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URBAN ACTIVISM AND COSMOPOLITAN AESTHETICS
IN TIMES OF CRISIS:
“THESSALONIKI OTHERWISE” MEETS STUTTGART

ABSTRACT

“Thessaloniki Otherwise,” an urban activist group in Thessaloniki, Greece, has been since 2010 disrupting the city’s daily routines by performatively enacting alternative city politics and aesthetics. This article first wonders whether the simultaneity of its establishment with the Greek economic crisis typify its politics as resistance or consent. It then focuses on an event in Stuttgart, Germany, as a performance of place that refuted the economic crisis as also a crisis of national essence. It is argued that this event employed an aesthetic cosmopolitanism, whose rhetorics of creativity, entrepreneurialism and art aimed at countering anti-Greek European views, claimed coeval and coequal participation in hegemonic Europeanness, and opposed both foreign media representations of Greece and classic ancient Greek representations. Finally, the article contemplates over whether such a cosmopolitan locality constitutes a form of crypto-colonialism.

Keywords: *resistance/consent binarism, crisis, aesthetic cosmopolitanism, creativity, crypto-colonialism*

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ΑΣΤΙΚΟΣ ΑΚΤΙΒΙΣΜΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΙΣΘΗΤΙΚΟΣ
ΚΟΣΜΟΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΣ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΚΑΙΡΟΥΣ
ΤΗΣ ΚΡΙΣΗΣ: ΤΟ “ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ ΑΛΛΙΩΣ”
ΣΤΗ ΣΤΟΥΤΓΑΡΔΗ

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το “Θεσσαλονίκη Αλλιώς”, μια αστική ακτιβιστική ομάδα που ιδρύθηκε στη Θεσσαλονίκη το 2010, παρεμβαίνει κατά διαστήματα στην καθημερινότητα της πόλης επιτελώντας εναλλακτικές πολιτικές και αισθητικές παρεμβάσεις. Το άρθρο αυτό διερευνά καταρχήν τη συγχρονικότητα της ίδρυσης της ομάδας με την περίοδο της ελληνικής οικονομικής κρίσης ως περίπτωση αντίστασης ή συναίνεσης. Στη συνέχεια επικεντρώνεται σε μια εκδήλωση της ομάδας στη Στουτγάρδη της Γερμανίας, κατά την οποία η επιτέλεση του τόπου φαίνεται να αντικρούει την οικονομική κρίση και ως κρίση της εθνικής υπόστασης. Αυτό το συμβάν επιστράτευσε έναν αισθητικό κοσμοπολιτισμό, όπου οι ρητορικές της δημιουργικότητας, επιχειρηματικότητας, και τέχνης αντιτάσσονταν σε ανθελληνικές ευρωπαϊκές αντιλήψεις, διεκδικούσαν συγχρονικότητα και ισότιμη συμμετοχή στην ηγεμονική ευρωπαϊκότητα και αντιτάσσονταν τόσο σε ξένες μηντιακές αναπαραστάσεις της Ελλάδας, όσο και σε αρχαιοελληνικές αναπαραστάσεις της. Στο τέλος διερευνά κατά πόσο η συγκρότηση μιας κοσμοπολιτικής τοπικότητας αποτελεί μια μορφή κρυπτο-αποικιοκρατίας.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: δίπολο σύγκρουση/συναίνεση, κρίση, αισθητικός κοσμοπολιτισμός, δημιουργικότητα, κρυπτο-αποικιοκρατία

In the summer of 2010 in Thessaloniki, Greece, the free press *Parallaxi* organized for the first time a two-day series of events all over the city that it named “Thessaloniki Otherwise” (*Thessaloníki allíós*) and designated as an “urban activism experiment.” Its coincidence with the World Environment Day set green development and environmentally friendly actions as its central axes, together with various cultural happenings in unanticipated parts of the city. Its most catching feature was its logo, where a mirror-λ letter was used to signify the “otherwise.”¹



During the next five years, “Thessaloniki Otherwise” became one of the most prominent urban movements in Thessaloniki. Its activities expressed its social, cultural, environmental, and architectural visions “for a better city,” as its “mastermind,” a Thessalonikian journalist, called it. Throughout those five years of intense activity,² its members organized tens of public events, all of which were met with success. The volunteers who participated, and henceforth formed a network of active citizens, exceeded the 500, while public attendance during some very successful events was estimated around 150,000. At the same time, several hundreds of groups and institutions, such as small private companies, the Organization of Urban Transportation of Thessaloniki, and the Thessaloniki Fire Department, cooperated in the organization of those events. For “Thessaloniki Otherwise,” the participation of as many agencies as possible aimed to show that the creativity of the organization, but also the organization itself, was not the concern of only some people. Accordingly, the financial viability of the events relied on soliciting private sponsors keen to contribute to a different

1. For an analysis of the trademark of the group, where the second Greek λ in the word *Allios* (otherwise) is reversed into its mirror image, and the broader question of change, see Deltou, 2016.

2. From 2015 onwards the group has reduced its activities, as their organization has become really demanding in terms of human and financial resources. In September 23rd, 2017, however, a big event was organized on the centenary of the large fire that destroyed the biggest part of Thessaloniki and ignited its transformation.

vision of the city. This prospect, however, has been getting more difficult with the deepening of the economic crisis.

Most of the “Thessaloniki Otherwise” actions did not encompass entirely new visions of the city. Instead, they tended to bring to the fore what was already there, but could be *otherwise*. Keeping in mind that each action actually involved several different performative events, the “Thessaloniki Otherwise” actions accentuated parts or aspects of the city by performing/producing different uses or perspectives of the urban landscape. Thus, through different means, such as artistic performances, city tours, etc., they sought to provide inhabitants with a more intimate historical experiential knowledge of the city, to build awareness about different social and cultural milieus. They wanted residents to take action on public spaces by giving them temporarily (but wishing permanently) a new everyday life. They also sought to acquaint local people with the city’s “creative economy and identity,” by which they meant the city’s architectural, graphic design, artistic et al. scapes. Last but not least, they organized actions in support of the needy, not only victims of the current economic crisis, but also long-term socially and economically deprived and marginalized city groups. On the basis of the above, the actions of “Thessaloniki Otherwise” constituted heterotopic performances; they constructed new topologies, the subversiveness of which lay within the possibilities of urban living that its actions temporarily materialized, transforming thus the invisibilities of city life into visibilities (Deltsou, 2016). In that sense its actions did not constitute merely transitory utopias, but forces aimed at promoting change and bridging the distance between existing and potential habitual structures of everyday life.³

A remarkable issue is the simultaneity of the “Thessaloniki Otherwise” inception with the beginnings of the Greek crisis. While the crisis arose as the overall dominant modality for the Greek condition in public, political, and academic rhetoric,⁴ for “Thessaloniki Otherwise,” it was not its main motivational drive. To the extent, however, that its establishment coincided with the “crisis,” the relation between this form of urban activism and the broader socio-economic-political circumstances should be considered. A number of questions can be raised in that direction: Is “Thessaloniki

3. One can look into the actions of “Thessaloniki Otherwise” at <http://www.thessalonikialios.gr/index.php/%CE%B7-%CE%B4%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%82/%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%89%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B5%CF%82-%CE%B4%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%82.html>.

4. See Knight, 2013.

Otherwise” related to the crisis, or were its undertakings to reconstitute the social ties in the urban frame anew merely a public counterforce? Can theorizations of the crisis⁵ also interpret phenomena that do not directly link themselves to the crisis, but exist amid its temporal contingency? Did “Thessaloniki Otherwise” belong to social movements that, according to Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou (2011, p. 92), coincide with the introduction of neo-liberalism in the country and are thus to be interpreted in relation to neoliberal politics?

Given that in recent years in Thessaloniki, as across Greece, various social activist organizations have been formed to promote alternative collectivities in the urbanscape, a relevant question regards the kind of mediation that “Thessaloniki Otherwise” provided, as it aimed to shape a social consciousness and an experience of urban collectivity distinct from the dominant and/or common. “Thessaloniki Otherwise” as a project is an act of political becoming that pursues not only instrumentalist or expedient goals, but also articulates matters of common concern (Rethmann, 2013, p. 236). According to Povinelli (2014), within the given order of existents-as-arrangement, every arrangement installs its own possible de-arrangements and rearrangements, the otherwise being these immanent de-arrangements and rearrangements. Consequently, an “anthropology of the otherwise” locates itself within forms of life that are at odds with dominant, and dominating, modes of being (Povinelli, 2011a). Such a form of life, she argues, emerges contrary to dominant modes of social being, and the dominant mode experiences it as inside, but foreign to its body. Rethmann (2013, p. 237) subsequently reapplied Povinelli’s “otherwise” on unexpected forms of political, sexual, and spiritual subjectivities that seek and shape “otherwise” spaces. For Rethmann, even though the kinds of conditions, collectivities, and coalitions that constitute possibilities may differ from case to case, what drives them all is a desire to contest the existing terms of political, social, and economic life and to struggle to build something new. These “otherwise” possibilities elucidate “Thessaloniki Otherwise” as a form of urban political activism, the ethnography of which seeks not comprehensive, but specific and partial answers in “pardon the expression, real places,” as Gregory remarked (1998, p. 52).

As mentioned, the activism of “Thessaloniki Otherwise” primarily achieved to highlight feasible future visions of urban life in the public space. It was an activism that “thought” and “did” what the public institu-

5. See, amongst others, Athanasiou, 2012; Papailias, 2011; Vradis and Dalakoglou, 2011.

tions did not and do not do, that “showed” the applicability of alternatives that exist in the urban space.⁶ For this primarily political dimension of “Thessaloniki Otherwise” an important question is whether it constituted a form of resistance or of consent. Its practices were not conflictual and confrontational, but instead consensual in terms of always getting the relevant permissions to interfere in public life. This issue becomes relevant in relation to theoretical approaches like Žižek’s (1999, p. 198), for whom the new “post-political” forms of politics shy away from traditional conflictual politics, promoting policies set forth by “enlightened” technocrats, and via the negotiation of interests, a more or less compromised consensus is reached. Accordingly, Checker, echoing Swyngedouw (2007), argued that consensus serves the neoliberal order in that the modes of post-political governance disable meaningful resistance (Checker, 2011, p. 212) and the imagining of alternative modes of governance (Swyngedouw, 2009 in Checker, *op.cit.*, p. 214).

What constitutes, however, substantive resistance and how can such actions be defined? Does resistance presuppose distance or differentiation from social ideals that do not reject all existing social relations? Are distancing from ongoing political forms and behaviors, and emphasizing local community involvement more democratic formulations of the political? Additionally, to the extent that actions are not confrontational, do they constitute a post-political form? In view of the state’s failure to function as an effective and rational mechanism (see also Plantzos, 2012, p. 238), did the choice of non-apparently conflictual and confrontational attitudes and actions towards official structures and institutions by “Thessaloniki Otherwise” differentiate it from other activist groups that either embrace confrontational politics, or express anti-neoliberal and/or anti-capitalist ideologies openly?

“THESSALONIKI OTHERWISE GOES TO... GERMANY”: LOCALISM, COSMOPOLITANISM, AND EUROPEANNESS

Of the many “Thessaloniki Otherwise” actions, one appeared to be different. This particular “otherwise” did not seem to strictly comply with its

6. In theoretical terms it may be argued that the politics of “Thessaloniki Otherwise” comply with Scott’s (2012 in Rethmann, 2013, p. 233) vision of the state as not being associated only with terror and harmful governmental power, but also with the enabling of greater justice and possibilities, leading to Rethmann’s remark that the actual question to ask is what power can do to bring about or delimit possibilities (2013, p. 233).

temporary enactments of a future city life. Instead, it projected internationally a counter-image of Thessaloniki in the conjuncture of the crisis. “Thessaloniki meets Stuttgart” was organized on 7-8 June 2013 in collaboration with the Greek-German enterprise “Good Morning Germany” that is active in Stuttgart since 1960 in order to advance the “coexistence of Germans and Greeks” by way of cultural events. This action calls for special analysis, because: it was “out of place,” i.e. out of Thessaloniki and Greece, but “in time,” as it put the crisis in the foreground. This analysis will also indirectly consider whether its “otherwise” politics constitute some form of resistance in relation to the Greek crisis.

It should be noted that for the study of this event a more indirect approach to the classic participant observation was selected, as at the time it was impossible for the researcher to travel to Stuttgart. Instead, people living there, not related to any of the two groups, were asked to attend the events and write their own notes and commentaries, which they then shared with the researcher. Later, discussions about the event were held both with the informants and members of the group involved in it. Particular attention will be paid here to the Internet re-presentation of the event, as it is a major performative modality of the group’s visions of the city that exceeds uses of the web as mediation.

“Thessaloniki meets Stuttgart” was, according to organizers and visitors alike, a great success; many people visited the exhibition, the round-table and the discussion had great participation, the concert hall was full, and people were generally enthusiastic. The action consisted of three parts, each of which targeted city life in the circumstance of the crisis in a different way.

The first part “transported” to Stuttgart photographic material from an event that took place in Thessaloniki earlier that year, in spring 2013—“Made in Thessaloniki2- Intervening in Public Space.” The central feature of that event was its “creativity,” as it displayed “important jobs of the most creative design agencies of the city, as well as creations of industrial designers of Thessaloniki,” where “they approach differently and give new meaning to symbols of the city.” From that event they sent to Stuttgart posters that featured “the best possible views of the city.” In parallel with the posters, they also exhibited examples of local industrial design, as representations of the modern economic and cultural practices of the citizens of Thessaloniki. Both in the public web representation of the event, but also in private discussions, members of the group argued that, despite the seemingly overall pessimism of the economic crisis, such events indicated

an optimistic present in city life, which associated itself to the past and looked ahead to the future. In bringing together past, present, and future, originally the visual interventions and later their photographic representations in Stuttgart linked three emblematic buildings of the city: The White Tower and the Trigonion Tower –two 15th century segments of the fortification of the city– and the telecommunications Tower, which was built in 1970 in the International Trade Fair in the center of the city.

The second part of the action was a concert by three Greek musicians who initially performed “Greek and Mediterranean sounds with rebetiko and jazz.” For the organizers, this musical performance formed a genre between the “mainstream” and “improvisation,” as the cultural origins of the musicians configured a musicscape that stood liminally between music “familiar” to the masses and “unfamiliar” improvisation. In the second part of the concert, the Greek musicians partnered with two German jazz musicians in a symbolic “music trip” that, for the organizers, crossed boundaries and constructed the performance as a field for “an ... otherwise Greek-German encounter,” in analogy to the “otherwise” of “Thessaloniki Otherwise.”

The third part included presentations about the endeavors of “Thessaloniki Otherwise” and then a discussion with the audience. In the discussion the presenters highlighted several aspects of life in Thessaloniki amidst the economic crisis, drawing attention to the existence of independent, creative city forces that had overcome the disappointment and inertia of the crisis. In that direction too, they pointed out, “Thessaloniki Otherwise” contributes to the development of the city’s potentials, as well as “in giving [the city] back to its citizens,” alluding clearly to the widely spread ideas expressed by Henri Lefebvre (1968) and David Harvey (2008).

In the above discourses, the rhetorics of action and creativity co-articulated with the rhetoric of entrepreneurship –conveyed through the “made in” of the title–embodying the tropicality of its artistic and industrial “exportable products” as an overall allusion to European cosmopolitanism. “Design and graphic arts constitute the best exportable products of Thessaloniki these days. They enjoy international recognition and have repeatedly gained awards,” the web text of the particular event highlighted. Thessaloniki’s city branding, as constituted in its exportable form, composed an imaginary in which the “White Tower,” the “Trigonion Tower,” and the “OTE Tower” characteristic memes of the city, emblematically designated the city’s historic continuity, while their artistic processing, the interventions on them, pictured the conciliation of a local identity of a remote and a near past with the city’s cultural global post-modernity. The graphics and

design “creativity” of city agencies as contemporary art re-processed the past of the city to create a new artistic product that was further-conceptualized by its inclusion in the frame of “Thessaloniki Otherwise”. The music choices of a “world fusion” type were also incorporated in the “creativity” rhetoric, as they conversed with jazz and configured a performative musicscape between the familiar and the innovative. They displayed the aesthetic cosmopolitanism of late modernity, which, according to Regev (2007: 124-125), indicates openness to late modern cultural forms that replaced the quest for essentialist purism. This mixed and hybridized musicscape then becomes itself a signifier of the current cultural uniqueness of Thessaloniki as such, and as a metonymy of Greece.

The broader goals of “Thessaloniki Otherwise,” namely, to promote a city where “individual and collective attitudes and strategies ... defy the crisis”, “do not resign”, “are creative”, “look ahead”, and “attempt to return the city to its citizens and to inspire the citizens for their city” (<http://parallaximag.gr/parallax-view/photoblog/26i-drasi-thessaloniki-meets-stuttgart>), but also the trip itself to Germany, the country considered most responsible for the hardline economic policies imposed on Greece, where strong doubts had been voiced about the quality of contemporary Greek culture, added extra significance to the artistic creations, capitalizing on their locality. The event thus synthesized a locality the reference points of which were at the same time inside and outside the city, surpassing any presumed local/global binarism. It also made apparent the urgency of presenting a cosmopolitan-cum-European both “seeming” and “being.” Also, in general, the mode of action of “Thessaloniki Otherwise” activism had nothing local in its politics (see Gregory, 1998, p. 54). By managing images of Greekness, “Thessaloniki Otherwise” did not aim at the acquisition of contemporary glory, but of equality and coevalness (see Fabian, 1983). Artistic interventions in windows of shops that had shut down due to the economic crisis, targeted the visual stimulation of people’s consciousness, while at the same time indexed people’s non-passivity against the policies of indigence and the consequences of the crisis. There is, therefore, a double signification to be noted here: on the one hand, these spaces, signs of the recent economic misery, were aestheticized as symbols of resistance. On the other hand, the artists/creators, who intervened and constructed the particular aesthetic product, became themselves symbols of economic, aesthetic, cultural, and broader political activity, since their “creativity” contradicted a widespread international media representation of Greece as unworthy of its “Europeanness.” These contemporary urban-cum-na-

tional artistic/cultural forms were thus institutionalized as “legitimate expressions of current ethno-national cultural uniqueness” in a condition of aesthetic cosmopolitanism (Regev, *op.cit.*, p. 124).

The significance of these actions, however, also confronted other dominant symbolic representations of Greekness. The actions of “Thessaloniki meets Stuttgart” and the emergent forms of locality clearly indicated inclusion in Europeanness, as they obviously diverged and differentiated themselves from public representations of Greece that projected ancient Greek antiquity.⁷ The emphasis on local cultural and economic production argued on behalf of a local, but also broader national post-modern collectivity. This differed not only from national-ist representations of antiquity, but also from corruption and clientelism as structural elements of the national collective (see Plantzos, 2012). The highlighted artwork connoted the indisputable inclusion of the city in post-modernity. But even in that case it was still art, as was earlier ancient Greek art and later also the modern Greek literature of the 1930s (see Τζιόβας, 2011), which indexed the value and quality of contemporary Greekness that was not discernible in its everyday enunciations. Thus, this art substituted “antiquity,” the dominant trope of Greek culture, with “creativity,” the new trope of post-modernity.

Following, however, Plantzos (*op.cit.*, p. 230-231), according to whom the production by archaeology of cultural landscapes that were promoted as the eternal contribution of the nation to the global culture and, thus, as its uniqueness, is a re-colonization of the classic cultural heritage, one wonders if the European cosmopolitanism of these cultural events is not also crypto-colonial in essence. Since crypto-colonialism concerns cases that, while never really colonies, seem nonetheless to feel the constant urge to revolt against the political, economic and cultural supremacy of the West (Herzfeld, 2002, p. 900), an issue that emerges concerns whether “Thessaloniki meets Stuttgart” constituted a crypto-colonial identity that was, nonetheless, also designated in juxtaposition to the crypto-colonial formation of classical antiquity. Is it thus crypto-colonial the cosmopolitan identity and collectivity that emerges in the periphery of western post-modernity?

On the other hand, all attempts at interpretation always entail issues of perception and, thus, at potential multiple interpretations. Given the globalized condition within which both the crisis and the “Thessaloniki Otherwise” events existed, what was Germany’s, the target place of the “Thes-

7. On the role antiquity has played in the contemporary Greek imaginary see Herzfeld, 1987; Plantzos, 2012; Χαμηλάκης, 2012.

saloniki meets Stuttgart” action, role to the symbolic significations of the event? To the extent that the chosen place of action was the country considered mostly responsible for the austerity measures and the all the more harder conditions of the crisis in Greece, it is important to co-estimate these factors in the “Thessaloniki Otherwise” representations of Greece internationally and particularly in Germany. As Plantzos remarks, the crisis in which Greece found itself since 2010 was accompanied by criticisms and ridicules by both friends and enemies abroad, “as if the centuries-old tyranny of classical heritage ... finally ended in a cloud of smoke” (Plantzos, *op.cit.*, p. 232). He also remarked that to those criticisms the Greek authorities and the country’s intellectuals retaliated with pompous archaeophile rhetoric, further reminding of the classical past.

What kinds of choices were, thus, those of “Thessaloniki Otherwise” with their emphasis on the creativity of the actions, the graphic arts, the industrial design and the fusion music idioms? Were they aesthetic and ideological reproductions that derived entirely from the “West,” or did the particular performance re-signify – may be even subvert – the characteristics of the “western” idiom? Or did they constitute exemplars of the late transformation of creativity into the neoliberal philosopher’s stone (Wilf, 2014)?

If, however, in Stuttgart “Thessaloniki Otherwise” claimed its equal participation in European post-modernity and the rejection of allochronism, i.e., the denial of its coevalness (Fabian, *op.cit.*), not all event attendants inevitably interpreted the message along these lines. During the events in Stuttgart some Germans, who were not members of the initiative “Good Morning Germany,” expressed views that in the final analysis questioned the equal participation of the artists in the cosmopolitan European post-modernity. Insofar they considered that the particular cultural production was not a totally new aesthetic language, the artists’ cultural particularity and uniqueness was negated. “What they showed were nice, but they were nothing particular, nothing special. These were things that we have somehow seen before. An aesthetic that is known.” Those Germans, friendly to Greeks, employed an aesthetic criterion as their critical argument, an aesthetic of the banal that in this case acted as a metaphor of essence. Thus, while, according to Regev (*op.cit.*, p. 126), on the realm of production in late modernity ethno-national cultural uniqueness is inverted and artists retrieve techniques and expressive patterns both from the “inside” of their own community’s traditions and “outside,” from products and art works that signify otherness, the perception of such products by audiences does not necessarily reflect a similar openness to otherness. Such

perceptions seemed more to attribute to the event organized by “Thessaloniki Otherwise” characteristics of Povinelli’s “quasi-events.” These are events marked by sheer potentiality and becoming, material and immaterial at the same time, continuously in a tension between “being nothing” and “being something.” Quasi-events also oscillate between recognition and rejection, death and full-fledged life. Such quasi-events never quite achieve the force to act in this world; to make a definitive event occur (2011bin Rethmann, *op.cit.*, pp. 235).

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

Along the above line of analysis, the normal and routine “banal aesthetic cosmopolitanism” that “Thessaloniki Otherwise” portrayed, whereby ethno-national cultural uniqueness was performed by art forms created by contemporary technologies of expression and stylistic elements that drew on exterior and indigenous sources (Regev, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-125), was not just a manifestation of globalization, i.e. the (re-)construction of locality in response to and under the influence of globalization (Robertson 1995 in Regev, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-125). The undertaking by “Thessaloniki Otherwise” of actions that displayed the “creative” achievements of the city and metonymically of the country was an “otherwise” that countered the Orientalizing and colonizing attitude of the German government and German mass media. As Kyriakopoulos (2011) noted, the Greek public internalized the offensive attack against Greece, accepting both the insult as well as the imperative to “exorcize the shame,” preserving the Greek hegemony and pride. “Thessaloniki meets Stuttgart” was a representational agency that in the context of the crisis was a crisis of representation as well (Papailias, 2011). It “responded” to foreign media representations, articulating an “otherwise” local cosmopolitan discourse about Thessaloniki and Greece to outsiders. Thus, the question whether the “creativity” of the events was an emancipation from “Western,” German contempt, or another hegemonic reproduction, could well be an analytically false question at this point, as it basically takes a moral-political position. Although the actions of “Thessaloniki Otherwise” differ from what Papanikolaou (2011) described as “poetics of disturbed archival logics” or the “disturbed archive,” “a trend characterized by its effort to critique, undermine and performatively disturb the very logics through which the story of Greece – the narrative of its national, political, sociocultural cohesion in synchrony and diachrony – has until now been told,” they do share some aspects of such poetics.

This analysis has also set further considerations on theoretical issues about the ways authority operates: Where does this social kind of urban activism stand between the obedient subjects that the various authority forms attempt to create on the one hand and the forms of resistance that emerge on the other (Αθανασίου, 2012, p. 89)? Could analyses based on the binarism of resistance/consent, be over-simplistic? Such analysis relies on terms such as resistance, acceptance, consent, subversion, etc. and claims that, beyond their analytic dimension, they are also evaluative terms with a moralizing content. On the other hand, beyond our concerns over the political and theoretical positionality of our methodological and analytic tools, our personal analyses, as well as the abundance of works on the crisis society –an eminently anthropological project– are compelling expressions of the need to search for general and personal responses about what it is that we are experiencing right now and what will come. In this quest not for a comprehensive, but a specific and partial answer to this case study, this paper argues that there is no way of knowing other than acting. As Rethmann (op.cit., pp. 236-237) argued, the provocation of becoming occurs in its capacity to pose a political project that it does not stipulate, and to open up a speculative horizon that it cannot fix in advance. This commitment of becoming, then, to futurity, fullness, and excess, both contests the existing terms of a given situation –the crisis in this case– and struggles to build something new. Seen in this light, the event “Thessaloniki meets Stuttgart” organized by “Thessaloniki Otherwise” fits Rethmann’s description as both a deconstructive and reconstructive political project of becoming. It was one that deployed simultaneously negation and affirmation, while at the same time it was critical and utopian, generated estrangement from the present, and was set to provoke a different future both in and out of the crisis.

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