lamps” (Dickinson, 1999: 930), these eyes can still look at us, reminding us of their existence, wishing to be “vital lights- Inhere as do the Suns- Each Age a Lens- Disseminating their Circumference” (Gilson, 1998: 487). The phantasmata in *Clepsydra* are not only holders of historical memory, but



Figure 11: Outdoor theatre of Lipasmata Drapetsonas. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

also entities that illuminate paths to possible alternative futures.

Employing art practices of staging that are “critical”, and as Chantal Mouffe would state, “can contribute to unsettling the dominant hegemony” by “bringing to the fore the existence of alternatives to the current post-political order” (Mouffe, 2013: 91), I have chosen to work with methodologies of “counter-monumentality” (Osborne, 2017: 182), searching for ways of commemorating traumatic incidents through means that oppose/reconsider/challenge established forms of public monuments. However, even the word ‘monument’ does not totally apply to the case of this mnemonic installation, which is, furthermore, a performing act of decentering space and time (Solomon, 2014) allowing the political *phantasma* to emerge.

Nevertheless, this performative memorial act led to the construction of a temporal non-‘monument’ which had not been intended to glorify the absent but rather to raise concern about the populism and the politics of hatred, intolerance, nationalism, sexism and racism which armed the hands of the murderers to commit such brutal homicides. Building within the context of transformation, temporality and instability, as the chosen material of the pillowcase is soft and does not last in time, *Clepsydra* implies trauma and sentimentality in the context of an improbable meeting of ghosts avoiding the security of a stable construction that

would lead to “associated memories that are highly mutable” (Osborne, 2014: 182). So this non-‘monument’ does not bring to mind “conventional subjects” (Stevens et al., 2018a: 719) but rather memorializes the unconventional which is not (re)presented in traditional public monuments. Escaping from the logic of the emblematic and prominent ‘monumental’, I rather explored “anti-monumental” (Stevens et al., 2018a: 719) practices such as the ephemerality of the construction and the non-figurative representation of the loss.

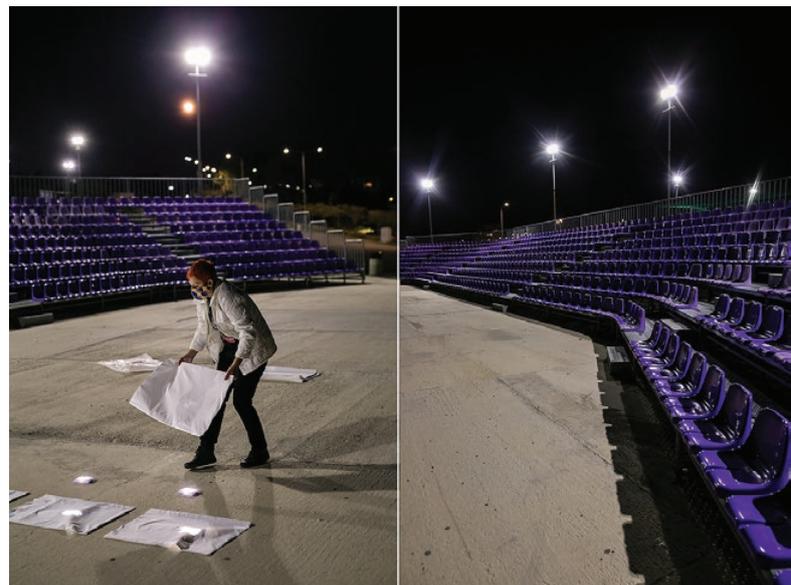


Figure 12: Performance in an empty theatre. Outdoor theatre of Lipasmata Drapetsonas. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

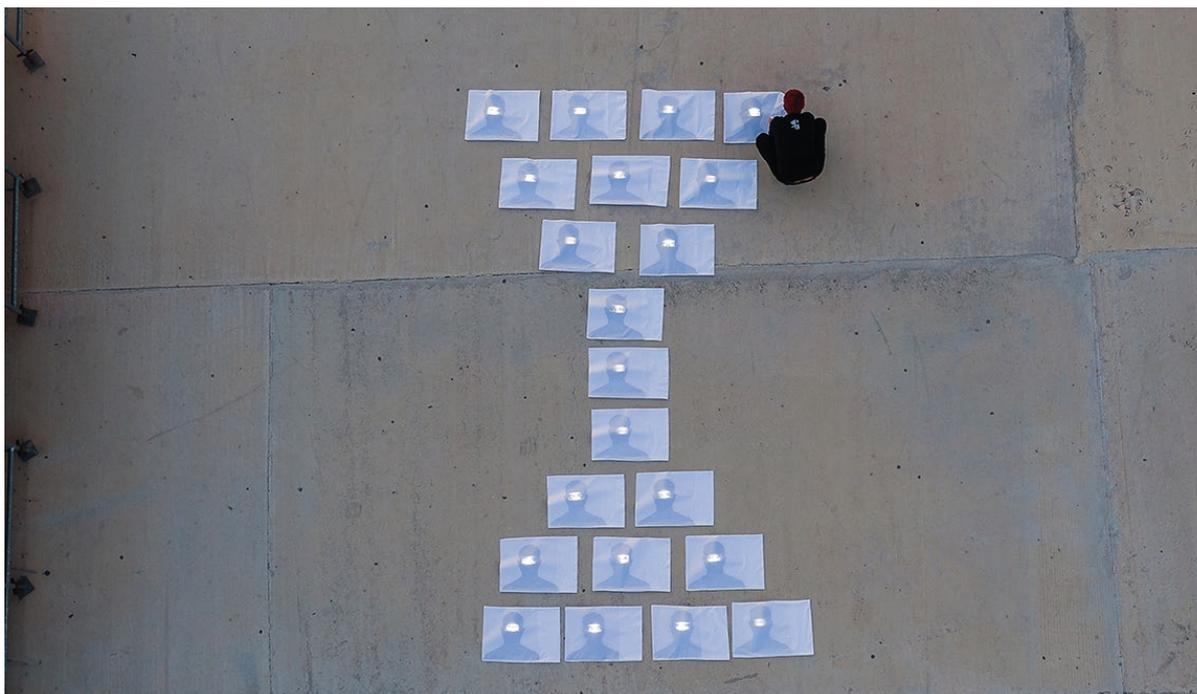


Figure 13: Installation / Geographical inscription. Drone documentation by Chris Stamis.

A non-figurative representation of the loss has also been used by the artist Doris Salcedo in the work *Palimpsest* (2013), which was developed as a mute installation of text that could be activated by the feet of pedestrians and drops of water which gradually formed the names of the victims of gun violence (Salcedo, 2015). Salcedo signifies the recognition of identity by employing text and the image of the gradually emerging letters as memorialized entities that replace a typical photographic portrait. Similarly, to *Palimpsest*, although with different technicalities, on October 8, 2020 the activist art collective, Colectiva SJF used text to identify the victims of femicide in Mexico City from the past four years, painting in the street their names, producing thus, a typographic memorial (Mendelson, 2020). In *Clepsydra* there is no textual marking of identity either for the named or for the unnamed cases that have been memorialized. Moreover, the image of the illuminating eyes does not serve as a recognizable sign. It rather questions recognition as it is difficult to identify a person only through their eyes, proposing thus a reflective mirror as the dead could be any of us. In this way, it's not us that we are looking at the *Other-absent*, but the *phantasma* who looks at us; a melancholic moment of an endless staring at finding a reason for the death exposing uneasiness for us and a call for responsibility.

Consequently, *Clepsydra* follows the genealogy of the "mobilization" (Kwon, 2002a: 157) of site-specific art, and the idea of the

"nomadic movement of the artist" (Kwon, 2002b: 157). Hence, even this present written article, is meant to be considered as another site of developing the process of a mnemonic, yet non-'monument', performative action and making.

5. SPATIALITIES

Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960 took place in the city of Drapetsona, at the outdoor theatre of Lipasmata Drapetsonas⁶ and in the specific geographic coordinates that are mentioned in the title of the project (Figure 11).

The location of Lipasmata Drapetsonas was selected for its physical attributes, as it has been the center of the industrial development of the city/port of Piraeus since the beginning of the 20th century. Mainly a polluted area and inhabited most by working class people, it constitutes a site decentered (Kwon, 2002: 3) from art economies (galleries, museums, etc.).

Historically, Drapetsona has been a site of mobility. In 1922 Greek refugees from Asia Minor and Pontus came in masses to settle in the area, living for many decades in makeshift huts and self-made sheds. A little later, a large number of internal immigrants (mainly from the Greek islands) settled next to refugees living also in hard conditions and working in the nearby industries (Christoforaki et al., 2019). During World War II and the years of German occupation, most of the inhabitants

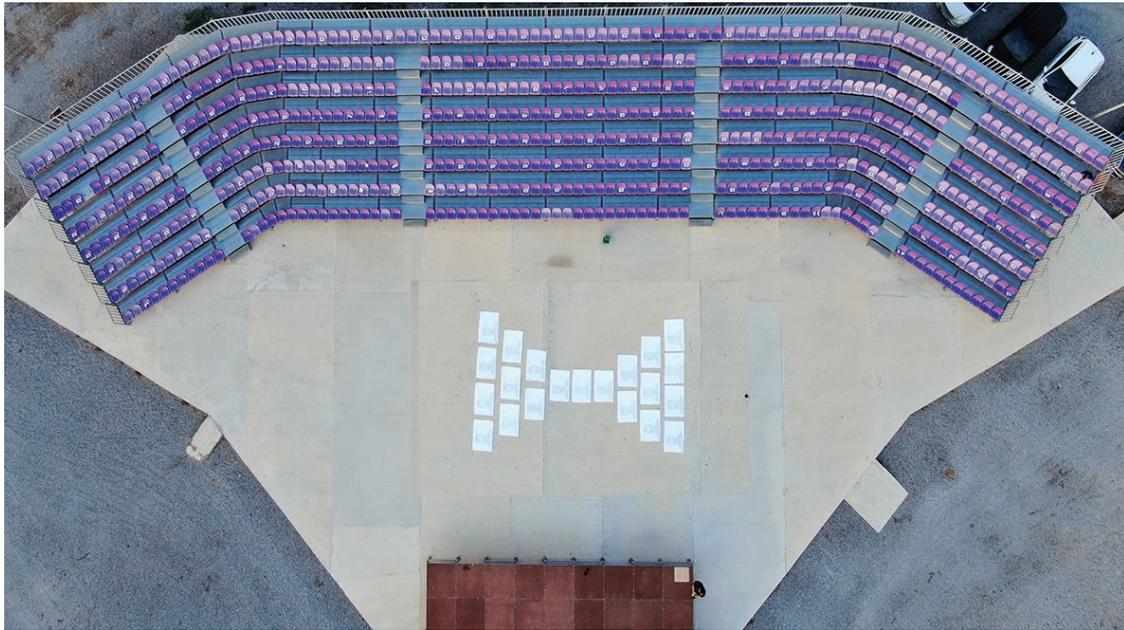


Figure 14: Installation / Geographical inscription. Drone documentation by Chris Stamis.

joined the EAM (Stavrianos, 1952), the nationwide communist movement of the Greek Resistance, while both Drapetsona and Keratsini were symbolically declared “free neighborhoods” (Municipality Keratsini-Drapetsona, 2020).

Being mainly communists and democrats, the people of Drapetsona, Keratsini and Kokkinia (Nikaia) suffered a lot in the years after the Greek civil war (1944-1948), which ended with the military defeat of the EAM by the right-wing government forces and their British allies and the persecution of the Greek Communist Party. Stories of imprisonment, physical torture, executions and exiles were added on people’s old traumas from the Asia Minor catastrophe.

In the period after the civil war and until 1974, when the military junta of 1967 fell, governments attempted systematically to ‘reform’ Drapetsona and break down the collectivity of its people, by demolishing the slum and relocating and scattering refugees in different neighborhoods; an early form of gentrification of the urban environment, I would say, through which capitalism promotes individualism and homogenization and commodification of public space (Fisher, 2010; Langedger, 2016). Violent conflicts took place, since people resisted hard against losing not only their houses but also their sense of communal identity. Thus, the demolition of the refugee settlements took place gradually and it was in the mid-1990s when the housing issue came to a resolution (Christoforaki et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in the mid-1990s, the Fertilizer factory (in Greek “Lipasmata Drapetsonas”) was closed down causing worse problems, such as unemployment and further degradation of the area, due to the abandonment of the industrial buildings. However, since the beginning of 2019, the wider area of the factory has been transformed into a multifunctional park of cultural activities (theatrical performances, concerts, sport events, etc.). The park is known by two names: Lipasmata Drapetsonas or Parko ergatias (The workers’ park).

Situated in Drapetsona, a significant place of historical cultural conflicts and negotiations, *Clepsydra* employs the idea of rhizomatic nomadism (Braidotti, 2011a), the fluidity of identity and spatiality (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). By relocating each violent incident into an industrial site with a long history of socio-political struggles and traumas, this ephemeral installation suggests a spatial mobility for the dead applying the nomadic condition to the political phantasma. The mnemonic assembly proposes “relationality” (Braidotti, 2011b: 290), as, except from Pavlos Fyssas who was born in Keratsini, no one from the aforementioned murdered people was in any way connected to this industrial area.

In overall, *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* memorializes nomadic selves highlighting interconnected non-linear relationships of memory, histories, and identities both in time and in association with trauma, political struggle and resistance related to the particular geographic position. Hence, this



Figures 15-16: Installation / Geographical inscription. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

performative public intervention inscribes to the industrial area a utopian dialogue among people, times and places challenging the perception of space as an “authentic experience and coherent sense of historical and personal identity” (Kwon, 2002: 52).

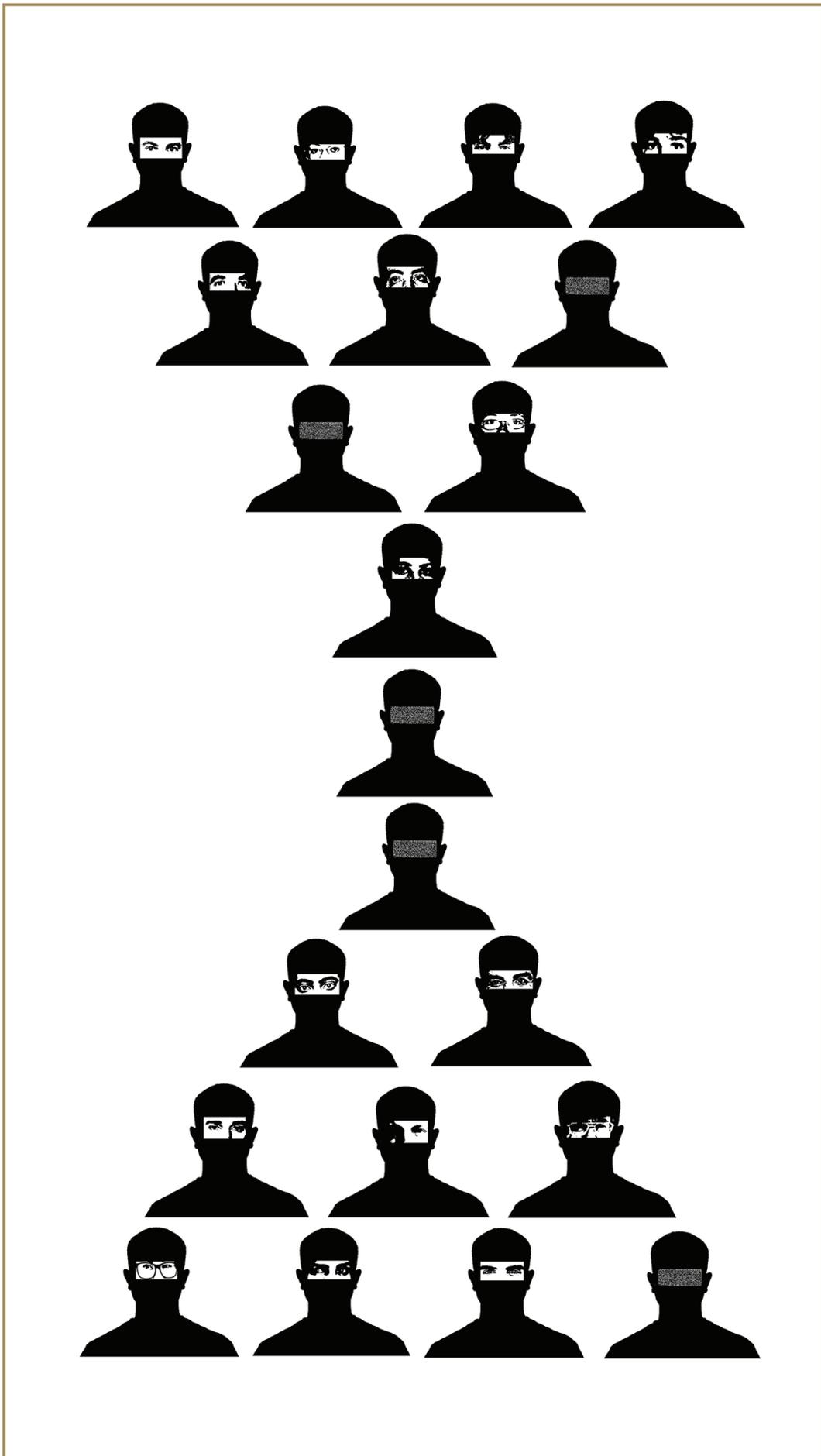
My utopian praxis at the open-air theatre inside the park of Lipasmata Drapetsonas, took place, though, in front of empty rows of seats (Figure 12). Restricted by the

particularities of the time of social distancing, the initial idea of involving members of various political collectives to participate in the mnemonic event had to be reconsidered and redesigned due to the consecutive quarantines in the pandemic of COVID-19.

CONCLUSION

Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960 unveils the political violence lurking in a democracy governed by neo-liberal policies and neoconservatism. As an ephemeral mnemonic installation, it challenges capitalist ideologies, art institutions and structures as the one and only legitimate way of representing and commemorating history. Such dominant forms of representation usually memorialize 'heroic' acts and/or 'achievements' of the nation state oversimplifying and distorting historical events, and, consequently, normalizing public memory in the framework of patriarchal, ethnocentric and/or militaristic conservative discourses (Bedford et al., 2021: 50) that capitalist realism employs to distract people from the actual sources of their troubles. Counter monumental works aim to expose these normalizing practices revealing public space and time as products of the conflict between what is worthy to be remembered and what should be doomed to oblivion. Such dividing practices (Foucault, 1977) constrain the horizons not only of the thinkable but also of the memorable and the imaginable. Furthermore, while capitalist realism sanitizes art works from their historical context by transforming them into commodities of monetary value, ephemeral art, such as installation and performance, has the potential to resist monetarization and acquire historical meaning. In its ephemeral/situational momentum, it may constitute this "tiniest event [that] can tear a hole in the grey curtain of reaction which has marked the horizons of possibility under capitalist realism. From a situation in which nothing can happen, suddenly anything is possible again" (Fisher, 2010: 81). Yet, what Fisher (ibid: 77) notes as condition for such an event to take place, is that the artist should take the risk to get engaged with the strange and the unfamiliar, and I would say also the marginal, so that to disturb the capitalist realism's status quo, in which culture does nothing but repeat endlessly itself.

Reflecting on the importance of the ghost as a political mediator and holder of historical memory (Gordon, 2008), *Clepsydra* seeks to establish an archaeology (Foucault, 1982) of the political phantasma through a geographical inscription of trauma in democracy in the open air. It engages reflectivity on political loss and the violation of the freedom of speech, mobility and senses which the neo-fascist movements demand to enforce in public life. Intending not to become an "unreconstructed spectacle", a logic that has to be abandoned in order to narrate a ghost story (Gordon, 2008), *Clepsydra* in the form of its documentation both from the ground point of view and above (use of a drone),⁷ emerges as an architectural structure marking the geographic territory and working as a public reminder (Figures 13-16). As such, it converses with the current debate on the political implications of public monuments in the construction of memory and the questions posed by the movement of Black Lives Matter (Black Lives Matter, 2013) and the consequent mass destruction of statues (Grovier, 2020) that followed George Floyd's murder. By mapping a bloodline of the voiceless, the performative installation calls for political awareness and responsibility towards the dead, a condition necessary for imagining alternative futures.



NOTES

- [1] The postdoctoral research, "Performative aspects of political loss: Lethal censorships, haunting memories" is being developed in collaboration with the Department of Social Anthropology at Panteion University under the supervision of Dr. Athena Athanasiou (Professor of Social Anthropology, Culture Theory and Gender Studies). It was co-funded by Greece and the European Union (European Social Fund-ESF) through the Operational Program "Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning", in the framework of the "Reinforcement of Postdoctoral Researchers – 2nd circle" (MIS-5033021) act implemented by the State Scholarships Foundation of Greece (IKY).
- [2] "As a phantasma, the anti-fascist musician emerged under the circumstances of the economic crisis in Greece where violence, racism, xenophobia, homophobia and nationalism were systematically fostered by the activity of Golden Dawn in underprivileged and poverty- and unemployment-stricken western suburbs of Attica. The vivid presence of Golden Dawn in most of the working-class neighborhoods of Piraeus and Athens, has been directly related to the consequences of the implementations of the memoranda. In fact, it was the worsening economy, increasing impoverishment of the middle-class, rapid influx of immigrants in certain areas, continuous degradation of the centre of Athens and populism of news media that culminated in a dramatic rupture in the Greek society out of which the political party of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn emerged and gradually established itself as the third power in the Greek Parliament at the elections of January 2015. Golden Dawn took advantage of the poor living conditions of the above urban districts and promoted its racist agenda by organizing protest rallies and food drives exclusively for Greeks, and offered 'protection' services, including violent attacks against theatrical performances, activists, immigrants, homosexuals, artists, anti-fascists and leftists. After a series of atrocious criminal activities, "the neo-Nazi party ended up in the deadly stabbing of Pavlos Fyssas, whose murder in September 2013 forced the Greek authorities to act. A senior operative in the party, Giorgos Roupakias, confessed to killing the rapper" (Helena Smith, Golden Dawn guilty verdicts celebrated across Greece. [Online] Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/07/golden-dawn-leader-and-ex-mps-found-guilty-in-landmark-trial> [Accessed 26/12/2020], Oct. 2020, para. 14). The trial against Golden Dawn started in April 2015 and after five years of the procedure, the court ruled that the neo-fascist Golden Dawn was a criminal organization in disguise.strategic stakes." (Rubel, 2015)
- [3] The Athens Polytechnic uprising took place in November 1973 as a massive student revolt against the Greek military junta of 1967-1974. It started on November 14, 1973 and ended in bloodshed in November 17, 1973.
- [4] Emily Dickinson and Ralph W. Franklin, *The poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading edition* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 930.
- [5] As Fisher (2010) explains: Capitalist realism as dreamwork produces "a confabulated consistency which covers over anomalies and contradictions", softens up systemic "glitches" and symptoms such as the widespread memory disorder, depression and other mental health problems (p.60).
- [6] For the realization of this event, the Cultural Organization of the Municipality of Keratsini-Drapetsona, eagerly, granted me with the permission to use its premises.
- [7] Documentation: Photography – Lambros Papanikolatos | Drone – Chris Stamis | Video – Elli Kontogianni.

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5+1 STORIES OF HABITATION: LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF HABITATION IN ATHENS OF THE CRISIS

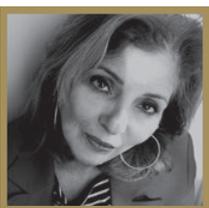
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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Greek Crisis
Literature
Habitation
Athens

The article explores the representation of urban space and human habitation in Greek literature, particularly in the aftermath of the financial crisis that began in 2008. The narrative focuses on the city of Athens as it grapples with economic turmoil, the shock of the pandemic, and the ongoing war in Ukraine.



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*Space is transformed into an indicator of
social structure and change,*

*but also into an organic fabric that
establishes and underpins the unity
of common, collective, public, social
experience:*

*the public space of the city, as a
mediating element of the interpersonal
relations*

*of its citizens, becomes the framework
for the formation of collective memory,*

collective experience, collective identity.

—Kracauer

1. INTRODUCTION

*Cities do not show their true face, or
rather their infinite faces, on any map.*

*A city is merely a black dot, nothing else
— and one must actually go there*

*in order for the city to be reflected not
only in their eyes*

but also deep in their soul.

—Rea Galanaki

Fifteen years after the breakout of the financial crisis — which developed into a humanitarian one — in Greece, the shock of the pandemic, the ongoing war on European soil in Ukraine, as well as the new tremors in the economic system at a global level, currently form a permanent condition of emergency, or “permacrisis,” which brings about radical changes, not only on the social and economic level, but also on human behaviors. Starting in 2008, the reality of Greece found itself yet again amidst a cyclone of a profoundly anthropological crisis of values, as new forgotten archaic fears emerged, bringing to the fore the vulnerability and fragility of human existence.

Literature, which captured this major crisis, drawing its raw material from the gloomy economic reality, incorporated in its narratives the multiple symbolic levels of meaning that are inscribed on urban space and captured the deviations from normality in urban life. The theme of crisis, with the narrative plot focusing on unprecedented forms of habitation and various different deviant literary characters, highlighted the way in which the material layer of the city is imbued with new social paradigms, unexpected forms and versions of habitation, and unexpected uses, claims and appropriations of spaces.

In the novel plots of Greek writers from the period 2010–2020, the city is redefined in terms of deterritorialization (emigration, loss of housing), claiming of public space (demonstrations in squares, strikers and new-homeless people squatting in public spaces and buildings), transformation of the lives of its inhabitants (impoverishment, unemployment, homelessness), and a radical redefinition of their social and political identities.

In his Introduction of *Greece in Crisis: The Cultural Politics of Austerity*, Dimitris Tziouvas notes:

Greece may have defaulted on its debts on several occasions in the past (1827, 1843, 1893, 1932), but since 2010 it has been experiencing the longest period of austerity and economic downturn in its recent history, further compounded by the influx of refugees and migrants. It has suffered more severely from the economic crisis than any other European country with harsh austerity measures, high unemployment and capital controls. What has happened in Greece since 2010 has occurred nowhere else in the developed world... Some fear that the syndrome of a failed society may become widespread, recovery will be hard to achieve and a persecution mentality may become entrenched. Resignation and despair could become everyday conditions.

(Tziouvas, 2017: introduction)

Cultural memory, according to Jan Assmann (2011), who coined the term, refers to the traditions that are transmitted orally or in writing and have a special value in the formation of the collective identity of a group. Moreover, it is of major importance to highlight the ways in which this cultural memory is produced and transmitted, a memory that is “collective” since it is the memory of wider groups, “social” since it plays a big part in the dissemination of social values, and “communicative” since it is rooted in the communication among the members of a community. Jan Assmann also points out the central role it plays in shaping a community’s identity and self-

awareness, since cultural memory is used by a community not only to understand its past but also to structure its present. The world of things in which we live (from a chair, bed or piece of clothing, to houses and cities) has a time index that refers not only to our present but also to different substrates of our past (Assmann, 2011: 6). So, this memory has a reference to time and place and leaves a distinct imprint on the literary discourse, which approaches the living reality as a revelation rather than a reflection of it.

Heidegger focuses his attention on the hidden word and on etymological transcendence, i.e. on the perception of language as a nod about the essence of things, on the composition of "being" through its poetics, through its animation and defamiliarization and integration through language in a hidden confession. The authors in the example of Athens capture, in novels and short stories published between 2010 and the present day, privileged vistas of scenes of habitation, human behaviors, political and social morals. They compose a mosaic of urban spaces or events and, through the personal and collective experiences that are integrated into the plot, attempt parallel interpretations of the historical city through the interaction of places and people. They adopt homologous or distinct thematic patterns, expressive structures, perspectives and focuses of the narrative function, symbolisms and metaphors, to represent the new, completely differentiated condition of inhabiting the city due to the socio-economic crisis.

The narrative discourse, drawing material from political current affairs and social reality, chooses symbolic Athenian places that carry a special meaning. It documents the ominous condition of Athens in crisis and of its inhabitants living in a state of alarm and constant pressure, as they watch the city's identity change. Literature fictionally represents the city of Athens, synthesizing the age-long past with the present. It processes the individual experience, the micro-history, the personal journey of the resident, alongside the "big picture" of collective experiences and the echo of wider socio-political and historical events. It constructs a hypertextual diagram that captures the individual and collective expression of habitation through the embodied negotiation of the urban field. Competing or parallel narratives meet in the public urban space, highlighting a different

collective memory, heterogeneities, opportunistic desecrations, and traumas.

With the spectre of the crisis in Greece haunting every aspect of everyday life, the tendency to reduce cultural and artistic expression in present-day Greece to a product of the 'crisis' is amplified. This tendency has to be met with scepticism, insofar as it risks turning the 'crisis' into a master-narrative: an overarching framework for understanding every expressive form, which often ends up appropriating cultural products to dominant discourses of the crisis.

Writers are inspired by Athens of the crisis, attempting new representations of the urban space, new readings and interpretations of the metropolitan experience. In their novels or short stories of the past decade, they follow the painful changes that occur in the city, radically altering the psyche of its inhabitants. They collect the mutual interactions of space and psyche of their heroes. They reconstruct the image of the city through comparative valuations of districts, buildings, streets and public spaces with intense social and political life. They alternate between the present and the past. They follow their heroes as the latter move aimlessly or protest in iconic spaces around the city. In squares-condensers of the collective experience, such as Syntagma Square "of the revolted citizens," and Omonoia Square, the refuge for immigrants and a place for political gatherings. In Athenian arcades and subway stations that serve as dormitories for the homeless; in dark streets where human wrecks wander about, the victims of the collapse of humanitarian values. They underline with lucid descriptions the bleak image of dilapidated neoclassical houses, empty stores with dark dusty shop windows, burnt listed buildings, city landmarks (such as the historic Attikon and Apollo movie theaters), decaying hotels, shelters and soup kitchens, unrented or dilapidated apartments of Athenian apartment buildings. They enlist in the structure of the plot iconic places that have lost their usual function and familiar image, injured and depreciated by widespread resignation, pervasive gloom and disheartening abandonment. In her essay "The writer in an environment of crisis" (2017), Jina Politis cites the viewpoint of Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa, who claims that major "traumas," such as the current economic crisis, are "stimulating" because they "prod"

and “fertilize” literature, but she explicitly also expresses her skepticism, arguing that major disasters take a long time to mature so that they do not constitute superficial stereotypical descriptive representations of a “crisis” (Politi, 2017: 210).

2. FIRST STORY OF HABITATION

From the eutopia of development to the dystopia of social and economic crisis. Omonoia Square receives the deposits of the sediment of the crisis

In her novel *Absolute Humiliation* (2015), author Rea Galanaki represents an urban space dotted with the signs of economic crisis and relinquishment. She negotiates versions of the city that make up the monumental cultural heritage of classical antiquity, alongside current images of the actions and practices of individuals and groups. The supremely beautiful city-amalgam of symbolic mnemonic places and poets meets the city of “the streets and the homeless.”

The heroes chosen by the authors represent the most vulnerable social groups: the elderly, the young, the unemployed, the needy, the homeless, the immigrants, the mentally or physically ill. Those who most dramatically experience the analgesia of the big city (Tsirimokou, 1988: 28). In her novel *Absolute Humiliation*, Galanaki decides to wander into the abyss of impoverishment. To plunge into the “hidden and uncharted city of the homeless,” “the city of outcasts, which was hidden like a nightmarish fetus inside the belly of once again pregnant Athens” (Galanaki, 2015: 211). In the invisible world of the humbled and the poor, “the most populous wilderness” of this city. She chooses her heroines from among the most vulnerable to the effects of this ominous condition. Two cultured, elderly, mentally ill women who live in a downtown hostel and who, on February 12, 2012, are caught in the whirlwind of the dramatic events that transpire on Syntagma Square. On the fateful night that shook the ancient city to the core and plunged it into despair and mourning, the two women will find themselves protesting in the city’s “navel,” among people hurt and discouraged, young and middle-aged, homeless and uprooted, angry and lost in the dark labyrinths of

politics and social impasses. The next day will find the two women lost and helpless, amidst the rings of beggary, the misery of the streets, and the at times selfish and at times selfless kindness of their fellow homeless people.

Galanaki contrasts the concept of “the streets” with that of the orderly and dignified “street”:

Nothing was as easy for you as it was in a house enclosed by walls, particularly everything that had to do with your bodily needs and personal hygiene. No other way was available to you; you adapted as best you could to life on the streets — the vast difference between singular and plural made you sad, a simple “s” denoting a whole other class of habitation; you see, “street” implies a house with an address, while “streets” stands for humiliation.

(Galanaki, 2015: 212-213)

The urban landscape in crisis literature is constantly under construction and reshaped based on the different experiences and actions of the subjects who come into contact with it. The authors sketch a city that is unstable and in motion, constantly changing, but also polyphonic and alive. An outdoor theater stage where new forms of social life and publicity take place with an unpredictable character. They map a network of public spaces that functions as a field of negotiation between different cultural identities (Stavridis, 2010: 73).

In his collection of short stories *Brave with a Thousand Terrors*, the author Diamantis Axiotis constructs and deciphers mental landscapes that are threatened by upheavals, invasions and attacks, or inhabited by memory and nostalgia. The homeless heroes of the nineteen stories are trapped in dystopian environments. Uprooted, stateless, unaccompanied, actually or metaphorically, they move along borderlines, hover in the void, inhabit unfamiliar or threatening spaces, get trapped in labyrinths, follow unknown routes, get isolated in nightmarish universes, encased in hermetic crypts. They are people who live in the shadows, on the margins, in shelters, in prisons, in the city or on the countryside, in a state of alarm and under constant pressure. Identities in confusion, sorely tested by social conditions, eroded, shattered, alienated by mental anguish and burnout. Outcasts and pariahs, for the longer or the shorter term, faced with emergency situations without a safety net.

3. SECOND STORY OF HABITATION

From the eutopia of development to the dystopia of social and economic crisis. Omonoia Square receives the deposits of the sediment of the crisis

Maurice Halbwachs underscored the key importance of space in the formation of collective memory, noting that the mnemonic recall of spaces by members of a community is just as vital to social memory as the recollection of time periods (Halbwachs, 2013). Through disjunctive relationships and dipoles, with the mobilization of all the senses, the contrast between the present image of the city and the past is emphasized.

Dystopian and utopian narratives also pose among fiction of 'the crisis'. Dystopias certainly take the lead over utopias, as Greek fiction – especially from 2009 to 2013 – registers the desolation that overcame the country. Utopian fiction in this context is never straightforwardly optimistic: alternative societies and heterotopias set up in fiction usually lapse into anti-utopias or carry both utopian and dystopian dimensions.

(Boletsi, in Tziouvas, 2017)

In order to intensify the topographic identification and emphasize the unfamiliar image of the city's disintegration after the fires of 2012, Galanaki invokes the cultural past and the historical monuments of Athens around Monastiraki as "sites of memory," that is, as functional, symbolic and material spaces in which history and memory, according to Pierre Nora (1984), interact and are mutually defined, co-shaping the social and political identity of inhabitants.

It was quiet in the shed, as if your Athens here became another city; the cleaner atmosphere [after the February twelfth fire] also helped. But it wasn't another city, it was your city; this was evident to you by the nearby square with the mosque and the church, the ancient columns next to them, the entrance to the electric rail and the subway, the high sacred rock of the Acropolis with the ancient temple as a crown on top of this amalgam of time, thoughts and feelings.

(Galanaki, 2015: 203)

In Axiotis's short story "The ball on zero," the hero is unable to connect the image of Omonoia Square that is registered in his memory with the present one. The thriving square, an indicator of the modern phantasmagoria of the city during the sixties (one recalls the metropolitan night shots of Greek cinema of the time) with its futuristic fountain, newly built hotels, popular restaurants, the underground station and the brightly lit shops, is compared to the present-day fluid state of decay and decline.

The hotel with the dozens of balconies towers before him, decorated with colorful bunting. The carvings on the facade are worn, the cornices missing. The plaster is peeled here and there – like a toothless whore. He grieves for this abject state. His mother took her last breath in this mansion [...] Behind the rickety counter stands a lanky sixty-year-old man with matted hair and yellow teeth. Next to him a blonde woman, flaunting her rich gifts [...] He sees the department store where his father had bought a shawl for his mother and a cast-iron car for himself. He looks for the "fancy" restaurant where they used to eat. He searches for the basement store with the suitcases. The first one is gaping pitifully, the second one has been turned into a cookhouse called "Stop Over." Komkom cuisine, specifies a tin sign. Recommendations include the pounded yam and the Nigerian soup egusi.

(Axiotis, 2016: 160)

The metro takes him to Omonoia. He emerges from the bowels of the earth, trying to orient himself with his gaze. All around him are glass and iron buildings. The asymmetrical square is dry of water [...] Wretched junkies are lying on the stairs, oblivious to tourists who photograph them. Two homeless people are preparing their dinner on the concrete.

(Axiotis, 2016: 159)

4. THIRD STORY OF HABITATION

Forms of disconnection from private space. The transformations of the urban apartment building unit

The narrative plot emphasizes the dwelling (private space) or its absence (homelessness-inhabiting public space). The center of the city, as a structural generative core, and its traditional districts, as symbolic places of identity, persistently come to the fore, as it is there that the change of paradigm takes place. There is a visible continuous degradation: from the flamboyant splendor and feverish, often forced, gentrification of entire areas of the past, to abject gloom. From the optimistic contemplation of a future of prosperity and uninterrupted growth, from the carefree era of frenzied, wanton, bulimic consumption, which was undoubtedly the driving force behind the "growth" of previous years, to suicides, idleness, embarrassment, and misery.

The city has an identity. The city carries memories. The city has a past [...] but at the same time the city mutates like a living organism where various systems intervene. They grow on the main body and multiply like a virus. Next to the Propylaea, a guy is shooting up. Face ravaged; you can't tell his age. Down below, gutted plastic bags and strays all around them...

(Konomara, 2018: 91)

In Lila Konomara's novel, the voices of the three members of a family alternate, resonate and intersect to express different perceptions of the crisis. The near-retirement disillusioned middle-aged pharmacist father, who operates on the basis of solidarity practices; the young, promising scientist daughter, who is plagued by work pressure and the stress of advancement and success; the disorganized teenage son, in a state of awkward disorganization, are representative examples of dealing with the problem. Through the gasping voice of the daughter (bio researcher in a multinational pharmaceutical company), the author describes a discontinuous city that is constantly transforming in search of its identity. She presents an anarchic image of heterogeneity, in an environment "*with human needs that are not being met and broken lives moving on the fringes like*

mini jungles." Thus, a rhythmic pattern is produced, where opposing concepts and dipoles alternate in a porous, murky and indeterminate urban landscape: the empty and the full, the dark and the bright, the familiar and the unfamiliar.

The city is sucking me in. Cheese pies, gift shop, school supplies-empty-, lottery, women's clothing-empty-, dry cleaners, mini market, electrical goods, funeral home-empty, empty, empty-, shops explode like quick flashes, old and new, little compasses next to bubbles, brand names, cheap stuff, for money laundering or gifts, staying open late, proper goldmines, and others putting their dreams on clearance sales. Concrete gaping here and there throwing up scrap metal. Graffiti devouring walls. Walls devouring dreams. Here and there lonely reflections in shop windows. Hook-ups, haunts, alternative crowds. Pointless wanderings. A deep web navigation in search of a hazy promise of happiness. I am contained within these materials, I feel them as my own, and at the same time the elements I do not recognize are multiplying...

(Konomara, 2018: 92)

The once well-to-do middle-class apartments of the city center are being divided and welcoming new cohabitations and cotenancies. In Alexis Panselinos's novel, a dark romance with elements of a love mystery and references to the socio-political situation, although the plot unfolds mainly in the interior of an apartment, the crisis breaks through the barrier of the walls and erodes the lives of the tenants, changing their appearance and content. As a fluid condition of deregulation, it builds up cumulatively like dust in the once-thriving and respectable districts of the inner city.

The city was burning only a few hundred meters away, the riots had spread amidst flames and smoke, fires were consuming buildings, bins and cars, shop windows were breaking, and hooded people were emerging from the shops carrying the loot they had grabbed. But up there, at the height of the apartment building, the sounds were distant and apartments were closed, immersed in their sleep; only few people were tuned to the television to watch the breaking news and the stern frightened faces of the newscasters.

(Panselinos, 2016: 172)

The ornate graceful neoclassical buildings of the 19th and 20th centuries in Exarcheia, in Neapoli, at the foot of Mount Lycabettus, on Asklipiou and Ippokratous Streets, examples of habitation from other, happier and carefree times, are crumbling or occasionally inhabited by homeless people, students, immigrants and the new poor, as downtown riots reaching all the way to their front door act as a deterrent, intensifying the state of desolation and decline.

The old urban neighborhood was filled with students, unknown faces who kept the apartments for a while, left after a year or two, and the landlords filled the entrances and walls with for-rent signs [...] For the old residents, those still alive, the decline was not visible as it coincided with their own. They were growing old in the same part of town where they were once young...

(Panselinos, 2016: 9)

5. FOURTH STORY OF HABITATION

For Sale – For Rent: The elegy of empty spaces, or, traversing the city from one end to the other

A ride from Syntagma to Kifissia. The public bus drives through the city, from its center to its northern suburbs. A ragged, disabled, and injured man boards without a ticket, his presence tolerated and aided by other passengers, triggering an angry reaction from the bus driver and a torrential, out-of-control, incoherent monologue. The “other,” the unlawful, the outcast, the outsider, the invader of normality, will activate all the conservative reflexes of the person in charge of the vehicle, who shows signs of rage, disorganization and fear, bordering on panic, almost right from the start.

En route to KAT General Hospital in Kifissia, the mental derailment and anxiety-ridden phobic delirium intensifies as it falls in sync with the rhythmic succession of vacant for-rent or for-sale buildings. The bus driver's daily treadmill, being pinned on his seat, subject to the same repetitive stimuli (buildings, advertising signs, commercial messages, noise, stops, traffic lights, congestion of cars and people), turns into an acute existential crisis, with symptoms of paranoia. Words like hunger, filth, disease, death, drugs, unemployment, illegality,

creep into his sentences rhythmically and repetitively. Like a denunciation, or perhaps an exorcism.

Like another Perec, the bus driver records during his daily routes everything he sees fleetingly through the panoramic windshield, while the hitherto familiar, now hostile and inhospitable, city flies past him in the opposite direction. It slips away from him. Menacingly persistent urban signals succeed one another in the declining Athens of the crisis, the “troika” and the class conflict: *“For Rent – For Sale, Banks, Shopping Centers, Department Stores, Private Clinics, Night Clubs, For Rent - For Sale Now, the present property, Bourgeois Neighborhoods, For Rent.”* An orchestrated daily assault on the psyche of the residents, who are unconsciously trying to decipher the ingredients of this dystopian condition oozing bleakness and despair.

Nothing's left standing. *For Rent, For Rent, For Rent, everything closed! For Rent, For Rent, For Rent* — if stores are closed here too, it's all gone to hell. *Offers, Kotsovolos, For Sale, Angelos Coiffures For Sale, Peugeot, For Rent, For Rent, Great Offers, For a Few Days Only, Public, Alpha Bank, Citibank, Eurobank, Goody's, Fresh Fish, Venetis, For Sale, European Credit, For Rent, For Rent, For Rent* — where are the good old days when you almost wouldn't dare look at all the riches? Through the windshield I could see the tiles and the bathtubs and lose my bearings. Are there people who afford to spend so much money on a bathroom? Where are they now? But they'll be fine. Both parties will be fine. Those selling the goods and those buying them. They've taken all their money abroad. Switzerland. Piece of work, both of them. *Entire Floor for Rent, Shop for Rent, We Struck Gold, For Sale, Ground Floor for Rent, Warehouse, Remos, For Rent, For Rent, For Rent, Hygeia.*

(Frangeskaki, 2019: 59-60)

The protagonists in most, or rather in the most representative, of the seventeen short stories that make up Maro Douka's collection *Giati emena i psychi mou* [Because my soul] (2012) find themselves far from the familiar and intimate place of family warmth, far from hearth and home, from their personal safe haven. They roam about or stand still; they meet up, communicate, or become alienated; they demonstrate, rebel, or bog down; they dream, fall into melancholy,



Figure 1 : Nina Lasithiotaki, *Untitled*, 2015.

or become overwhelmed by painful or comforting memories, in the shared center stage of urban life, in the public space of the capital city or a small town. In the streets, on the squares and in crowded cafes, somewhere in Greece or elsewhere, deprived of the warmth of collective visions and the sense of communalism. Most of her heroes, lost in the city's labyrinths, are faced with the spectrum of exclusion and marginalization. Exposed in the public space, defenseless, misled, disappointed, old-timers, alone. Suffering political subjects with injured hope and dignity, on trajectories of despair and frustration, or action and resistance. Everyday anonymous people, with shattered dreams, existential fears and anxieties, their livelihood impaired, their survival uncertain. Only some of the narratives exude the claustrophobic intensity of an enclosed interior, a place of surveillance and confinement, a prison with no escape and no way out, while others resort to the representation of a nightmarish future of doom and gloom, in which humanity has finally succumbed to the despotic structures of the global dictatorship of money and the markets.

6. FIFTH STORY OF HABITATION

The city ablaze, representations of resistance

The urban space, habitat of relationships and souls, is not univocal and cannot be taken for granted, whether as an image or as a representation. It is a product of social practices, and the right to the city emerges as the central issue during the time of economic crisis, destabilization of political structures and decline of social acquis; and this awakening, as well as this deconstruction, is recorded by authors in their topical fictionalizations. Their heroes are faced with a series of trials that disrupt and radically divert the course of their lives. The plot starts from the individual experience to arrive at the socio-political stakes. It is no coincidence that all the authors under study consider it appropriate to include in the narrative plot the gatherings of citizens in Syntagma Square. Social concern is either overtly evident or implicit in the literary narratives after 2008. The heroes' wanderings, in the form of transit or aimless walking, spatialize the city of economic, political and social crisis, of awkwardness, of insecurity.

The focus of literary representations shifts

from the interior of houses to the streets and their habitation, as the narrative moves out of the enclosed personal space of intimacy and security to capture events in the open. The "homeless citizen" exists in all the texts, either as a central character driving the plot, or as a secondary significant person that sharpens the critical stance of the reader. He or she is now visible, highlighting the intensity and extent of the problem. He or she appropriates, according to Lefebvre, the public space of the city and, through actions of negotiation, assertion and establishment of informal rules of habitation and behavior, transforms it into his or her vital space and ephemeral outdoor stage. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the "literary microcosm," a relatively autonomous field, functions by means of a group of acting subjects, works and phenomena, in which social forces are also present, since literary writing has the unique capacity "to concentrate and condense in the concrete singularity of a sensitive figure and an individual adventure, functioning both as metaphor and as metonymy, all the complexity of a [social] structure and a history" (Bourdieu 1995: 24).

On the same wavelength as Galanaki is Vangelis Raptopoulos in his novel *The Man Who Burned Down Greece*. The fired journalist, father of two daughters, who abandons his family and his home and becomes homeless out of despair and shame, maps Athens of the crisis in a very different way. This unusual grapheme highlights parts of the city where homeless people find shelter: major roads (Stadiou, Panepistimiou), downtown districts (Psirri, Metaxourgeio, Kerameikos), metro stations (Monastiraki, Omonoia), downtown squares (Koumoundourou, Omonoia), Athenian arcades, deserted shops, areas under bridges over major avenues (Kifissou, Pireos, Petrou Ralli, Lenorman). It records the places where entire ephemeral improvised camps are set up, the haunts where the homeless eat, sleep or spend the day, making visible everything dark and hideous that is hiding behind the city's phantasmagoria. The author interjects into the flow of the narrative a wide list of homeless fellow citizens, briefly describing their lives and the spaces they choose to move around in the city:

STAMATIS: Acquaintance of Koumoundourou. Like most of us, middle-aged Stamatis has set up a makeshift shelter out of cardboard boxes and nylon. Instead of a sleeping bag, he has a pile of quilts...

ALEXANDROS: It's uncanny how much he looks like any bourgeois gentleman.

Washed, clean, you would never guess he is homeless. And yet, he lives and sleeps in Omonoia, opposite a bank....

YIANNIS ANGELOPOULOS: 45 years old. Once upon a time, he used to live in Peristeri. He was forced to sell his home: he had started a business that failed. He now lives in Psirri, but we met in our makeshift camp, near the spot where Pireos street passes under the elevated Kifissou Avenue. Yiannis was part of a relatively closed group of seven people who slept next to each other.

VOULA: 53 years old, homeless for six months. The best deal she has had was in the dormitory for the homeless, and she thanks from the bottom of her heart the members of Médecins du monde who have embraced and cared for her and all the other homeless people.

CHRISTARAS AND ADRIANNA: Since the crisis, the meaning of the word "homeless" has changed. Previously only the delinquent, the drug addicts, the mentally ill were homeless. Now anyone who was once a householder may be homeless. Christaras is still a householder, only now his house has no walls. He sleeps with Adrianna under the bridge of Petrou Ralli. Their bed is delimited by the railing of the road and the flower bed... In actuality, the only things that are theirs, his or Adrianna's, are a few pillows, an orange blanket, and two cats who curl up on the couple's blankets to keep warm...

(Raptopoulos, 2018: 186–207)

7. PLUS ONE STORY OF HABITATION

The floor plan. Inhabiting the empty space

According to Ricoeur, fictional narrative is an iconic augmentation of the world of human action, which consists of conjuring plots and constructing events in a rational manner. Speech, action and integration into a storyline create new networks of reading an experience or producing it, precisely because they lend a dimension of denotation or notification rather than reduplication of reality. Fiction resorts to reality not to copy it but to propose a new approach to it of distinct cognitive value. The conceptual mental image created by the writer is marked

by his or her characteristic intention to offer a model for a different perception of things, more specifically a paradigm of a new vision (Ricoeur 1990, 66–70).

In his novel, author Manolis Lydakakis stubbornly closes, almost to the end, all escape routes for the characters of his work, persistently representing a crippled world, with no values or ideals. An unbearable condition of the "total social event" type. The predominant image is that of the deserted plot where the hero's family house used to be, a property now repossessed and demolished. His younger brother, who never managed to become an architect, draws the floor plan onto the ground with his bare hands. He draws the walls, the doors and the windows, plucking out the weeds from the virtual rooms. He rebuilds the happy family home of the past, and stubbornly inhabits the empty space.

Because my family house did not exist. The lot stood there empty, a grassy field now. Only its imprint remained on the wall it shared with the neighboring house, an outline made of stone and loose mortar. Traces of bricks where walls once stood, the built-in cupboard with the marks from the shelves, the chimney, the horizontal concrete floor and the sloping roof line, the colors now faded there on the wall, marks on them from the frames that used to hang there, the mirror and the sideboard where it rested against the wall for as long as I can remember.

I stood there dumbfounded, staring into the void.

(Lydakis, 2020: 249)

8. EPILOGUE

The authors in the example of Athens capture, in novels and short stories published between 2010 and the present day, privileged vistas of scenes of habitation, human behaviors, political and social morals. They compose a mosaic of urban spaces or events and, through the personal and collective experiences that are integrated into the plot, attempt parallel interpretations of the historical city through the interaction of places and people. Their works, the offspring of a restless consciousness and a keen prophetic political reflection, condense and translate into literature the agony about people's willingness to conform and assimilate, the concern about the passivity and complacency of the



Figure 2 : Nina Lasithiotaki,
Untitled, 2015.

masses. About everything that, in the context of the dynamic penetration of capitalist realism, imperceptibly alter the perception of subjects about the world, sweeping away values and principles. About language, independence, respect for the environment and self-determination of the peoples who, in the name of prudence, modernization and development it promotes, are led to servitude and decline.

The condition of uncertainty and constant fear leads to internal violence and conflict. It brings out the repressed vulnerability of human existence by making conscious a radical self-awareness of the city's inhabitants. The characters of the authors are ordinary people who are faced with an all-out attack by the social, economic and political establishment. Nevertheless, they struggle to rise above the possible, the permissible and the predetermined. The hard, generalized condition of the crisis leads them to run through the whole spectrum of reactions. From capitulation, resignation and nihilism, that expresses acceptance and submission to a sovereign and omnipotent system of power, to extreme anger and resistance to institutions and symbols through acts of violence.

From the nostalgic recollection of a beautified bright and happy past and its passive encapsulation to a utopian situation, to the dynamic reconstruction and confrontation of dystopian conditions through inventive practices and resourceful solutions aimed at claiming the vision of a fairer society

The noteworthy literary contribution of the political origin of short stories and novels is their ability to balance the narrative on a slight verge between conformity and disobedience. To combine with skill and sensitivity opposing forces in their attempt to represent and highlight the spatial discontinuities, conflicts and contradictions of an era of mutations.

In the novels of this period, Athens, the supremely beautiful city-amalgam of symbolic mnemonic places and poets, presents a new multiple identity in narrative discourse. It meets the city of abandonment, unemployment and doubt. The city of "the streets and the homeless"; and is thus radically re-defined and reconstructed.

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Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for constructive comments and recommendations.

ATHENS:

A TEXT UNDER EDITING

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Athens

Public interventions

Graffiti

City-as-Text

The city of Athens, with its urban landscape adorned by graffiti, murals, and non-institutional interventions, serves as a living text constantly under revision and editing. These interventions, whether in the form of political slogans or artistic expressions, disrupt the city's narrative and engage its users in an ongoing dialogue. Drawing parallels to text editing, these interventions act as annotations, deletions, and corrections, shaping the urban experience. Phosphorescent pink markings document the aftermath of clashes between protesters and security forces, offering a socio-political narrative that combats collective forgetfulness. Vandalized historic monuments, like the Polytechnic building, become focal points, sparking debates about public art and state tolerance. Just as text editing can be a tool for care or manipulation, interventions in Athens reflect the complex relationships between citizens, the state, and public space. In this dynamic interplay, the city becomes a negotiated text, continually reinterpreted with each editorial act, reflecting the diverse voices and perspectives of its users.



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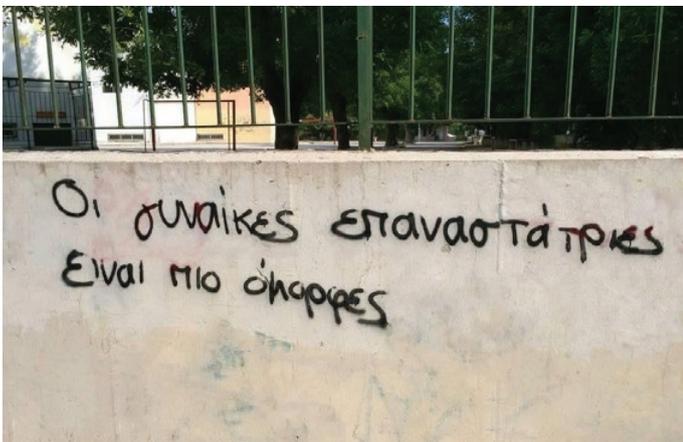
1. ATHENS: A TEXT UNDER EDITING?

Non-institutional interventions in the city, “destruction of foreign property”, smudges and dirt, government indifference, street art, graffiti, or all of these combined?

Do such interventions, regardless of how one labels them, share common characteristics? How do the writings on the city walls relate to each other and to the city itself as an institution when viewed through the prism of writing and editing a text? If one regards the city as a text undergoing editing, not only by institutional and governmental mechanisms but also by other subjects, readers, and users, how are these interventions recontextualized within this framework?

Through this exploration, correlations emerge between interventions in the city and the editorial process of a text. These correlations are proposed as a potential indicator of how the relationships between the subjects using the city and the city itself unfold. These subjects include the state, institutions, public entities, architects, urban planners, contractors, citizens, tourists, immigrants, or refugees. During a stroll through the center of Athens or any neighborhood, one can observe traces of appropriation on the walls. Texts, slogans, paintings, sketches, graffiti, stencils, and image and poster pastings are integral parts of the Athenian landscape. However, most of the interventions on Athens' walls fall into the category of slogans. These slogans typically pertain to politics, football, religion, love, personal thoughts, or are a combination of the above. Some of them often attempt to communicate their message to different audiences, while others target specific individuals, and in the case of just writing personal thoughts, it is often unclear if they are ultimately ad-





dress to anyone. The written slogans are all imprints of gestures exposed to interventions by other users, readers, or governmental mechanisms, which either supplement or erase the existing text. Based on various elements such as the themes of the slogans or their graphic character, we can make assumptions about the age, political beliefs, and other convictions of those responsible. Heterogeneous slogans sometimes engage in dialogue with the institutional text (the city), i.e., they either critique the dominant discourse or use it, while at other times, they have no connection with it. They can be statements and personal thoughts or dialogues between subjects, perhaps even unknown to each other. Athens serves as the space/text where users keep notes. Does something similar not happen, for example, with school textbooks? In a school textbook, in addition to the printed text, one can read notes related to the content, statements related to emotions, drawings, and dialogues for communication with others.

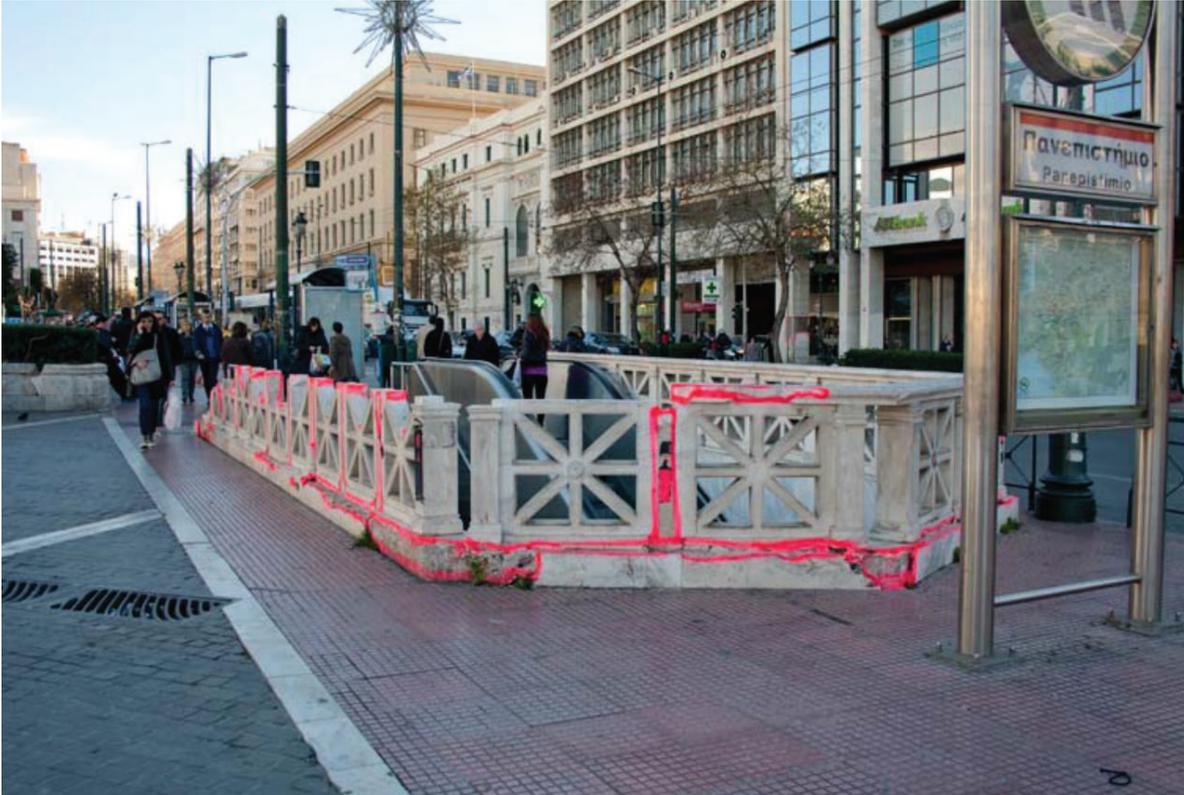


2. INTERVENTIONS AS EDITING

What would happen if readers had the ability to edit the text they read themselves, while this process could be documented and presented to other parties? How would it impact future readings and interventions? Editing encompasses the concept of care but also manipulation. The city's residents take charge of the text—the city of Athens—by contributing new content, erasing, or commenting on existing traces of appropriation. In this process, the government's intervention could also be considered, as it cleans up by removing some of the traces. Intervention upon intervention, correction upon correction, placement upon placement, create a sense of ongoing dialogue. It's as if the text is continuously negotiated. Such an approach appears to expand the definition of text editing. In this case, editing isn't bound by rules beyond those defined by each user; it's in a constant state of evolution, it's collective but not organized, not coordinated, and doesn't have a single purpose.

Under these conditions, the city of Athens could be seen as a text under negotiation, constantly reinterpreted with each editorial act. Looking at Athens, especially in comparison to other European cities, the appropriation of public space seems de facto justified by quite a few users who disregard legislation, prohibitions, or "good manners." However, in addition to the multitude of traces of such appropriations, it's noteworthy that state intervention is selective. Essentially, not all traces in public space are "erased," but rather points or areas are chosen with unclear criteria. Some interventions on the walls of Athens have become a source of controversy concerning the specific relationship between citizens and the state, as it's inscribed in public space. Emphasizing the relationship between Athens' users and the city itself as a material, I will delve into three examples of non-institutional interventions in more detail. By non-institutional, I mean all interventions that haven't obtained the necessary permits from the state to exist in public space. Annotation, deletion, and correction are the fundamental aspects of editing that I will reference in these examples.





ANNOTATION

Athens, November 2012.

Phosphorescent pink elements disrupt the urban landscape of Athens. They are scattered across Syntagma and Klauthmonos Squares, in the Exarchia neighborhood, and along Stadiou, Panepistimiou, and Amalias streets. These elements literally document and describe the traces and ruins resulting from clashes between police forces and protesters during demonstrations in the center of Athens. Broken marbles on walls and sidewalks, shattered glass on doors and windows, damaged stairs and marble surfaces at subway entrances and residential buildings, burnt trash cans, scorched facades, removed sidewalks, remnants of paint splashes, and vandalized monuments. These descriptions have been made using phosphorescent pink spray and are accompanied by the marker's symbol, which we typically use for making notes in a text (highlighter). From the map that records this artistic intervention, as published on the internet, it is evident that these markings create a rhythm within the urban space. This rhythm varies in frequency in different areas, being more pronounced, for example, in the areas around Syntagma Square or Stadiou Street near the Propylaea. Due to its extent, this intervention could be

perceived as a large-scale artistic installation spread throughout the city. The way these phosphorescent notes encircle the city's users during their movements and the connections they create allude to how an artistic work is managed. Navigating within this "installation," within the city, induces different sensations depending on the narrative established by the rhythmic patterns of the phosphorescent elements. These annotations essentially function as references of socio-political significance. They aim to combat social amnesia by reminding passersby of the recent history of the city.

In the case of a text, when annotations are numerous, they play a disruptive role. The abundance of annotations interferes with reading, maintaining the reader's attention on a particular issue. Similarly, in Athens, pedestrians encounter these repetitive phosphorescent elements, which disrupt their attention and capture their interest, directing it toward the socio-political situation in the country, as it unfolds in the public space through demonstrations, gatherings, clashes, and mobilizations.



DELETION

Athens, March 2015.

"Graffiti aggressively took over the National Metsovion Polytechnic and vandalized the architectural monument. It not only altered its form but also its historical identity. Moreover, it damaged the marbles, hopefully not irreparably."

Minister of Culture, Nikos Xydakis

The Polytechnic has always been, and still is, an incredibly information-loaded building - posters on top of posters, slogans written over slogans, stencils, graffiti, hung banners, etc. In short, it was by no means a clean and well-maintained building befitting its claimed historical and aesthetic architectural value. The Polytechnic building at the intersection of Stournari and Patission streets became the center of attention because, in early March 2015, it was vandalized in a way that "crossed the line." The Polytechnic building was chosen for a large-scale artistic intervention. Obviously, this choice was not random, just as the plan itself wasn't, considering the historical significance of the building, the Exarchia district, and the political context (two months after the first electoral victory of a left-wing coalition in Greece). An unclear black and white design spread across the entire surface of the two external facades. This massive intervention was completed in one night, indicating collective work, good organization, and perfect execution of an

illegal act as such in the center of Athens.

Does this design, or this "smudge", referencing comic aesthetics, function as deletion? Or does it ultimately work in exactly the opposite way? The extent covered by the design is quite large, making the building prominently present and dominant in the surrounding urban landscape, thus highlighting it. Similarly, in a text, the deletion or highlighting of an entire chapter wouldn't carry the same weight as deleting a word or a sentence. Such a gesture could mean rejection or even censorship. In any case, it would focus on the point it covers, arousing the curiosity of passersby. After this intervention, the specific building, through the media, regained its monumental identity, architectural significance, and historical character. Inspired by this intervention, architects, artists, politicians, residents, and passersby made public statements. These statements were mainly disseminated through the press and social media, and mass media dedicated considerable time to the issue, sparking a discussion about public art and state tolerance. The only facades of the Polytechnic that were quickly restored were those occupied by the "graffiti." According to some, the responsible authorities cleaned the traces of vandalism, while others claimed they destroyed the artistic intervention of the creators, leaving the interventions (writings, graffiti, posters, etc) in the rest of the building untouched. The publicity given during the cleaning process by the Mass Media was similar to the initial coverage the issue received.





CORRECTION

Athens, October 2011

The forty-eight-hour strike mobilization, jointly declared by GSEE-ADEDY (The General Confederation of Greek Workers and Supreme Administration of Unions of Public Employees) on October 19th and 20th, 2011, was one of the largest mobilizations of the post-memorandum period. Similarly, police presence was very strong, as has been the case in such situations in recent years. Many clashes occurred between demonstrators and law enforcement during the protest. On one of the two days of mobilization, the following intervention took place: demonstrators sprayed with pink paint on MAT (Riot Police) units using fire extinguishers as spray cans. The result was to change the customary color of some uniforms from greenish khaki to pink. Simultaneously, with the change of color, the possibility of camouflage that khaki provides is weakened, while the imaginative pink makes law enforcement bodies visible from a distance. Thus, it points out their location, drawing attention to the protesters. Riot police officers, as replicas, could be seen as letters within a text.

Does this particular intervention resemble a correction similar to that of a recurring typographical error in a text? How is a persistent "error" interpreted? As the writer's oversight or intention?

Treating Athens as a shared notebook within this framework, it is an inextricable part of daily life. However, the city is closely connected to the dominant discourse, so it is not a blank, unwritten notebook. In this notebook, actions-traces/evidence are recorded individually, both personally and collectively. The city is a personal diary but at the same time an indelible record of socio-political events. Deploying protest, humor, literature, and visual language, notes in the urban space are offered to all users (institutional or not) as an open archive. Each note implies a reading. In the city, reading is embodied and collective, while each note reinterprets readings. This process is bidirectional and represents a continuously curated text. Subjects are subject to the text and vice versa.

RE-DRAWING INTERIOR SPACE: HABITATION PRACTICE AS ARCHITECTURAL METHOD

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
interior space
habitation practices
permacrisis
architectural method
narrative

The subject of this article entails an endeavor to spatially interpret a synchronicity labeled as a "crisis," or more fittingly, as a "permacrisis." Initially, the concept of crisis will be explored in conjunction with the hermeneutics of "normalcy." Subsequently, the article will scrutinize the spatial manifestations of the crisis, placing a particular emphasis on habitation and housing dynamics. To this end, our focus will shift to Greece, specifically the city of Athens, where the crisis intertwines with habitation practices. Consequently, the article will juxtapose a theoretical exposition of the current crisis depiction with a narrative case study centered on habitation and accommodation. From the theoretical analysis of the crisis and its associated emergency housing needs to the narrative depiction of spatial transformations within an apartment in Athens, the lingering question pertains to the feasibility of generalizing from abstract versions to tangible realities, from the familiar to the everyday.



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This article is an attempt to spatially interpret a synchronicity marked as an “emergency” (Agamben 2005; Athanasiou 2018), a “crisis” (Gentili 2021; Roitman 2014), or better, as “crises”. In our contemporary era, “normalcy” intersects with significant crises—financial, economic, health, energy, ecological, climate, refugee and migration crises, up to recent geopolitical upheavals—thus complicating everyday life. This complexity places societies in a state of social, institutional, and political instability to such an extent that successive crises are now perceived as enduring or perpetual, a condition also referred to as a permacrisis¹.

Initially, the concept of crisis will be explored in relation to the hermeneutics of “normalcy”. Subsequently, the spatial manifestations of the crisis will be studied with an emphasis on habitation and housing. In this direction, our focus will shift to Greece, particularly the city of Athens, where the crisis intersects with habitation practices. This entails that the theoretical presentation of a current crisis depiction will be succeeded by a narrative – a case study – centered on the fields of habitation and accommodation. The specific narrative adopts a research methodology coming from the qualitative approaches, aiming to bypass quantitative calculations of “how much” while emphasising the manner – the “how” – in which habitation practices are organised amidst crises. The narrative is structured around the description and recounting of a “critical habitation” revealing spatial snapshots from the interior space of the apartment (Barkouta 2019). If we consider a residence not as something “finalised, completed from the beginning” as Aris Konstadinidis mentions, but as something that “is being remolded through living; similarly to an ‘expandable’ life-tool”, the particular research approach aims to redesign a dwelling from “within”, from the interior space, placing emphasis on what is deemed “truly existing and necessary” (Konstadinidis 1972: 34). From the theoretical analysis of the crisis and emergency housing needs to the narrative description of spatial transformations within an apartment in Athens, the fundamental question remains: Can any generalizations be drawn from abstract representations to tangible realities, from the familiar to the everyday?

1. FROM THE "CRISIS" TO THE HOUSING "CRISIS"

In his genealogical study of the notion of “crisis”, Reinhart Koselleck traces its etymology back to the Greek infinitive “krinein²” (Koselleck 2006). According to the author, the historisation of how

the concept has been applied is necessary since its polysemy and wide distribution complicates its clarity and precision (Koselleck 2006: 397). Initially, the term “crisis” held distinct meanings associated with law, medicine and theology. In the field of theology for instance, the use of the word was connected to Christian theology and in particular “the moment of judgment” and the end of the world. Already since the Middle Ages, the application of the term in the field of medicine implied “the critical condition of the ‘ailing body’” that suggested “a turning point in time dictating the crisis (in the sense of a decision - oversight) (Athanasiou 2018: 45). The timeliness of imminence and emergency constituted the temporal imprint of liminality as entailed by the notion of crisis within a historical context. At short, all initial meanings of “crisis” were in relation to dual choices like “right or wrong, salvation or condemnation, life or death” (Koselleck 2006: 358).

The shifting of the term “crisis” from its original etymologies to the prevalence of the current economic meanings is, according to Carlo Bordoni, due to our tendency of stripping off any event from the realm of individualism (Bauman & Bordoni 2014). Since the word “crisis” is considered a neutral term containing positive conceptualisations as well (a change, a decision and a turning point), its depersonalised dimension effectively relegates any undesirable event to a realm of ambiguity. To answer the same question, the anthropologist Janet Roitman in her book “Anti-crisis” (Roitman 2014) analyses the use of the notion of “crisis” in order to describe social phenomena by focusing on the “descent” of the word. More specifically, Roitman is looking for the root of the crisis in the words and terms indicating arrays of related concepts and by doing so, she is shedding light to connotations of the word: “liquidity, asset bubble, credit, interest rates, deregulation, corruption [...] political and economic policy, ideology, neoliberalism, economic theory, [...] financialisation, risk management, regulatory capture, and the falling rate of profit” (Roitman 2014: 42-43).

Geographer David Harvey in his book “The Enigma of Capital” (Harvey 2010b) studies crises by presenting the disparities between Marxist theory and conventional economic theory within the capitalist system. According to the author, “conventional” economists support a “tendency to equilibrium”, whereas the crisis is understood only as the outcome of external factors and the system retains the tendency to restore balance. On the contrary, according to Marxist theory, balance is an unusual condition. Harvey, on his summary on crisis interpretation considers the

latter to be intrinsic to the system, believing that each crisis won't be resolved but will rather be transformed and translocated in time (Harvey 2010a). David Harvey's interpretation highlights the spatial dimension of the crisis, placing it in a central position. "The crisis today is more than ever a crisis of the city" (Harvey 2012). The management of economic surplus and the reproduction of capital take on a spatial dimension through the procedures of urbanisation, through "predatory practices"³ and land-grabs (Harvey 2012; Hadjimichalis 2018).

The correlation between a crisis and the spatial transformations in the city constitutes an extensive field of research (Ponzini 2016; Dalakoglou 2013). Architects, urban planners and geographers affirm that the role, definition and characteristics of space are being transformed when under crisis. According to Laura Burkhalter and Manuel Castells a crisis does not only take economic dimensions, but also social, ecological, spiritual and spatial ones, placing hence both space and city at the epicentre of their approach (Burkhalter & Castells 2009). Many scholars, by placing the interrelationship between crisis and space at the epicentre of their research, define the first as part of a neoliberal shift. According to Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2010), neoliberalism is not a homogeneous socioeconomic and ideological structure, but rather "a variegated form of regulatory restructuring that produces geo-institutional differentiation across places, territories, and scales". The association of space neoliberalisation with austerity policies has opened up a new field of research, relevant to austerity urbanism, which considers the latter a mutation of neoliberal urbanism (Peck 2012). If austerity can be considered a form of redistributive policy – in spatial and social terms (Peck 2012: 651) – then space can be reconceptualised as an exposure field of this "unequal" and "asymmetric" practice (Peck 2012; Peck 2015).

If we direct our attention to Greece, research on housing would not be possible without addressing the swift and violent changes instigated by the economic crisis of 2009-2018, that which all facets of daily life. In this context, the structural "reforms" mandated during the crisis, neoliberal policies, the process of impoverishment and the appropriation of public lands have underscored the significance of space in the implementation of austerity measures. As a result, housing exclusion was extended creating thus new housing issues, inequalities in the urban space were intensified and the building stock was degraded (Vaiou 2014; Barkouta 2019). The aggravation of housing issues ensuing from the intensive austerity programmes and the parallel withdrawal of state social policies for the provision of shelters

defined a new reality, that further destabilized the right to housing as we knew it (Vaiou 2014; Hadjimichalis 2018; Barkouta 2016). From the inability to repay extreme housing debts to forced relocations and co-habitations or increased quotas of energy deprivation, the vulnerability of households facing eviction or the displacement brought upon the short-term rental of properties – all constitute the multiple aspects of housing issues placing habitation at the centre (Barkouta 2019). During this adverse period, the constraints of the pandemic led to abrupt transformations of the housing landscape, such as the widespread adoption of telework and increased time spent indoors. And lately, the current energy crisis seems to be emerging as a new threat, amplifying the rhetoric of the 'endless crisis' (Agamben 2005, Athanasiou 2018) and further straining the already overburdened domain of housing.

The housing crisis and subsequent precariousness are now being considered as part of a self-evident and extended discussion (Barkouta 2019; stegasi360/eteron) while current studies and reports⁴ outline an emergency situation shaped by the rhythm, intensity and extent of the phenomenon. Although debates on housing are growing in public discourse and available information suggests how difficult it is to gain access to housing autonomy, spatial and material transformations taking place in the housing field are however not broadly reflected upon. Which means, that while systematic recordings answer about "how many" may be affected on the level of housing, contrivances and inventive practices of the everyday life are left in obscurity. Such a tactic will be presented in the next paragraphs giving an emphasis on the interior space of a residence, as well as subsequent practices of habitation.

A silent practice of survival as well as reduction of the exorbitant housing costs is the return to the parental home. Young, but also older adults, are forced to re-inhabit the house of their parents after a period of autonomous living⁵. Based on a young woman's, Eleni's, narrative, a research that focuses on the housing crisis becomes embodied and is transferred to the apartment's interior. Focus is shifting toward the specific and the narrative is being spatialised on multiple levels, moving from the house/ residence to its interior, in order to arrive at the level of an object, the sofa. Through Eleni's recounting, the residence regains its ambiguous character as a space of peace, but also domination, while the interior space is being re-drawn through the everyday habitation practices of its dwellers.

2. INTERIOR SPACE AND HABITATION PRACTICES

Eleni, aged 42, resides in the living room of her parents' apartment located in Ghyzi, Athens. For the past six years, she, along with her eight-year-old daughter, has been accommodated by her seventy-year-old parents in a rented 72-square-meter flat. Their living space comprises two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, a bathroom, and two balconies (Fig.1). The front balcony overlooks the main road and connects the smaller bedroom to the living room, while the rear balcony links the larger bedroom to the kitchen, providing a view of the internal uncovered area of the building.

The seven-storey apartment block was constructed at the beginning of the '60s. The ground-floor pilotis is being used as a parking space, while the rest of the floors are residential, most of them rented. The apartment block represents the architectural typology of the area. The neighbourhood is characterised by a high plot ratio and is comprised by multi-floor buildings with a pilotis. The area is being designated as residential and presents with a high degree of traffic congestion.

Initially, the interlocutor inhabited the apartment only with her daughter. "It was the house where I came to stay alone with my daughter, without her dad, and I did everything myself [...] it was my house. And we had very good time here [...] It was my own creation, I mean, from the colors of the walls to every little detail. How can I say this? There were no indications left from the past. It was just a house that resembled a blank sheet of paper." The normality implied is deflected when the interlocutor is "forced⁶" to move in after an extended period of unemployment. Following her occupation as a secretary for the last two decades, her employment after 2009 gets destabilised. As she characteristically mentions "there were some years where we did well. Ehm, this was interrupted violently⁷, mainly due the events from the outside". It is in this house where her parents move into and stay until Eleni and her daughter return as guests.

"We all liked this house and it was convenient – the child's school was nearby etc. We had this idea, that they should come here [...] hoping that when I manage to find work, I could return here and they would go back to my grandmother's house. That was the plan." Eleni draws up a management plan in order to deal with "the events from the outside", which include forced relocation, but also the hope that the timeliness of abrupt changes and rapid transformation refer to "exceptional" and temporal events.

And in the end, of course, this is what happened and we decided to rent the grandmother's house so that we get some extra help, ehm... and we stayed all together... here.

The story of her journey from her own house to the sofa of her parental house is spatially imprinted as a zig-zag, whereas the moves between places and the changes in working environment are captured as shifts within the city. The interlocutor and her daughter have changed five houses within the period of five years. They try to minimise the cost of accommodation by moving to a smaller house, later moving to a self-owned house and finally returning to the parental house in order to eliminate subsistence expenses. Eleni recounts the "forced" relocations:

In the beginning I was left without work, there was a gradual repetition, where this was happening all the time. [...] In 2009, while I had lost my permanent job, we came to this house because costs were the same and the space roomier [...] I found work, not in my subject [...] then I was left without work again, I found another job, the company went bankrupt. [...] There was a house belonging to the family, my grandmother's [...] which was small, could not fit us all, but we were forced to go there. [...] In 2010 I found another job, which again didn't last very long and then... a decrease in my salary by 300 euros [...] where I couldn't even maintain this house [...] the company bankrupted again and once more I was left unemployed. I could understand that things were getting worse, there was nothing I could do, there was nothing I could do. This is how we ended up living with my parents again, even at this moment, and with myself being unemployed.

Space allocation and the spatiotemporal co-articulation of daily functions were decided before the move, forming an informal protocol of cohabitation which described the restructuring of the apartment. "We had created a plan, a full plan, we had discussed it a lot. We had agreed on the basics. How I would like things to be, and this is how it happened, there were no objections on behalf of my parents. The little one got the same bedroom as before, this is her own bedroom, my parents kept the bedroom I used to sleep in when we [two] stayed here and I now sleep in the living-room. I had thought about it a lot, we discussed it and this was how things were done after all".

Apart from the management and arrangement of spaces and their functions, the transition to the parental house became a field for internal

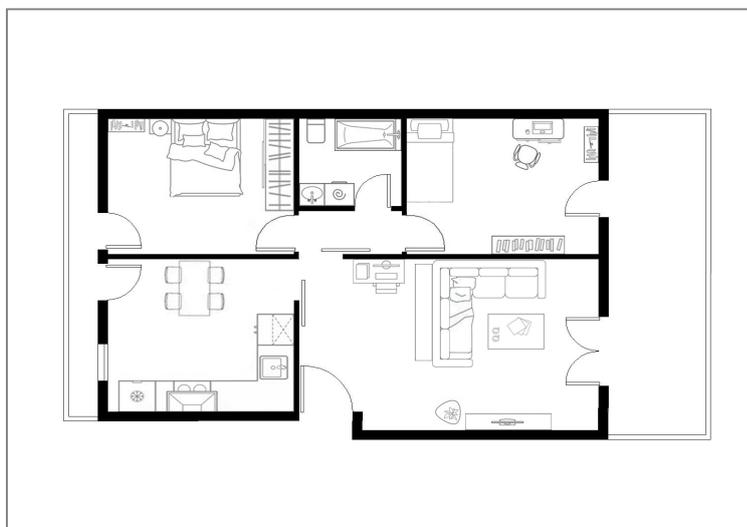


Figure 1: Floor plan of Eleni's apartment (Ioanna Barkouta)

processes and reflections related to the wishes, needs and habits of all persons involved in the cohabitation.

We took the decision under a lot of pressure. [...] I knew it wasn't possible and we were trying to delay this, my parents didn't want to, because they understood it was going to be difficult for them and us too [...] they were trying to delay this and maybe... they didn't want to face reality. I was under a lot of stress and I could see it wasn't going to change soon, so I was pushing them. They didn't want to believe in this, but they were forced to. [...] They, too, were convinced that for the time being it is the best [choice].

Eleni's return to the parental house kindles reveries about family life. The nostalgic mood resolves around a sense of safety and loyalty, revealing "memories of protection"⁸. As memory and imagination remain "indissoluble", they create a safety belt, with many "critical" events taking place "without" it, while an idealised family daily life safely unfolds "within" it. Prior to the (re)habitation of a residence in materialistic terms, its habitation takes place on a dreaming level first. Gaston Bachelard mentions: "To inhabit your parental home in dreams is more than doing so in memory, as it means you live in the lost house the way you dreamt within it" (Bachelard 1994: 33). The interlocutor recounts the first days of being hosted: "At the beginning there was this joy that we returned back to the house that was once mine. Also, during the first period there was an enthusiasm, that our lives were once more interwoven [with the parents]... it was nice, there was grace and beauty [...] I was very happy and I felt like this for a very long time"

The romantic approach of a "dreamlike" cohabitation in a "neutral" or "protected" space does

not take into account social arrangements of space and their unequal, competitive and conflicting character (see in this regard Lefebvre 1996). Space as a product of social relationships is being regulated by explicit norms and implicit, potentially competitive arrangements. Beyond the explicit agreement of the hosting "protocol" that defines the cohabitation lay-out, users are exposed to the undefined uses and encounters that may lead to inclusion or exclusion. "However, at this moment, it weighs heavily on me that this isn't my home. Now that it's been some time... I think it's the economic problems and not just the cohabitation, the economic problems and other kinds of problems, the personal ones, that feel heavy. I mean, if we assumed that there was a relative financial comfort, I wouldn't take it so hard, now I do take it hard because we cannot move freely, we are dependent, financially dependent. [...] It's not my home anymore, it is the house of my parents, it feels somehow weird. [...] It's a compromise for everyone".

3. THE SOFA

Although the apartment's layout remained the same since the interlocutor first moved in, the allocation of uses and everyday functions changed. Regarding this change, the interlocutor mentions: "Look, this is a three-room apartment, it is supposed to be made for a family, it has two bedrooms, so this is not the issue – the issue is that I have no personal space". Eleni sleeps on the living-room sofa. "There was no space for me elsewhere anyway, I had to sleep here". The polysemy of spaces is projected unto the furniture of the residence, ascribing them a wider range of utilitarian and symbolic value. The meaning of each object is supported by a series of associations in relation to its use and functionality⁹. According to Herman Herzberger,

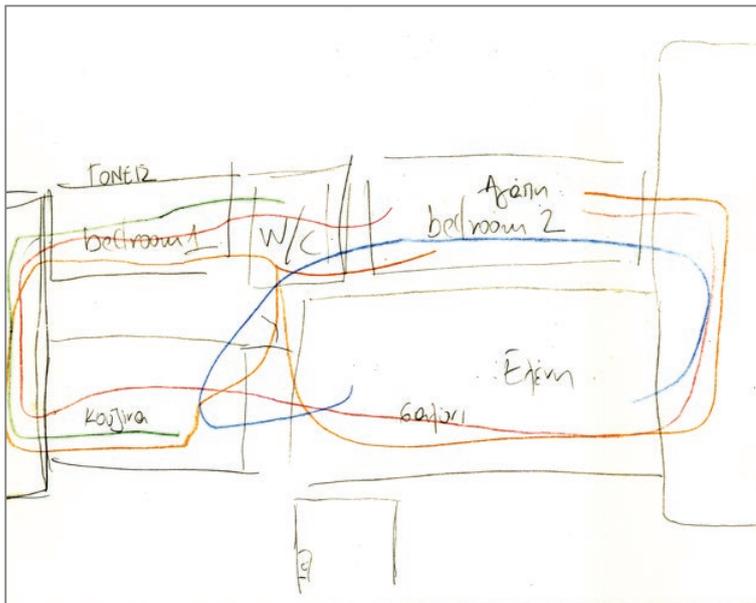


Figure 2: A movement diagram of the daily routes of Eleni, her daughter and parents

the “absolute functionality” of an object renders it “inflexible”, allowing limited space for interpretations of functionality to the user (Herzberger 1991: 469). In the case of Eleni’s accommodation, the “sofa” is supported by associations that ascribe on it the additional meaning of a “bed”. The connotations however between these two objects are conflicting. The daily use of the sofa as bed – hence of the living-room as bedroom – creates a temporary sense of privacy, with the space signifying some times associations of openness and other times of closeness. This ambiguity of the room opens the space up to a process of negotiations.

I sleep [on the sofa], I take away the covers when I get up. The notion of a bed does not exist during the day. It turns into an in situ bed and then it’s taken away. Usually you wouldn’t see it, because either I have already woken up or gotten up at that time. I don’t let it look like a bed.

Walter Benjamin connects life within space – and especially an interior (space) – to a search for traces. “To live is to leave traces. It is them that are being emphasised within an interior” (Benjamin 1986: 155-156). The absence of traces in the case of the additional occupations of space may allow appropriate uses of the living-room to remain within the visibility field, while concealing any other traces emerging from practices relevant to its use as a bedroom. The appearance of traces stemming from this latter type of accommodation would make the transposition of its practice within the visibility sphere possible, allowing both awareness and possibly disputes to emerge.

Usually blankets are here, this is an indication. But when someone comes to the house or if

they bother me, I will take them away. Now, in daily life, that is when we run like crazy to get everything done, I often leave them where they are. It’s a blanket, a sheet and a pillow. If someone comes, I will certainly store them away, I will take them inside. So that we have somewhere to sit down to, right?

The differentiated use of the “bedroom” reinterprets the consolidated importance of the living-room, which retains, however, its material imprint as is.

The living-room can also turn to a bedroom, as long as this remains an “in situ” procedure. The practice of this momentary habitation regulates both space and time within the residence. During the night, the space turns into a bedroom, hence to a personal space, while during the day the room is once more returned to its use as a living-room for the family and this adjustment divides the residence space into two separate zones of day and night. This time sequence, nevertheless, gets short-circuited when uses get mixed, rendering the residence space to a field of negotiations and contests between established identities – albeit temporarily.

It so happened that we were sleeping with the little one [...] here in the living-room and the bell rang and a friend of my parents had come for a visit, with her passing through and waking us up and it was inconvenient for everyone, for her too of course and also us... They sat in the kitchen and I suppose their visit was shorter than they would have liked. We stayed in bed

The ambiguity of spaces reveals their hierarchical evaluation when uses overlap with each other. The presence of the two women on the

apartment sofa cancels the option of using the particular space as a living-room. However, at the same time the guests' movement takes away the option of using this space as a personal one. Some times a snap-shot depicting stasis, other times a snap-shot depicting movement, this forced assembly of uses reveals the association of architectural characteristics of spaces in terms of visibility, supervision and sound communication. .

4. THE DOOR

The interlocutor appropriates apartment areas by temporarily occupying any "residual" spaces in the residence. "This is a room, but also a transit area out of necessity. That is, if you want to enter the house, there is no door you can close here, it is the house entrance, if you want to exit the house, again, this is where you go through, this means you cannot sit down, take out your clothes and sit".

The "living-room" connotations are disrupted and undermined by the "bedroom" connotations and vice versa. The living-room use as a space of community and coexistence displaces the use of the bedroom as the territory of intimacy where the personal moments of everyday life unfold. The "forced" placement of the bed next to the entrance door and the hallway sabotages the simultaneous and orderly use of this "hybrid" space, whereas the architectural structure is being revealed as a spatial arrangement of control determining the relationship between movement, visibility and supervision (Colomina 1996). The interlocutor is expected to "fit" her settlement within the habitation shell on an ephemeral and occasional basis as if it were some sort of temporary accommodation – i.e. in a sense that reminds us of short-term hospitality – while in reality this is long-term¹⁰ occupation.

The issue is that I have no personal space. Because, yes there is a door that closes and keeps [spaces] apart, but ok, this is not a personal space, I cannot close the door so that no one passes through when I don't want them to... it's connected to the kitchen.

The sliding door separates the living-room from the rest of the house. The door is implied by the interlocutor as the sufficient condition for the demarcation of privacy, with its placement however attributing to it characteristics of connection and communication. The door, as a boundary, intercepts and separates, and by doing thus it divides space, it discourages osmosis and imposes disjunction (Simmel 2020, Perec 1997). At the same time, it unifies

and brings in contact, as it lifts any separation it may be possibly imposed. The closing or opening of the door is a practice that activates the mechanism of prohibition or reception. This gesture works in pairs like closed-open, inside-outside, secret-obvious, closeness-distance and influences flow and movement, communication and isolation, activating thus a mechanism of communication through sight and sound¹¹. The amphisemy of the door is revealed through the daily life within the residence. Sometimes it guards the integrity of a territory and other times "dissolves" itself allowing permeability. On a house-plan drawing Eleni sketches her daily routes in the house, as well as those of her daughter and parents. (Fig.2)

My parents are very discreet. If I want... I don't know... get dressed, I will let them know. I will tell them 'I am closing the door because I want to...' Now, if it so happens and all doors are open and I would like to get dressed, I will tell them: 'I want to get dressed' and I will close the doors. Therefore, you know... nobody comes

Interpersonal settings and a sense of solidarity smooth the edges caused by any arrangements stemming out of heterotopic uses of the residence. The harmonic co-existence implied by Eleni is described through a sense of privacy generated by the closing of the door, ensuring thus the autonomy of her "bedroom". The space of movement transforms into a space of stasis, lending it the features of a bedroom. She undermines this same position a little later.

Summer is an issue, because at this point doors should remain open. We seldom opened the doors at night. I had the biggest issue [...] I'd leave the kitchen door open to let in a breeze. When things got tough, I would gradually open [this one]. The biggest problem for me was the sound. Because I wanted the window closed. So, yes, there was an issue there. I could leave it open and then close it at five in the morning. So we wouldn't burst from the heat during the night, but it made my sleep difficult.

The residence, reclaiming its initial role of protection from climatological conditions, reveals space as a tense field of power exercise. When the door is closed, the interlocutor – even temporarily – has access to her own personal space. The properties of this space are being lost and whatever privacy exists will dissolve the moment the door opens, either to allow air circulation or unrestricted movement within the apartment. Fluctuating between solidarity and dominance (Barkouta 2016), the management of co-habitation intervenes upon power cor-

relations, some times within and other times without prescribed uses and functions, but always revealing a power play. The way space is organised and demarcated directly relates to the ways the “self” is defined and constructed against the “Other”, the latter seen either as strange and threatening or different. Eleni recounts an incident interweaving the architectural layout of spaces with tactics of their delimitation and appropriation.

It happened though, I didn't get up and my mum couldn't stay in the room any longer, she wanted to make coffee and ehm... she will get up and go [to the kitchen] at some point. She will think about it, she will wait, yes. But at some point she will go. It happens rarely, but it does happen [...]. I can hear her walking through, I know she can wait in her room for this reason, she may wish to get up earlier and she delays it so she won't wake us up [...] in the end, I do wake up.

The family “promise” for an equal and free participation in a coherent collaborative existence is defeated, although on an imaginary level it remains active. According to Hardt and Negri, the family remains the main space for gathering social experience and experiencing care and intimacy, while simultaneously imposing hierarchies, constrictions, exclusions and distortions (Hardt & Negri 2009:162). The interlocutor describes this daily movement as if it were a straight line drawn upon the residence layout, connecting thus the departure point to the final point of destination through the shortest – but also most appropriate – route. This route remains familiar, as it is inscribed upon the specifications resulting through the informal protocol of in-habitation. In correspondence to the visit snap-shot where the interlocutor was sleeping, the residence maintains a self-evident and “proper” mapping between spaces and functions which overweighs intermediate shifts and failures. The route between the kitchen and bedroom – with the kitchen being connected through the hallway to the living-room – seems to remain unaffected by what is really taking place within the apartment. But there are also other snap-shots, that seem to deviate from the dominant pathways and regulations.

My parents are both very supportive, I mean regardless of whether is night or day, they will often use the balcony to enter the kitchen, so they won't disturb me [...] yes, there are many times when they will come out from here and go to the kitchen, they will also return the same way, because of course during the night it's closed, if they have to they will do it, they can't, therefore [...]

The spatial snapshot of kitchen access through the balcony is an invention, a spatial detour, shaping anew the harder shell of the residence. This “incongruous” movement, although related to the interior of the residence, takes place externally, enveloping the apartment in zig-zags. The border between “outside” and “inside” is fluid, activating residual spaces and trying to create space. The balcony, being “something like a corridor” is comprised by its “slightly differentiated” uses, that deviate from the conventional match-ups between utilisations and functions (Barkouta 2016). The alternative route of “bedroom-balcony-kitchen” adds an additional room to the residence layout, that of Eleni, whereas the safe and familiar route of “bedroom-living room-kitchen” reproduces exclusions and is subjected to the authority of conventional boundaries. The “no door” version - where the door remains closed, acting as a wall or partition – and the “no balcony” one - where the balcony functions as a corridor – deviate from the initial meanings of the residence. The established authority of conventional spatial meanings is transformed, setting up “inappropriate” spatial splicings and “unsuitable” spatial uses. Routes multiply, recomposing thus the space of the residence based on movement. Hard demarcations and classifications become flexible and “incongruous” occupation takes place in an active way, when the living-room door closes and the balcony of the house is being given over a different use (Barkouta 2019). The residence space is being comprised of these spatial refinements too, adding to the literal meaning of its architectural syntax something from the resourcefulness of personal – spatial – idioms.

NOTES

- [1] The noun “permacrisis” was chosen as “word of the year” in 2022 by Collins dictionary. It refers to an extended period of instability and insecurity and refers to a series of challenges – including Covid19, US-China rivalry, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and energy prices – that show no signs of abating. (<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/nov/01/sums-up-2022-permacrisis-chosen-as-collins-word-of-the-year>).
- [2] It means “to judge”.
- [3] By using the term “predatory practices”, David Harvey describes the process of gentrification of parts of the city, the privatisation of public spaces, the practice of redlining and blockbusting, as well as the high-risk lending practices (Harvey, 2013:115-122).
- [4] According to Worldbank data, in 2022 the housing cost in Greece was the greatest in Europe with 30% of the population spending 40% of its income in order to cover for housing expenses. According to the Greek Statistical Authority, in 2022 Greece was second among European countries in percentage (%) distribution of the population undergoing material deprivation. When it comes to the space constraint index, research by the Greek Statistical Authority on living conditions for 2020 reveals a percentage of 29% among the population and 43,9% among the poor population.
- [5] The term boomerang kids or boomerang generation describes the phenomenon of returning to the parental home and is related to the increasing difficulties experienced by young people when it comes to economic autonomy. <https://stegasi360.eteron.org/glossary/>
- [6] The imposition of “necessity” emerges both as meaning and as a phrase during the whole conversation. The sense of coercion is being expressed in the interlocutor’s speech as she often and emphatically repeats the word “necessarily” and/ or “forced”. As an indication: “there was nothing I could do, I mean everything [happened] out of necessity... first of all I was forced to leave here... in 2012 when I left here, I had to leave out of necessity and... I was forced to leave from there too, exactly as it happened with my grandmother’s house”.
- [7] The interlocutor connects violence to the economic crisis bringing into the foreground a rich discussion. According to Vaiou, violence in times of “crisis” becomes ubiquitous (Vaiou 2014:535). Here, in the term violence, are included direct actions causing physical, mental or moral harm, but also “symbolic representations” or practices shaping conditions of deprivation that are considered corrosive of human dignity. In this sense, the crisis is connected to a structural violence, the violence of poverty and exclusion, the violence of precariousness, the increase of domestic violence and also the physical violence by the resisting embodied subjects (Vaiou 2014; Dalakoglou 2013; Athanasiou 2018). Judith Butler, introduces the notion of “normative violence” as she connects precariousness to violence, which is “the capacity of power to render life both possible and restricted” (Athanasiou 2018).
- [8] “[The parental house] resonates with the familiar component of faith” (Bachelard 1994).
- [9] Herman Herzberger refers to the importance of “strong associations” that are related to the uses of a sofa: “What a sofa implies may be considered as the sum of what those who are responsible for its existence have to offer: carpenters, buyers, an ideology, a society, a culture” (Herzberger 1991: 469).
- [10] The ephemeral residence described here has already lasted for four years, while there are no prospects of change in the immediate future. The interlocutor mentions characteristically: “This is the worst, that I do not see any way out, I cannot maintain myself and my daughter without receiving any help. Ehm, for the time being, yes, but it doesn’t... it doesn’t... I may be expressing my fears, but they are based in reality”.
- [11] The interlocutor, referring to visual communication and spatial ways of management, raises the issue of sound privacy. Control is not imposed only through visibility, but also through sound: “Yes, a folding screen is an optical separator. But there is no equivalent for sound, right? [...] Nobody can see what’s in there. On a sound level of course, it doesn’t... You hear, they hear, that’s also very important”.

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GROSSRAUM C21:

EXPERIENCING INTANGIBLE

FIELDS OF SOVEREIGNTY,

EXPANSIONISM AND

IMPOSITION OF STATE-OF-

EMERGENCY REGIMES

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Globalization
Greek Crisis
Documenta 14
Grossraum
Photography

This project is a collective site-specific exhibition that took place as a parallel action to the Documenta 14 happenings in Athens. Despite being showcased as a progressive decision by the Documenta institution to move the exhibitions for the first time out of Germany into another country—and perhaps to indicate with this gesture its solidarity with Greece—for many Greek intellectuals and artists this narrative seemed equally colonial and imperialistic. A sticker in the city center summarized the critical approach toward the art institution: “Dear Documenta, I refuse to exoticize myself to increase your cultural capital. Sincerely, the people.” Thus, a few anti-Documenta performances and art happenings were organized during April and May 2017, one of them being “Grossraum 21C”

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YORGOS PRINOS is a visual artist. His work explores issues of power and violence at the intersection of human psychology and politics, often focusing on the human figure in urban space, using his own images alongside found footage from media and the internet.

PAVLOS FYSAKIS is an Athens-based artist working with lens-based media. He is co-founder of the non-profit cultural organization KOLEKTIV8 and of the art collective Depression Era which, since 2011, has been documenting the social landscape of the Greek crisis through images and texts..

GROSSRAUM C21

The fact that today there are Grossraums formed, thus there is a war incited, is no worse and no more frightening than other earthquakes of previous centuries. Why be afraid of Behemoth more than Leviathan?

Carl Schmitt, 1939

The writings of Carl Schmitt, the German jurist of the 20th century, denote and rationalize the expansionist eagerness of the ruling class in Germany from a very early period. The strategy of spatial occupation and political aggression led to two world wars and the formation of the Third Reich. Grossraum¹ is the actual area of a state's dominance, where its interests are expanded. It constitutes the network of influence, the practice of legislation, the possibility of imposing a state of emergency. Considering the current dominant situation, the European Union is a form of capitalist totalitarianism, totally conforming to the schmittian approach: crisis² is no more than an unexpected state of emergency unfolding in neutral time, forced upon peoples by the dominant elites through financial institutions³.

It surely seems naïve and unhistorical to compare the expansionist policies of the Third Reich with today's Bundestag and European bank policies. However, it is as much unhistorical – indeed, it is a dominant ideology – to conceal that both a war with bombs and a war with banks derive from the same doctrine, the great area; that the actual occupation of land and the occupation of technological, legislative, financial “lands” are the outcome of the same economic model, the one that separates people in classes⁴.

We should have in mind, of course, that the networks of capitalistic and spectacle flux are more than ever global and, at a certain extent, intangible. A hundred years ago, it was Schmitt who cited the American Monroe Doctrine and its concept of “non-intervention” in the American Raum⁵. He was the one who saw the Monroe Doctrine as the first implemented Grossraum. “This is the core of the original Monroe Doctrine, a genuine Grossraum principle, namely the union of politically awakened people, a political idea and, on the basis of this idea, a politically dominant Grossraum excluding foreign intervention.” New world order imposes itself through war, biotechnology, banks, nationalistic groups and politics, unemployment, dominant culture, prisons, concentration camps, control, states.

Experiencing such a form of exploitation today, we strongly believe that symptoms reach the same depths with structures and we constitute negations throughout sociopolitical spectrum sharing as an objective the refutation of the very spectrum. Re-using and acting in a public space is crucially important; especially Gini building at Athens Polytechnic⁶, historically opposed –symbolically and literally– to all forms of power during the last four decades in Greece. Reclaiming those public spaces⁷ is crucial for the strengthening of participatory, cooperative and collective means of expression and action against each imposed Grossraum.



Figures 1-16: Installation shots *GrossraumC21* collective site-specific exhibition, Athens Polytechnic University, Gini building, 2017 ©Yannis Karpouzis, Yorgos Karailias, Yorgos Prinos, Pavlos Fysakis.









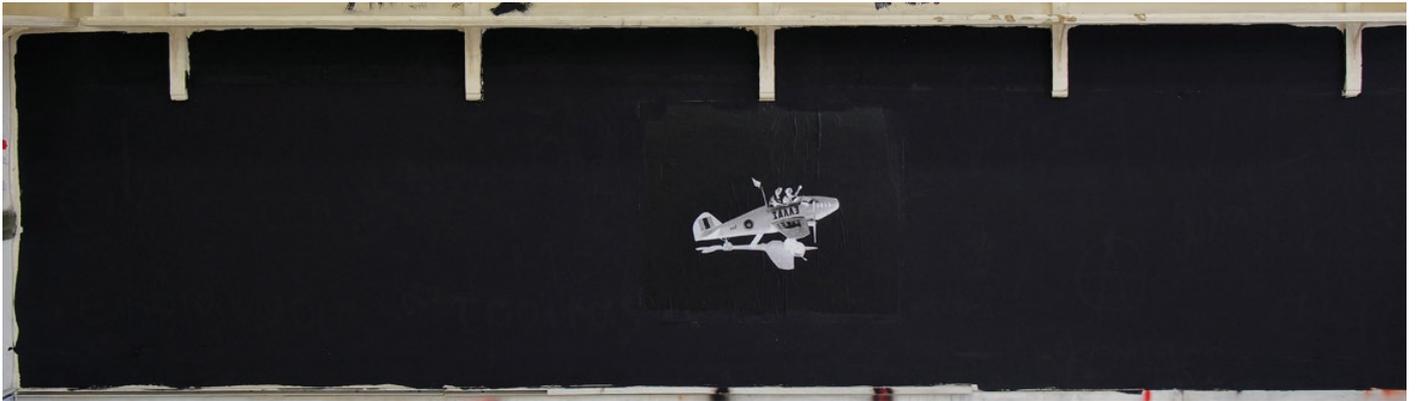












NOTES

- [1] After six years of crisis, Greece has been left wrecked. More than half a million people had left the country due to unemployment, the country's GPT was reduced by 25%, and suicides had increased by 30%. The quality of life and public health collapsed, and a neo-nazi party entered parliament. The public property had been getting sold to European companies, especially German ones, as happened with the prosperous Greek National Telecommunication Company (OTE). The economy had crashed; for many scientists, Greece suffered more losses to its economy than during the Nazi occupation period. Greece never recovered after this shock.
- [2] The exhibition was held in 2017, a year after the capitulation of the Greek left government (and one of the very few left governments ever elected in Europe) with the authorities of the European Union, concerning the continuation of austerity measures and the general political depression that followed. Despite the 2016 referendum results, in which 61% of the people rejected further measures, the left government was forced by the Eurogroups to proceed with further neoliberal policies.
- [3] Both the text and the exhibition recognized back then the affinity between the European Union—an entity vastly controlled by the German capital—and the definition of Grossraum by German intellectual Carl Schmitt. The Documenta 14 takeover of the Athenian art scene seemed as a metonymy of the Grossraum condition in the field of art.
- [4] Carl Schmitt went through a trial after the Second World War, from October 1945 to April 1946. Schmitt was accused of being one of the ideological inspirers of the Third Reich. During the interrogation, Schmitt referred to his book "Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für raumfremde Mächte" where he makes comparisons between the American Monroe Doctrine and the Grossraum condition.
- [5] The location was crucial for the exhibition. The Athens Polytechnic University complex resides in the center of Athens and has played a key role in all freedom movements of the Greek people. After the Second World War, it became a battlefield between left guerilla forces and British troops, and in 1973, it became the center of the anti-dictatorship struggle, which resulted in many worker and student assassinations by the Junta. The Polytechnic uprising ended with the invasion of the complex by a military tank on the 17th of November. Up until these days, people gather in the Polytechnic complex and the Gini building after demonstrations or for political assembly purposes. Nowadays, the complex accommodates the Architecture School, some departments of the Fine Art School of Athens, and the Civil Engineering School. Despite the reactions, the Greek state has left the complex, especially the Gini building, without maintenance work. Our interference through photographs of the decayed building was intended as political activism itself.
- [6] Various buildings inside the Athens Polytechnic University complex and around it (many of which remain unapproachable for art exhibitions) hosted Documenta 14 exhibitions after official state invitations.

INTERPRETATION OF A DIFFICULT HERITAGE ABOUT THE INTERNAL EXILE OF POLITICAL OPPONENTS IN GREECE.

THE CASES OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS OF ISLANDS AI-STRATIS, CHIOS AND ANAFI.

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Difficult cultural heritage
Political prisoners
Concentration Camp
Ai-Stratis
Chios
Anafi

The practice of internal exile in Greece, inaugurated during the aftermaths of the National Schism (1915-17) and continued by the Pangalos' dictatorship, was generalized after the vote of the anticommunist "Idionymo" law of the liberal Venizelos' government (1929), during the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1940), during the Greek civil war (1946-49) and the political repression that followed and finally during the Greek Junta (1967-74) and applied mostly against the communists and other political opponents. The political transition of the Metapolitefsi (1974) marked the end of this practice, but the decades of turning dozens of Greek islands into places of exile and "disciplinary camps" for the "enemies of the State" is something that have created a multitude of political and social experiences of great historical importance. Though, this is a kind of "difficult cultural heritage" to deal with for the local communities and for the Greek State itself. The obvious duty to preserve and promote the memory of these historical sites is undermined, on the one hand by the fear to revive political conflicts from the past that still appear thorny, and on the other hand by the fear that this preservation and promotion would darken the sunny and pleasant brand name needed by the islands in question for tourist purposes. Thus, the exile sites on Greek islands have been consigned to oblivion, an oblivion that recent efforts to transform such sites of memory into museums and to promote them, try to overcome. Using an on-the-spot investigation at the exile sites on three of these islands (Ai-Stratis, Chios and Anafi) and desk research of relevant literature (books, historical achieves, photographic records, oral testimonies) the present article reconstitutes the very hard but also very rich in cultural forms of resistance and in creativity life of the exiles, stresses the importance of these three exile sites for the Greek political history and also for the local history and identity and advocates for more state action aiming the preservation of this heritage. .



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Figure 1: Ruins of the Concentration Camp in Ai-Stratis (Archive Marini Myrto).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 MEMORY

Memory is not a static storage space from which we retrieve unaltered past experiences but an active process of constructing meanings (Portelli, 1991). Addressing traumatic and painful aspects of the past, especially recent ones, is a complex process determined by the politics of memory and oblivion (Burström, 2009). After all, according to psychologists, “the memory of traumatic events seems to be susceptible to oblivion” (Masoura & Kargopoulos, 2008, Georgiadou et al., 2021). In each site of memory, there is a multiplicity of interpretations, symbols, historical narratives, represented social and cultural practices. The role of the museum as an institution and a place of collective memory that is directly related to national history and politics is the cause for intense debates and political interventions (Droumpouki, 2014).

It is a given that the different social groups living within the borders of a nation identify with the centre of government and must show obedience to it, whatever its form. This results in a national identity that is in fact imposed by the power of the state (Kaplan, 2012). In post-war Europe, collective oblivion was a cornerstone of the structure of stability, especially in the West. In 1989, the overthrow of the socialist system in the USSR had multiple consequences, especially through the crisis of political consciousness. De-politicization

and subjectivity prevailed in the interpretation of historical events. For many years, the sites of memory were sites of oblivion.

Based on the events of the last century, Europe could be considered a Memory Land, as a very geographical point has its own story to tell. That story is not a result of materials, but oral testimonies that compose the history of the past, composing identities. Within the context of the aforementioned events, new definitions have been devised, such as fever memory, mania memory, crazy for memory, etc. (Pantzou, 2010).

Only specific historical projects have been considered sites of memory and mainly those that transform memory in some fundamental way or provide repetition for educational purposes. Memory lands are created by the marriage of history and memory and their goals are many: to stop time, prevent oblivion, represent the intangible and give substance to what belongs to the past (Macdonald, 2013).

The last two decades have been marked by an explosion of interest in modern history not only in Greece but in Europe and other continents as well. It seems that the citizens are trying to learn about those events that for so many years have been forgotten or hidden in secret historical records, aiming to understand and create their own identity. Especially in Europe, because of its heavy heritage, there is a strong interest in the historical events of World War II since many citizens believe that they do not know enough about that period, due to ignorance or concealment of important events. This interest is expressed in several ways, such as the study of relevant publications, watching documentaries, films, etc. (Droumpouki, 2014). This search, however, hides inside intense controversies, as the rival memories of the different camps of the War come into conflict.

What do we do when the dark traces of the past cannot be buried within a national negotiation but constitute an element of transformation of the world-historical memory? What do we do when the unpleasant material of the past is of such a scale that it can be neither ignored nor silenced? (Macdonald, 2009a, Macdonald, 2009b).

1.2 RECOUNTING HISTORY

Disputes over history cannot be understood without taking into account the specific conditions under which they take place, i.e. without examining their political and social context (Liakos, 2007). Depending on the era and the socioeconomic conditions, we can perceive the past and transform it into history change. Thus, under the influence of the major political overthrows that took place in the last century, in certain cases, the formation of contemporary identities requires a rupture of the dark contemporary past (Macdonald, 2009a, Macdonald, 2009b).

All around the world, historical issues and sites still creating conflicts within society are part of difficult heritage, and from time to time they have been addressed differently as factors conveying specific impressions, emotions or ideological messages. Thus, various measures have been taken in order to form the desired consciousness, such as the partial or complete destruction of buildings, an attempt to neutralize others by dismantling Nazi symbols, the demythification of a location by integrating daily activities and the museumification of some parts of it (Macdonald, 2009a, Macdonald, 2009b).

1.3 WORLDWIDE INTEREST IN THE DIFFICULT CULTURAL HERITAGE

From the late 20th century to the early 21st century, there is a growing trend around the world to publicly display those stories and cultural heritage that are difficult and potentially capable to cause ruptures in the established contemporary identities and social relations. During the 1990s – a milestone in the revision of history – a fruitful debate began around the difficult heritage and the historical events that it subsumes. That shift could not have left unaffected the museums and the way they used to address the difficult heritage until then (Macdonald, 2010).

A museum is linked to the society and operates by promoting its cultural heritage. These sites can play a key role in the cultural life of a place through the activities they offer. The role of a museum should not be limited to collecting, preserving, studying

and displaying the material evidence of the cultural heritage of a place with the sole purpose of promoting scientific research. Museums are organizations that preserve and present the objects of cultural heritage from one generation to another whilst teaching, educating, and entertaining their audience (Michaelidou, 2002).

Museums are organizations that need to decide which notions of the past, the present and perhaps the future deserve public space (Black, 2010). Museums engaging with the topics of difficult cultural heritage and controversial stories often raise important and, at the same time, unpleasant questions about the role they play. “Should museums deal with controversial stories? Could they do so without entering into troubled, contemporary social and political relations? Could they do so without taking the side of one or the other? And how appropriate is the museum as a means of dealing with a dispute, raising or addressing questions?”(Macdonald, 2010).

2. THE SITES OF MEMORY IN GREECE

In Greece, modern history had not been a subject of a museum narrative for a long time. History museums and especially the difficult heritage of contemporary historical events have not been the focus of systematic research and evaluation by historians and museologists (Hatzinikolaou, 2010). Undoubtedly, the subject of compulsory displacements and political persecutions, as well as repression measures against the political enemies, is part of the country's difficult heritage. The commonest way of prosecution was the displacement to distant locations (internal exile) and the internment to maximum-security prisons. The study of which was avoided for decades or only certain fragmentary events of that period were presented. Those are events that do not cause ruptures in the cohesion of society.

Regarding Greece, dozens of islands were turned into places of exile and “disciplinary camps”, whilst many prisons were created for the “enemies”. At the same time, the methods of repression that the state implied on its political opponents (radical citizens,

left-winged, communists), from the '30s to the political transition in 1974 (Military Junta), have been consigned to oblivion. These sites of memory in Greece - political prisons and concentration camps - have been consigned to oblivion since there is no state support for their maintenance and enhancement.

Museums and memory are some of the topics that sparked discussions amongst specialists, and which continue to this day (Hatzinikolaou, 2010). Recently in our country, important steps have been taken not only for the study and protection of the traumatic past but also for its promotion, driven by the need of the ever-increasing interest of the public, and the flourishing of a new type of tourism from 1990 onwards, the so-called dark tourism (Pantzou, 2010). In Greece, more and more people seek for information, study historic books and visit these places. Making visits to sites associated with atrocity is for many people a meaning through which they can preserve their own promise to remember and, thus, to strengthen to avoid bad history being repeated (Macdonald, 2009a).

2.1 WHERE TO FOCUS

In this article I will study three emblematic cases of displacement for political exiles, that of Ai-Stratis, Chios and Anafi. These places of exile, among many others in the country, are considered milestones in the history of the last century, each for separate reasons, as we will see below.

The Camps of Ai-Stratis, Chios and Anafi were places which operated as repressive measure mostly against political and secondarily criminal exiles. The purpose was to ideologically reform those who were dangerous for the proper functioning of the state. Thousands of souls were exiled cause of their ideology. Many of them were famous such as poets, writers, actors etc and their persecution was the cause of producing art. Many books, paintings, songs, poems were created in the Camp, talking about the passion for life and the hardships of exile.

The reason why we chose the specific sites and theme is, on the one hand, the historical importance of these memory sites, and that, on the other hand, after thorough research on the museum mapping of the country, is recorded

the complete absence for the preservation and promotion of these places. Also, an important incentive has been the growing research interest recorded in recent years in sites of detention and exile, in repressive policies but also social and ethnic conflicts (Carman & Carman 2001).

The institution of displacement and internment based on the political beliefs of the citizens was a difficult subject to investigate. Until recently, in Greece, the only ones who dared to address it were the exiles themselves and their remaining associations creating some small thematic museums. However, there is a recent dimension to the studies regarding the prisoners and exiles. These studies in the new context of internationalized research have highlighted privileged areas for discussion, such as confinement, discipline, the techniques of subjection and the reaction to them (Voglis, 2002).

3. THE EXILE IN AI-STRATIS

3.1 THE INTERNAL EXILE THROUGH HISTORY & THE CONCENTRATION CAMP OF AI-STRATIS

Internal displacement as a politically-motivated administrative measure began to be used intensively in consequence of the first vertical political division of Greek society, the so-called 'National Schism' of 1915. However, the practice of administrative exile on a large scale was used against cadres of the trade union movement and socialist parties.

The first politically internal deportations took place in the 20th century. In 1914 Abraham Benaroyia and Samuel Yiona, two trade unionists from Thessaloniki who were leading members of the Socialist Labour Confederation, commonly called 'the Federation', were exiled to Naxos after a strike by tobacco workers.

In 1929 was enacted the "Idionymo" law by Venizelos, which was clearly aimed at suppressing trade unionism and communism. This year the "Concentration Camp of Discipline Living" in Ai-Stratis was opened. It is estimated that about 3,000 Greek citizens were sentenced to internal exile due to the "Idionymo" Law. The political crisis of the 1930s led to bloody strikes and workers' riots in May 1936 in Thessaloniki.

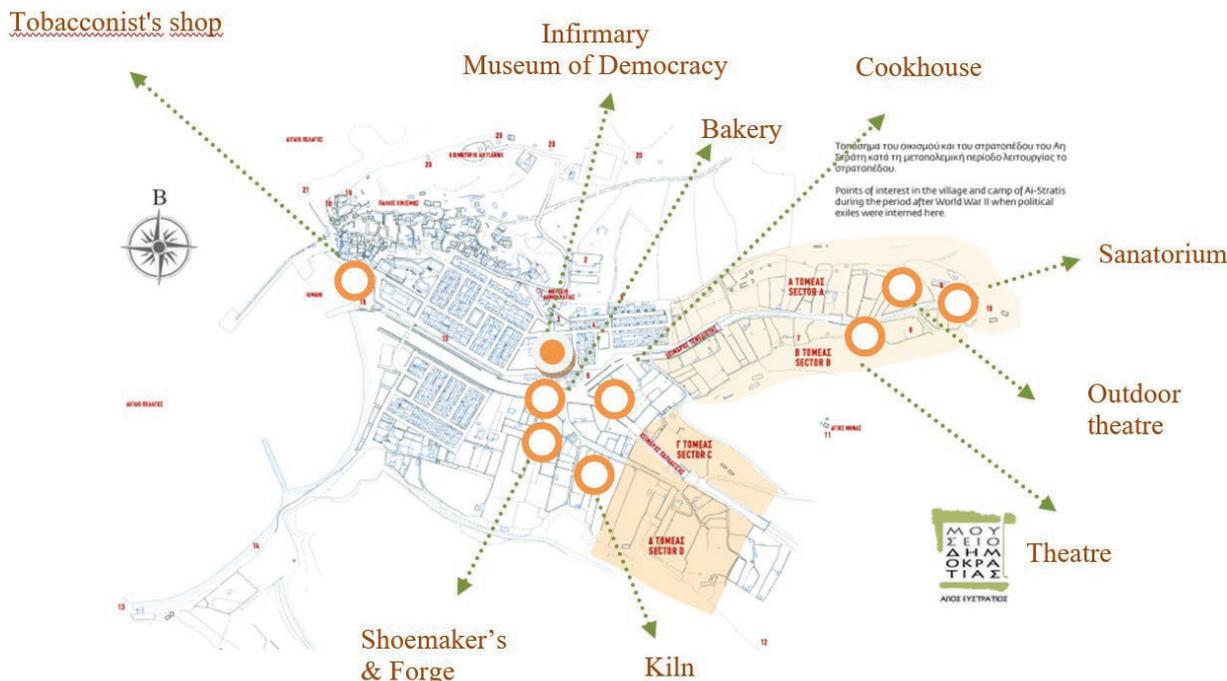


Figure 2: A walk along the route marked on the map will take you to the historic sites and surviving buildings. Also marked on the map are some of the names given by the exiles to certain places in the area (the map has undergone processing). Available at: <http://www.mouseiodimokratias.gr/greek/exhibition2.asp> (Accessed April, 2022).

Ioannis Metaxas seized dictatorial power by dissolving Parliament and suspending the Constitution on 4th August, suppress the revolt. The exile phenomenon culminated in Metaxas's dictatorship, when hundreds "opponents" of the nation were exiled. The Metaxas regime enacted a mass of legislation directed against "enemies of the state". These laws provided the legal foundations for measures that would have a far-reaching impact on Greece's social and political life right down to the fall of the military coup: measures such as formal recantations of Communism ("declarations of repentance"). The only way for a political prisoner to win his release was by signing a recantation. The security forces applied extreme psychological pressure and brutal physical tortures to gain recantations, namely the political prisoners must disown their ideals and ideology (Kazakos, 2013, Varnalis, 2014).

Although political prisoners and political exiles asserted to be allowed to go and fight the Nazi invasion, the security forces of Greece handed over the political prisoners and exiles, as hostages, to the German occupation army. Especially, in the Camp of Ai-Stratis the security forces attacked and killed three of the exiles. After Nazi invasion, the internees were confined in the Infirmary by invaders. Finally, 33 exiles died of starvation during the terrible winter of

1941-1942. After the liberation, in October 1944, the Camp closed and the last exiles were set free.

In 1947, during the Civil War, the Camp of Ai-Stratis opened again. When the Civil War was over, many detainees were released, but about 3,400 civilians remained in exile in 1951. In April 1952 the number has fallen to 2,000. The downward trend continued over the next few years: in 1955 there were 950 inmates on the books, in 1956 only 820, and by 1959 the number had dropped to 470. However, it is not possible at present article to calculate safely the total number of exiles. From then on, Ai-Stratis was the sole place of exile until early in 1963, when the last of the internees were finally released. Overall, between 1947 and 1962, more than 9.000 exiles were displaced on the island. Hundreds of men and women lingered in exile for five or ten years or even longer.

The interval of the years 1963-1967 was brought to an end by the military coup on 21st April 1967. In the early hours of 21st April thousands of people were arrested. After the military coup of 1967, the Camp reopened and operated as place of exile for political detainees until 1974, hosting a small number of exiles. This year the "Left" – communist party was officially recognized as a legitimate political organization and

Figure 3: The exiles' bakery. Available at: <https://www.ertnews.gr/wpcontent/uploads/2016/10/M5B1.jpg>



therefore persecutions were paused.

Nowadays, there are only ruins of Camp, because the residents cleaned and cultivated their fields after its closure. Also, there wasn't any state support to preserve them. Both the residents and the state, desired to forget. Demolishing buildings or certain architectural features aimed to forget particular political regimes and social orders (Macdonald, 2009a).

3.2 LIVING IN THE CAMP

In the places of exile, as in prisons, the deportees took steps to organize their life collectively. To deal with the problems of undernourishment, illness, despondency and depression, as well as the most unlikely restrictions imposed on them at the whim of the local police chief, they organized "Political Exiles' Coexistence Groups" (known in Greek by the acronym OSPE) (Theodorou, 2006).

The first exiles rent houses, when the Civil War began the exiles were thousands, so the forces created the Camp in a valley with oaks. In the period of Civil War the valley was full of tents and every tent housed 8-10 exiles. In the first period, before Civil War, only men lived on the island, but in 1947 the first women were displaced in Ai-Stratis renting small houses to stay safe - a decision of OSPE.

The exiles received a minimal allowance from the State, which was barely enough for one meal per day. The capital grant was low, so the relatives of exiles sent money to support them. Everyone put his money to the kitty. The internees managed to get some provisions for themselves by growing a few vegetables, keeping poultry, fishing etc. In the periods of sowing, the exiles worked on the farmlands of natives



Figure 4: Exiles in Ai-Stratis, 1950s. Contemporary History Archives (ASKI)

and their salary was money or vegetables, fruits, grains. Many times the exiles fished with residents by using their boats, into the sea far away from the military forces, the internees seized the opportunity to discuss with the locals about their ideology and socialism (Varnalis, 2014).

The tinsplate workshop and the machine-shop on Ai-Stratis provided the exiles with utensils, tools and other everyday objects by making a different use of everything that could be reused. Often the exiles taught the natives new methods of agriculture, husbandry, architecture or water supply. For example, for the first time in history of the island the water – the most important public health measure – was chlorinated by exiles. In this way, everybody was survived endemic typhoid (Kazakos, 2013).

Unfortunately, the internees were already in poor health when they arrived on the island, because of the successive internal displacements. Local conditions exposed them to new illnesses. About thirty doctors and twenty medical students were exiled to Ai-Stratis until 1954. Although even the most basic requisites for diagnosis and treatment were unavailable, many of the exiles and permanent residents were saved from death by the doctors' determined efforts.

In the begging, the locals were skeptical about the exiles. However, progressively they trusted them and there was a peaceful cohabitation. The most important issue for the residents was that exiles support the economy of the island. But, also the locals appreciate the exiles because they brought something new to their backward island, such as medicine, technical know-how, arts etc.

3.3 EDUCATION CIRCLES & CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Many internees were workers and farmers, thus the majority of them was illiterate. Consequently, discussion groups, further education classes and elementary education had been established since the inter-war period. Although the Military Police imposed strict censorship on books and other study material, the political exiles found ways to smuggle books and newspapers into the camp and built up a lending library. A lot of the books were in languages other than Greek, as the exiles wished to learn foreign languages (Kamariinou, 2005).

The experience of exile imprisonment left its mark on the work of numerous Greek artists and writers. Especially, in the years 1950-1955, when Ai-Stratis had its largest number of male and female internees, the Camp ran a very flourishing programme of cultural activities. The exiles who lived in the Camp included leading figures in the world of the theatre such as Manos Katrakis, Kostas Baladimas et al., poets and writers such as Yannis Ritsos, Menelaos Loudemis, Titos Patrikios, Tasos Livaditis et al, artists like Christos Danglis et al. Others were taught in painting and engraving on the island and subsequently became famous artists, included Yorgos Farsakidis and Takis Tzaneteas.

The exiles organized theatrical performances, poetry readings, satirical sketches, choral concerts and performances of traditional dances from all the regions. Every festive occasion (Christmas, Easter, Carnival, national holidays) was an opportunity for a kind of cultural activity (Tsellos, 2002). Over fifty theatrical performances were held on island. The classes and the theatre made a good impression at residents. Especially, the theatre because as was the first time that the locals saw a performance. But, the military forces prohibit to listen in, because they were afraid of proselytism to socialism. Nevertheless, the kids managed to slip in the theatre.

Nikos Margaris was the chorus master of the exiles' first choir, which was a great success and had a repertoire that included classical music, as well as folk songs, popular songs and

so on. The musical instruments were made by the exiles, such as guitars, mandolins, mandolins, violins etc. In this period, Kostas Triantafyllou wrote down all the dance melodies that the exiles could remember and orchestrated them. "There was a period in 1952-1953 when the camp danced literally all day and all night, regardless of age" (Voglis, 2002).

4. THE EXILE IN CHIOS

4.1 THE CONCENTRATION CAMP OF CHIOS ISLAND

The Chios Women's Camp was created in the midst of the Civil War in order to isolate the hard core of the political activist once belonging to the Resistance Organizations of the German Occupation period and especially the unrepentant members of the Communist Party, who were considered dangerous to public order. It was made exclusively for women, many of whom were mothers of young children, so their children also found themselves in exile. They were women of all ages and professions. In many cases we meet the whole family in exile on the island: grandmother, mother, daughter and child.

The first women got transferred to Chios Detention Camp on March 17, 1947. The first shipment of detainees consisted of 90 women, who previously were in other places of exile or detention centers, among them 17 small children. The Camp was established inside the barracks of Chios, known until our days as "Giala Camp", located at the edge of the town on a small hill. It consisted of three large two-story buildings that the exiles called the first, second and third buildings respectively; there were still the kitchens, the baths and the stables. Around the structures a large plot of land with few trees, that served as a place for walking during the hours when it was allowed for the detainees to leave the buildings (Theodorou, 2006).

On June 2, 1948, the Red Cross registered 1.050 women and 57 children up to the age of twelve (Koundouros, 1978). The missions continued; the exiles had become so numerous that the buildings could no longer accommodate them. Thus, as the time, the prison administration made the decision



Figure 5: Exiled women with their children. Available at: <https://www.koutipandoras.gr/article/i-giorti-tis-25is-martioy-sto-stratopedo-gynaikon-hioy/> (Accessed May, 2023)

to house the exiles in military tents within the Camp's courtyard. The conditions in the tents were unbearable, wanting in this way to exert pressure on the detainees to declare repentance. The stay in the tents lasted about 20 days. During this period, the administration placed female informers inside the tents to reveal the most dangerous communists. This operation paid off greatly, so overnight the administration removed about 100 women and placed them in "Saint Thomas" Primary School. The detention at "Saint Thomas" school lasted only two and a half months, from July to mid-September 1948, as the school had to reopen. The most dangerous exiles were taken then to the warehouse in the original Camp (Leuka, 1964).

The Camp was closed after the end of the Civil War in April 1949, when the exiles were transferred to another exile place close to the continental Greece, the tiny island of Trikeri in the Pagasetic Gulf off the end of the Pelion peninsula (Gavriliidou, 2006).

Today, the building of the ancient Chios Detention Camp belongs to the Army General Staff and functions as an Army Unit. Unfortunately, no citizen has access there. The Primary School of "Saint Thomas" is still an operational education unit, without the architecture of the place having changed.



Figure 6: The "Giala" Camp Available at: <https://astraparis.gr/sto-stratopedo-giala-apo-tin-96-adte-o-eortasmou-agiou-georgiou/> (Accessed May, 2023)



Figure 7: The preserved iron door of "Saint Thomas" Primary School. (Archive Marini Myrto)

4.2 LIVING IN THE DETENTION CAMP

The division of labor was established among the detainees; each ward had its own schedule for cleaning the chambers, the toilet, the kitchen and finding water. The sick and the elderly were exempted from this procedure. The aid from the state was 3.000 drachmas per month, of which 300 were kept for the building's water and electricity costs and the remaining 2.700 were given for the mess, with the result that there was nothing left for the prisoners. The living conditions were harsh, the food minimal and of poor quality. The meal consisted of pulses, pasta or potatoes and salted fish. Water was scarce and dirty, even during the summer months. Also, there was no special concern about feeding the children; instead, they had to eat what their exiled mothers ate (Gavriliidou, 2006).

The courtyard was fenced with barbed wire. The exiles had no contact with the local population, leaving the Camp was forbidden. After all, there was a regulation that exiles should not approach the barbed wire, as well as local passers-by. Often the exiles spent their days in detention, without food and deprived of mail communications, in an effort of the camp administration to break their morale and make them sign a statement of repentance. Also, savage beatings have been recorded that ended up mostly in the island's hospital, while they led a 23-year-old exile to lose her life (Apostolopoulou, 1979).

Exiles' health was already very weakened by their previous stay in exile and detention centers. So very quickly many of them fell ill from tuberculosis, while remaining in the same wards with the healthy ones. The administration did not provide medicines, only the Red Cross did, with the mess remaining the same even for the seriously ill. All the children slept in the same wards, the healthy among the tubercular ones. The medical care was assured by doctors and nurses who were also detainees with the island's doctor visiting the camp sometimes (Staveri, 2006, Gavriliidou, 2006).

The primary school of "Saint Thomas" was comparatively a model prison, it was a rather beautiful building for anyone passing by from

outside. It was a modern two-story building and had six wards. When the prisoners were courting, they were not allowed to raise their heads outside the fence, and if any of them violated this rule faced discipline measures from the administration. The mess was worse than the one in the Chios Camp and there was no care for a special alimentation for the sick. But their main problem was the torment of thirst. After many protests the exiles managed to get access to water (Leuka, 1964, Theodorou, 2006).

4.3 EDUCATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

In the Chios Camp, the opportunities for entertainment and education were few, due to the strict surveillance of the administration. There was censorship on the books that entered the Camp, they had to be read by the administration first, approved and then given to the exiles. The books were forbidden even to female students, as -according to the administration- they presented subversive ideas (Gavriliidou, 2006).

Among the exiles Lisa Kotou, a teacher and a writer, organized classes to teach reading and writing to the illiterate girls. Later she took charge of the university students too. Meanwhile, Katina Mamei, an elder communist teacher, who had lived in exile from the time of the Metaxas' dictatorship, undertook to give lessons to the young children (Mastroleon-Zerva, 1985). Even the elder exiles were making an effort to learn to read, you could hear them spelling out in secret words from small pieces of newspaper that had passed the gendarmerie check (Staveri, 2006).

The most enjoyable time for the exiles in Chios Camp were the evenings when the younger girls took charge of the entertainment with dances from their homelands and songs. Despite the difficult conditions, the exiles did not lose their courage and organized celebrations for national holidays, creating sets and costumes. The same happened during the Christmas celebrations for small children. However, their favorite pastime was the "tsibida", parody skits improvised by younger exiles, full of railleries about the

gendarmes and about each other. On the other hand, in the annex of "Saint Thomas" every kind of entertainment was forbidden. Activities like chess, singing, dancing were not allowed, even the "tsibida" parodies of the prisoners were not tolerated (Staveri, 2006).

The exiles were particularly pleased when a camera passed through the inspection hidden inside a sack of sugar. The photographic record of the exile is an important piece of evidence in our study and helped a lot in the identification of the sites (Mastroleon-Zerva, 1985).

5. THE EXILE IN ANAFI ISLAND

Anafi is a small island of the Cyclades island group, nearby Santorini, which was to become one of the most important places of exile in the interwar period. On the island there was one sole settlement on top of a mountain, consisting of about 300 houses.

The first political exiles were displaced to Anafi under the rule of Pangalos' dictatorship in 1925, while the rest of the detainees were criminal law defendants: thieves, robbers and smugglers. In 1929, with the passing of the Idionymo law, more and more political activists were displaced to Anafi Island. With the advent of the Metaxas' dictatorship, the shipments had multiplied and the exile number reached 500, while the permanent population of the island was approximately 1.300 inhabitants (Tzamaloukas, 2002).

Most shipments arriving on the island during this period consisted of detainees from the Northern Greece's cities Kavala and Serres. There had worked before in the tobacco and silk mills industry and most of them were trade unionists, with some women among them, who were exiled for their trade union activity and their participation in the bloody strikes of 1936.

In 1935 a hunger strike was held for several days, demanding the government to grant a general amnesty to the exiles and release them. Almost all of the exiles participated in these hunger strikes except for the patients and the office of Coexistence Group, so that it could take care of the hunger strikes. The

hunger strikers were gathered in a ward, holding a banner with the slogan "Amnesty or Death". In the beginning of this action the authorities required exiles to sign a statement of repentance in order to be released. After 14 days of hunger strike and while the exiled strikers were completely exhausted, the state granted a partial amnesty and released 75 of them (Xatzidimos, 1990, Birtles, 2002).

After the Axis occupation of Greece during World War II (April 1941), there were still 220 exiled communists and trade unionists in Anafi. Then, one of the most impressive escapes of exiles was organized, as the detainees had to take part in the resistance against the conquerors. The escapes were members of the Communist Party, among them Electra Apostolou (Gritzonas, 1985).

Life during the German Occupation was very difficult for both the locals and the exiles and both sides suffered from hunger. In the islands' registry office one can find several death certificates testifying several deaths from food deprivation and starvation, while other causes were pneumonia, tuberculosis, bronchitis and typhus. It is worth noting that during this period there was no provision for the shipment of medicines by the state. In the Spring of 1942, the new Italian commander of the Cyclades island complex visited Anafi (Tzamaloukas, 2002). The exiles seized the opportunity and carried the most seriously ill to their camp beds, protesting about the miserable living conditions. During the protest of the exiles, many villagers, among them the priest and the mayor, stood on the street with them asking the new governor for medical care and food. The Italian commander was shocked by the condition of the exiles and agreed to transfer them to hospitals in the capital. Unfortunately, by the time the transfer took place, some had died (Birtles, 2002).

From the handwritten newspapers of the exiles, we get the information that until the Spring of 1943, there were few exiles on the island. Most of them had been transferred to other places of exile or prisons. It is worth noting that of the 200 executed on May 1944 by the Germans at the Kesariani Shooting Range, 70 were former exiles from Anafi (Birtles, 2002). The shipments with exiles to Anafi



Figure 8: The exiles' kitchens. (Archive Marini Myrto)

stopped for a few years, until the beginning of the Civil War when they started again. In 1946, Manolis Glezos (hero of the Resistance who took down the Flag of Nazi Germany from the Acropolis, along with Lakis Santas) was also sent into exile on the island. After the end of Civil War, the exiles of Anafi were transferred to other places of exile. In 1967 after the Coup of the Colonels a few political prisoners were again sent to the island.

Today, the settlement of Anafi hardly bears witness to its history. The ruins and the remains of the old houses of the exiles are few. Most of the buildings are not saved, some collapsed and others were demolished, and in their place were built modern residences or guesthouses for tourist accommodation. Two years ago (2021) the Municipal Council decided to build a historical museum on the island, which would also include the thorny heritage of the exile. The State approved the plan, giving a fund of 80.000 euros for the realization of the museum. However, some time ago these plans were canceled, and the content of the museum was limited to folklore excluding the memory of the island as a place of exile. The local authorities settled on that issue that a museum including the theme of exile would not be attractive and would darken the image of the island.

5.1 LIVING IN ANAFI

The exiles rented houses in the settlement (the Chora) of the island, ten to twenty exiles

lived in each one of them and each house had its own organization, they elected a three-member bureau consisting of a chamberlain, a treasurer and a person in charge of education. They had given the houses names such as: Marx, Gorgi, Lenin, Luxemburg etc. Stalin's house served as a school; Engels' house served as a kitchen and as a guest house (Birtles, 2002). All the exiles, regardless their ideology, belonged to the OSPE (Group for the cohabitation of political exiles). Thus, all of them had to comply to regulations, anyone who did not was expelled from the team. The OSPE had a president and a secretary, who were elected through democratic procedures, while general assemblies were held regularly. The only ones who did not join the OSPE were the convicts, who were mostly animal thieves and poachers. Also, there were about ten exiled political activists belonging to the Archio-Marxists (Trotskyite fraction) who had their own cohabitation group, as they did not want to become members of the OSPE (Gavrilidis, 1997).

The regulations were strict, the first and foremost being the behavior of the members, both among themselves and with villagers. As far as the locals were concerned, special care was taken, as no one was to give reason for complaint. They had to respect the manners and the customs of the inhabitants, regarding their religious and political beliefs, so it was forbidden to discuss these matters with them. However, the issue on which OSPE was absolutely strict and disciplined was



Figure 9: The mill where the exiles ground barley. (Archive Marini Myrto)

the behavior with women. Love relationships between the exiles, as well as between exiles and locals, were expressly forbidden (Kenna, 2004).

The pension given by the State was set at ten drachmas, which not everyone received, as some were considered well off. Each exile gave the half of his money to the common treasury. The sick were excluded from this procedure, as they needed a special diet. Special diet was, also, provided to the women, giving them some milk and some eggs for those who had their children with them.

There was an apportionment for all jobs: for woodcutting, for cleaning, for finding water etc. In addition to the daily services, there were some crews: cooks, barbers, tailors and carpenters, who dealt with the needs of the group. The sick, mostly from tuberculosis, were excluded from the services. The island faced a serious- water shortage problem, so the exiles built cisterns to collect water when it rained or dug wells. The crew of builders and plasterers often worked for the locals and the income from their work went to the fund of OSPE. The exiled tanner Lefteris Matsoukas made shoes and sold them to the villagers to strengthen the treasury of OSPE (Tzamaloukas, 2002).

Resident's property was completely respected and any case of theft resulted in the guilty being excluded from the Group. An agreement had to be reached with the landowners concerning the herd's pastures. Suitable

slopes of hills and mountains were used for the cultivation of barley and wheat (Mpirkas, 1966). The exiles grounded their own barley in a mill. They also had a few vegetables, chickens and a few sheep. Meals were simple, usually consisting of beans, lentils, spaghetti, potatoes and rice (Gavriliadis, 1997). The exiles faced a difficulty in learning the news of the mainland. Thus, with the permission of the gendarmerie, an exile could visit the unique café (kafenion) in the settlement that had a radio in order to listen to the news and inform his co-exiles (Mpirkas, 1966). Trying to counterbalance these limitations, the OPSE had organized its own café, where the exiles could chat, discuss political and philosophical issues and play chess and backgammon (Tzamaloukas, 2002).

5.2 EDUCATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

In Anafi, as in the other places of exile, there was an intense activity concerning education and entertainment. The exiles considered that this kind of activity would steel their beliefs; after all it was also a pleasant way to pass the time on the island.

Electra Apostolou was responsible for the education activity. Courses were organized in each ward. They were taught political economy and Marxist-Leninist philosophy, courses on trade union issues and agricultural problems in Greece. The reprinting of courses and books was facilitated by an illegal polygraph owned by OSPE. Also, there was a graded educational

program covering Greek language and history, mathematics, geography, accounting and foreign languages (English, French, German, Russian), but the main target was to reduce illiteracy as most of the exiles were illiterate workers from northern Greece. Books and newspapers like "Rizospastis" (the journal of the Communist party, the KKE came from the capital), hidden into sacks with supplies. That's how the camera and the polygraph must have been smuggled.

The exiles also edited weekly handwritten newspapers. The most important, the "Antifascist", was a handwritten four-page newspaper, which played a serious



Figure 10: The exiles' handwritten newspaper "The antifascist".

role in the personal partisan and political development of the exiles. The editor-in-chief of the newspaper was the exile Manolis Perlorentzos, a typographer from Athens. He was exiled during the Metaxas' dictatorship. He died on February 22, 1942 from starvation.

The entertainment program was also rich. The OSPE had created a choir of 25 members and a musical group from those of its members who had managed to take their musical instrument with them. From the photographic archive we can identify a mandolin, guitars and a saxophone (Mpirkas, 1966). The leader of the band was the tobacco

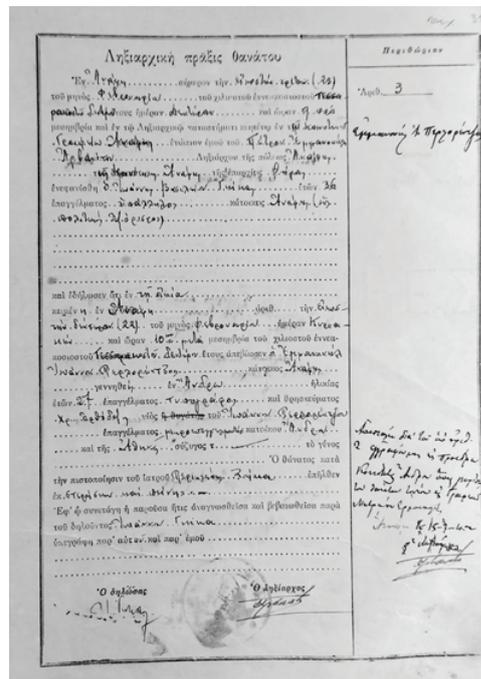


Figure 11: Death certificate of Perlorentzos, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper "The antifascist" (Archive Marini Myrto)

worker Goulios, who played the saxophone (Tzamaloukas, 2002). The repertoire was traditional and European music. Every Sunday they organized dances in the village square. An exile of Armenian origins, Kivork, was the group's dance teacher (Mpartziotas, 1978).

The exiles organized theatrical performances and recitations of poems, directed by the young exile Spanos. The scenographer of these performances was Apostolos Apostolidis, a painter from Thessaloniki. They also organized celebrations for the national holidays in the village's square. Shadow play performances (Karagiozis) were also given by the young exile Topekitzoglou from Athens. These performances made a special impression on the locals, as they had never seen an artistic performance in their lives. It is worth noting that illiteracy on the island was much higher, as the Greek State rarely sent a teacher on the island (Tzamaloukas, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The idea that sites of difficult heritage –especially sites of atrocities, traumatic memories or crimes– should be preserved and treated as “cultural heritage” has been controversial in many parts of the world. Difficult heritage prompts usually raise ethical concerns. But this is partly the reason that motivates many people to make educational visits to such sites. This provides an opportunity not only to learn about the local history, but also to engage in broader moral consideration and self-positioning (Macdonald, 2009a).

The Concentration Camps of Ai-Stratis and Chios, as well as the Anafi island as case studies present some interesting aspects. They have in common that they represent a rather thorny issue for the collective memory, reminding a difficult period of the modern history of Greece, an issue that may provoke controversies. The aim of this paper is to offer an objective approach to a sensitive period of the modern history of Greece that still divides society since it concerns a not so distant past and the memories are still fresh.

Undeniably, the Concentration Camps of Ai-Stratis, Chios and Anafi have been consigned to oblivion, since there is not enough State support for their promotion as historical sites and on the other hand local communities seem rather hesitant to promote the memory of a dark period of the local history that is considered as contradictory to a sunny tourist brand name. Thus, State action and funding aiming the preservation of this heritage is deemed necessary. A first step would be to restore the remaining ruins and then to place educational materials and explanatory panels in the buildings, so that the visitor of each place knows its history. Through historical walks the visitors could imagine and understand the life in the camp and its structure and that would offer to them a unique experience very useful to anyone who is interested in history and in its marks on a place. On the other hand, in this way, the locals would get closer to their own history and would reevaluate even the most difficult parts of their heritage as a source of self-consciousness.



Figure 12: V.Manikakis, Exiles in Ai-Stratis, 1950s. Contemporary History Archives (ASKI)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research has been granted by the Research Committee of the University of West Attica and National Technical University of Athens.

MEDPHOTO FESTIVAL: THE CASE OF A SOCIALLY ENGAGED LENS-BASED ARTISTIC INITIATIVE AT THE SOUTHERNMOST EDGE OF EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Photography
Capitalist Realism
MedPhoto Festival
Greek crisis

This review is a critical reflection of the evolution and impact of the MedPhoto Festival, an international lens-based festival initiated in Greece in 2016 amid the refugee/immigration crisis. Created by a diverse collective of individuals, including photographers, activists, curators, and scholars, MedPhoto aims to cultivate a socially engaged cultural community. The festival, rooted in Crete, expands its activities across Greece through exhibitions, educational workshops, discussions, and publications, addressing pressing contemporary issues.



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Figure 1: Richard Mosse, *Grid-Moria* (2016-2018), Installation shot from the exhibition *You Refuse to Understand, You Don't Say Anything, Watching Me Die*, ROMANTSO, Athens, 2018

In 2016, during the escalation of the refugee/immigration crisis, an international lens-based festival named MedPhoto was initiated in Greece by a small grassroots collective in cooperation with the Contemporary Art Museum of Crete. MedPhoto derived from an encounter of people coming from diverse disciplines (photographers, activists, graphic designers, curators, journalists and scholars), whose objective has been to establish a socially engaged cultural community. Having Crete as its point of departure (since this island constitutes an emblematic crossroad of various civilisations and a pivotal geopolitical site in the history of the Mediterranean), MedPhoto has been developing a wide range of activities across Greece, such as exhibitions, educational workshops, open discussions and publications, all of them explicitly oriented towards the cultivation of a radical dialogue on urgent contemporary issues. It is this ongoing endeavour that I will briefly reflect on in the following lines, pointing to some of the most noteworthy events MedPhoto realised and emphasising particularly its latest exhibition which addressed the endangered notion of democracy.

MedPhoto's inaugural edition, *Borders - Crossroads* (2016), focused on two interdependent threads: on the one hand, the violent dislocation of massive populations from the Middle East and Africa caused by extensive military conflicts (involving Western imperialist armies, fundamentalist religious groups, dictatorial regimes and "mercenaries of large multinational companies"), political oppression and extreme poverty; on the other, the

financial recession, the political deadlock, the increasing racism and the social unrest in the wider area of southern Europe (Michail, 2016, 50). To mention only a few examples of this exploratory course, in the exhibition *Critical Archives I: Ruins*, Davide Monteleone's and Francesco Zizola's works, both referring to the shipwreck of Lampedusa (the case of a boat, carrying hundreds of African refugees, which sank at the shores of the Italian island in 2013, resulting in the death of 366 people), had key significance in bringing us "closer to the individuality of those people who are lost and most usually are referred to as numbers", while Antoine D'Agata's *Odyseeia* (2011-2013), with its non-linear typological sequencies recording fragments of refugees' routes across Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, created a tapestry of the "no-way-out situation" these people are stuck in – with many "civilised" states being partially responsible for this (Vorgia, 2016, 29)¹.

I should note here that the (mostly) conservative, if not outright hostile, politics of the European Union during that period came as no surprise to a milieu of artists and scholars in Greece who had previously already articulated a critical stance against the formal narratives which ruled the continent. Being part of this milieu, the curatorial team of MedPhoto organised its next intervention, called *Europe: The Faces and the Territory* (2017-2018), starting from the hypothesis that the then current phenomena were inherently associated with some of the very constitutional principles of the EU as outlined in the "Declaration on European Identity" that was released during the

Copenhagen Summit in 1973. This historic declaration has probably been the first explicit statement of a long-standing institutional effort to designate a singular, unified European identity. This effort was incited by a coalition of transnational elites seeking to be defined through a secure (and securitised) territorial and political dominance on the inside while also securing an influential role in the globalised market; an attempt fundamentally rooted in the positivist (but in fact transcendental) imperative of unlimited progress tied

antagonistic) aspects of “Europeanness” for the sake of the sustainability of EU’s imperialist character (Cope, 2019). And this effort also seems to be disaffirmed by the very history of Europe which, apart from being constantly (re)shaped by the association between cultures, religions, languages and peoples, is also overdetermined by glaring class divides and economic interests confronting each other. I insist on these remarks, because it was precisely that scope under which MedPhoto’s main exhibition approached mul-



Figure 2: Johan Grimont, *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997), Installation shot from the exhibition *CRITICAL ARCHIVES IV: Documents*, Contemporary Art Museum of Crete, 2019

to European modernity. This effort, however, seems to systematically disregard that “adaptation to the power of progress furthers the progress of power, constantly renewing the degenerations which prove successful progress, not failed progress, to be its own antithesis” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, 28).; and it seems to overlook the fact that collective identities are multi-layered structures, the composition of which depends, to a great extent, on objective social relations and practices rather than on abstract concepts imposed by decisions from above that attempt to conceal or suppress the most diverse (and often

multiple identity construction mechanisms, by tracing some of their visual manifestations through insightful projects such as Robin Hammond’s *The New Europeans* (2016), Rineke Dijkstra’s *The Buzz Club, Liverpool, UK / Mystery World, Zaandam, NL* (1996-1997) and Jérôme Sessini’s *The Calais Jungle* (2015-2016), among others. Within the same conceptual framework, multifarious considerations of the European territory, with all the hues and meanings that it carries (a site of memory, a land of state dominance, an exile, a battlefield), also unfolded, based on photographs from Simon Norfolk’s *For Most Of It I Have No*

Words and from Mark Power's contribution to the Magnum group project *Peripylus*². The enquiry of that second curatorial project was substantially deepened by the multimedia installation *You Refuse to Understand, You Don't Say Anything, Watching Me Die* (2018), which MedPhoto co-organised with Athens Photo Festival and Thessaloniki Photobiennale and which took place in Athens³. The works presented there – *The Bureaucracy of Angels* (2017) by Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *Grid-Moria* (2016-2018) by Richard Mosse, and *Uprooted* (2017) by Daphne Tolis – proposed three quite unusual perspectives on war, considering it to be a salient aspect of “Europeanness”. Keeping their distance from merely portraying symptoms, these works foregrounded the issue of the objectification of the other – extensively discussed by Richard Mosse and the audience during his public lecture at the venue. Some works also highlighted the problematic character of the technical image itself (Flusser, 2000, 14–20), regarded as part of apparatuses of surveillance and dehumanisation⁴.

Feeling the need to look deeper into the development of a critical discourse on how the technical image represents or simulates (or even contributes to the production of) reality, MedPhoto's third edition, *Archive: Between the Public and the Private* (2019), delved into the ways that power relations are refracted through visual documents⁵. Partly seeing to expand on Allan Sekula's perspective on the politics of representation, the works that the festival presented that year at the Contemporary Art Museum of Crete

centred on how the technical image had been treated from the start as an archiving instrument by default and as a practice which has always found itself in the flux of classification, preservation and circulation of fragments forming pieces of both official and counter-hegemonic narratives (Sekula, 1986 and 1978). Thus, the curatorial team sought to place works such as Johan Grimonprez's *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997), which anatomises the ideological function of the mass media, in dialogue with research-based projects of an activist orientation, such as Forensic Architecture's *The Murder of Pavlos Fyssas* (2018), and with others, such as Max Pinckers's *Margins of Excess* (2018), which question the very processes that authorise certain subjects to impose codes that link visual signs to their referents and define our perception of reality.

Interwoven with notable matters of contention in contemporary politics, all the above enquiries of MedPhoto culminated in the festival's latest edition (2021), in which the curatorial team eventually (and not at all surprisingly) opted to directly address what is actually at stake today and lies beneath every social conflict: *democracy* – the big concept upon which the foundations of the West were, allegedly, built⁶. What is democracy? A state form or an ephemeral event, a way of organising pleasures or a commercial brand, an emancipatory project or mere lifestyle, a synonym for colonialism or a field for the emergence of collective subjectivities? Grounded in Jacques Rancière's argument that what makes democracy a “properly political” notion is that it is con-



Figure 3: Martha Rosler, *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home, New Series* (2004-2008), Installation shot from the exhibition *CRITICAL ARCHIVES V: The Future Is Unwritten*, Contemporary Art Museum of Crete, 2021



Figure 4:
Martha Rosler, *In the Place of the Public: Airport Series* (1983-present), Installation shot from the exhibition *CRITICAL ARCHIVES V: The Future Is Unwritten*, Contemporary Art Museum of Crete, 2021

stantly fought over, MedPhoto's central exhibition developed around this perpetual struggle for the appropriation of *democracy* and for its meaning (Rancière & Hazan, 2011, 76-81).

Indicative enough of those concerns was Martha Rosler's *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home, New Series* (2004-2008), an artwork fundamental to the exhibition's structure. Re-using a technique she had employed in the late 1960s to criticise the US invasion of Vietnam, Rosler constructed a photomontage series, combining mass media pictures from the war in Iraq with Western lifestyle imagery. By integrating scenes of military violence into the domestic space of a living-room or by blending fashion models with tanks, Rosler visually speculated on the existence of causal relations between different levels of social experience which have been deliberately disassociated from one another by dominant ideology: the spectacular, cultural imaginary that the U.S.A. fosters for itself, on the one hand, and, on the other, the wars that this state wages abroad (which are supposed to be something distant, something concerning the *others*). And thus, by reconfiguring the "shared sensible order," Rosler explores what can become legible and intelligible by the community – herein, the multiple faces of imperialism (Rancière, 2004, 39-45).

An elaborate interplay between Rosler's work and certain photographs by Luc Delahaye (referring to institutions and processes with a decisive role in recent history) was further triggered

by their spatial juxtaposition in the museum. Situated in the long tradition of documentary photography, while also conveying an implicit sense of a staged-like performativity, Delahaye's large-scale photographs incorporate a distantiated gaze towards catalytic events, oscillating between the immediacy of information and a time dilation through which they engage the viewer. A meeting of the UN Security Council, an ordinary congregation of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, or an intense moment from the trading floor of the stock market are hardly reduced to mere news coverage. The visual completeness, the level of detail, and the complexity of Delahaye's images contribute to the activation of historically specific connotations accompanying each social reality he reports on – which the MedPhoto collective was greatly interested in. The inaccessible centres of more or less legitimised decision-making, the fragmentary and, at the same time, monumental and aesthetic aspects of which Delahaye interlaces, constitute an apophatic response to the question that concerns the character of *democracy* today, in Europe and beyond.

Seeking to address more specific queries linked to the larger question of democracy – namely, to consider the possibilities we activate or disempower each time we invoke *democracy* (to paraphrase Rancière) and how we could reconceptualise democracy as a tool for critiquing social reality (Rancière & Hazan, 2011, 76-81), MedPhoto's curatorial approach drew certain connections

among various elements of a globalised, asymmetric warfare game. Barbed wires with their intimidating materiality (like those seen on Rafal Milach's pictures from the electric fence at the Hungarian-Croatian borders) and shady mechanisms for the construction and dispersion of information (like those insinuated in Jonas Bendiksen's project about Veles, the town which became an epicentre for the production of fake news that might have had an impact on the election of Donald Trump in 2016) were read as interrelated parameters of the ominous condition within which *democracy* is enclosed by technocrats. In another implied association, the exploitation of female domestic workers in Lebanon trapped in the abusive system of *kafala* (an issue stressed in Evangelia Kranioti's *Beirut Fictions*, 2015-2019) was examined as a partial case-study on the vulgarity of power relations that spread in full scale (yet indistinguishably) over everyone's life through the sophisticated mechanisms of absolute control developed by financial institutions – a metonymy of this could be

of self-organisation and re-claiming the commons.

In relation to the commons as practice (and before I complete this short overview), I should mention a MedPhoto ongoing project intended to expand access to, and the distribution of, knowledge. I am referring to *Nomadic Library*, the first mobile collection of photobooks in Greece. Photobooks have been an immensely popular framework for the encounter of the photographic image – indeed, of worldwide appeal. Also, many of the photographers and artists that MedPhoto had been collaborating with often choose to present their work in this form. Yet, what sparked the *Nomadic Library* initiative was the collective's belief that the photobook should be systematically studied in connection with the semiology of the image and the social relations that surround it (Barthes, 1977). For the collective, the photobook first needed to be materially accessible by wide audiences (also in the periphery) and, secondly, to be theoretically contextualised. Since 2018,

Figure 5
Luc Delahaye, *132nd Ordinary Meeting of the Conference* (2004), *Security Council* (2003), *Trading Floor* (2012), Installation shot from the exhibition *CRITICAL ARCHIVES V: The Future Is Unwritten*, Contemporary Art Museum of Crete, 2021



found in Manolis Baboussis's *Busts* (1997-1998). As a counterpoint to this pervasive climate of threat and its numbing effect, anti-hegemonic discourses over gender, race and class were brought forth, as in Gloria Oyarzabal's series *Woman Go No'Gree* (2019), combined with quests for alternative socio-political formations, as those traced in Yannis Stournas's *Kinematography* (2014-2017) exploring autonomous and de-commodified social centres that operate on the basis

MedPhoto has amassed a collection of 300 significant photobooks which tour the country, a collection granted for free to universities, cultural centres, photography schools and public libraries across Greece. *Nomadic Library* is accompanied by educational workshops that engage local communities, emerging artists and students. There is also an effort of the curatorial board to translate historic essays on photography into Greek, making them available to the public for free, bypassing

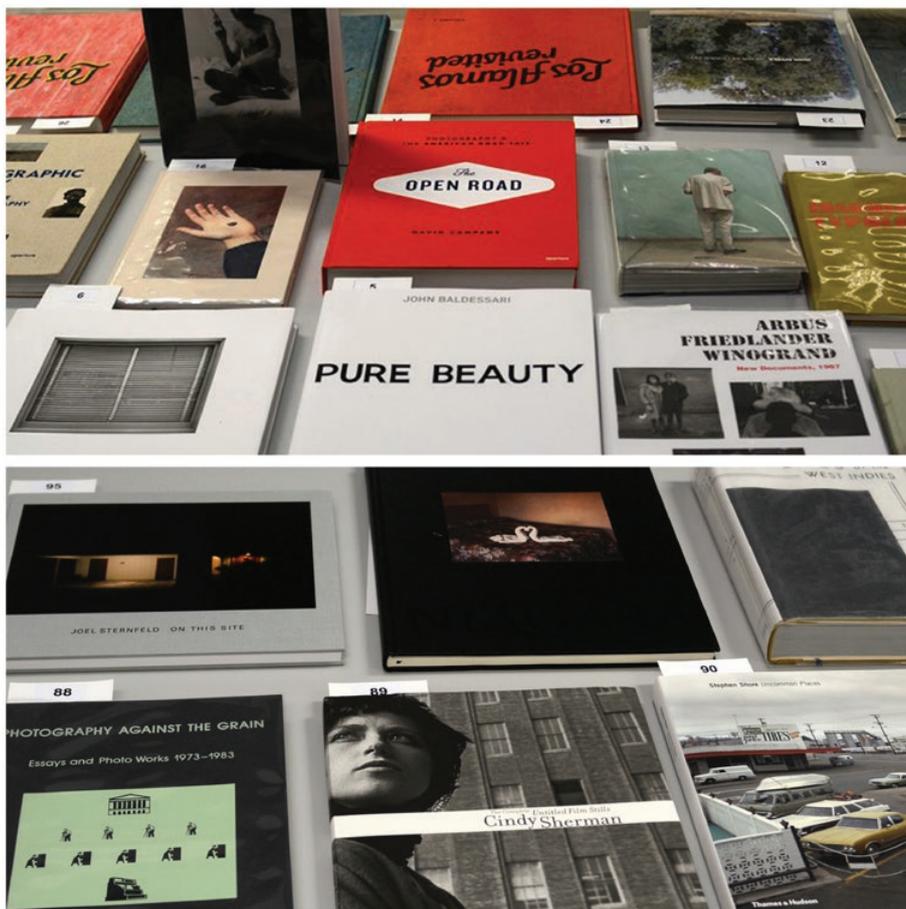


Figure 8: Photobooks from the Nomadic Library collection

the typical commercialisation of “open access” materials. This ever-growing project aims to function as a toolkit for approaching photography as a multi-modal cultural phenomenon rather than images on display in art institutions with “visitors”; as a repository of ideas and practices which explore the various combinations of cognitive elements with visual qualities; a mapping of contemporary artistic quests in constant interaction with the socio-political reality⁷.

To conclude, the experimental curatorial culture that generated MedPhoto’s activities corresponded *mutatis mutandis* to an aesthetic of “cognitive mapping” – that is, as put by Fredric Jameson, to “a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system” (Jameson, 1991, 54). Far from aligning with occasionally trendy and conceptually partial agendas, as those that often appear as “turns” in the art

market, MedPhoto persists with ostensibly old, yet unresolved, issues associated with our (capitalist) social totality which are subject to historical change. It is interested in the range of representational efforts that confront this ungraspable totality (Jameson, 1991, 297-418). Lens-based media, being favourably connected to reality, are “called upon” in MedPhoto’s interventions, but not so as to restore historically precedent types of naive realism compatible with the reproduction of the status quo. Instead, our question remains how abstract knowledge is connected with empirical data, what constitutes the latter, and how those who have no or little power – those who are governed – access these forms.

NOTES

- [1] The exhibition *Critical Archives I: Ruins* was hosted in the Contemporary Art Museum of Crete and was curated by Maria Maragkou, Pavlos Fysakis and Pasqua Vorgia. .
- [2] The exhibition *CRITICAL ARCHIVES III: Identities* was presented in 2018 at the Contemporary Art Museum of Crete and was curated by Pavlos Fysakis, Maria Maragkou, Dimitris Kechris and Yorgos Karailias.
- [3] The exhibition at ROMANTSO in Athens was curated by Dimitris Kechris, Pasqua Vorgia, and Apostolos Zerdevas.
- [4] By the term “technical image” I mean (following Flusser) the image that is produced when rays of light are captured by means of optical, chemical and mechanical devices on sensitive surfaces. Therefore, I refer to reproducible images which are the result of the use of either analogue or digital cameras.
- [5] The main exhibition *CRITICAL ARCHIVES IV: Documents* of the third edition was presented in 2019 at the Contemporary Art Museum of Crete and was curated by Pavlos Fysakis, Dimitris Kechris and Maria Maragkou..
- [6] The main exhibition of MedPhoto’s fourth edition *Democracy (2021)* came under the title *CRITICAL ARCHIVES V: The Future Is Unwritten*. It was presented at the Contemporary Art Museum of Crete and was curated by Dimitris Kechris and Pasqua Vorgia, under the artistic direction of Pavlos Fysakis and Maria Maragkou.
- [7] At this point I ought to mention by name the persons (additionally to those already mentioned in previous footnotes as curators of the exhibitions) who are or have been members of MedPhoto’s organisational team, and the persons who have advisorily, curatorially or technically contributed and whose participation has been extremely precious: Eleni Pagkalia, Ioannis Markakis, Vangelis Tatsis, Giorgos Gavrilakis, Olga Gortsa, Christina Kalligianni, Rafaela Karagianni, Elena Ntosa, Kiriaki Fragkiadaki, Ioanna Chronopoulou, Dora Chalari, Makis Faros, Nikos Markou, Giorgos Moutafis, Yorgos Prinos, Marinos Tsagkarakis, Natasha Christia, Charalampos Kydonakis, Haris Grigorakis, Niki Petraki, Anastasia Tzigounaki, Ioanna Zouli, Kostis Kalantzis, Yannis Hadjinicolaou, Andreas Meladakis, Georges Salameh, Alexandra Saliba, Yorgos Yatromanolakis, Eduardo Cadava, Angela Dimitrakaki and Penelope Petsini.

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