

Geopolitics vs. Citizenship: An Eco-Project's Perception of Crisis

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[Beyond considerations of sovereign debt, many people in Greece experience a state of crisis as the 21st century entails socio-political, economic and environmental challenges of regional, national and global significance. My research focuses on an eco-project in North Evia in order to ethnographically tease out notions of personhood and concepts of life time. I here analyse the group's perception of and positionality vis-à-vis the term 'crisis', focussing on one aspect of what they perceive to be a complex of intersecting issues. Informed by conspiracy theories and international civil society movements, they perceive a 'humanitarian' aspect of crisis to revolve around governmentality and hierarchical orchestration of geopolitics. They therefore critically re-assess the effectivity of traditional aspects of citizenship and turn to voluntarism and ecological humanitarianism to conceptualize and enact responses to this perceived crisis.]

“The so-called crisis is nothing, it’s a sub-division of a sub-division of the problem. It’s really a humanitarian crisis, and an environmental crisis, but we talk about [money] and make it sound important. Greece, basically, is a test-run by the IMF and these forces to see whether what they have been doing in Africa, Latin America and Asia can be implemented in Europe, too. They’re checking how much Europeans will take, so they’re running tests in Greece, Portugal, Ireland, and Spain.”

These are the words of Apostolos, the project leader of an eco-project in Evia, Greece’s second biggest island. On the foothills of Mount Telaithrion, a fluctuating group of people are building up a learning centre of self-sufficiency and sustainability under the name ‘Free&Real’. The members’ voluntary work is based on a strong ideology of crisis and alternative. They are convinced that mainstream society’s consumption choices, work-leisure patterns, health narratives and political affiliations are guided by information flows that attempt to streamline populations into docility. Twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork revealed an array of ways in which this group attempted to counter such orchestration via ways of being, relating and imagining which they perceived as free from domination and real in terms of emotional commitment. However, the paper at hand is concerned with their perception of what they call a ‘humanitarian crisis’: Orchestrated geopolitics and a powerless citizenry.

Orchestrated Geopolitics

Free&Real emerged from a series of meetings organised by early followers of the *Zeitgeist Movement* in 2008. Grounded in the understanding that geopolitics are governed by a small number of profit and power oriented people, the *Zeitgeist Movement* is a US-based NGO which advocates a transformation of society via its economic system. Growing out of a documentary trilogy (*Zeitgeist* 2007, 2008, 2011), members of the *Movement* insist that Judaeo-Christian religious institutions, governments and finance corporations have for centuries executed structural violence over populations by strategically continuing poverty, deception and inequality through a scarcity-based economic system. This system is to be replaced by Jacque Fresco’s¹ definition of a ‘resource-based’ economy, wherein techno-scientific solutions guarantee an abundance of resources for ‘all Earth’s inhabitants’, without the need for means of exchange (*The Venus Project* n.d.). Out of the Greek subdivision of the *Zeitgeist Movement* Free&Real emerged and, after achieving NGO status, the members decided to leave Athens and start a project in North Evia.

As we were sitting around the dinner table one evening in September 2015, a Spanish visitor in his early twenties somewhat naïvely suggested that “Things are improving all the time. No-one expected the Arab spring, and it happened: So things can change”. Apostolos retorted critically: “So there is no plan, when you look around you? The one percent? From the nineteen

¹ Jacque Fresco is the founder of *The Venus Project*, a futuristic design project for sustainable city planning based on cybernetics, technocratic governmentality and automation. In 2016, Fresco was awarded with the NOVUS Summit award for City Design / Community, a summit supported by United Nation’s Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

hundreds, they have thousands of contingency plans. They do have a plan, it's very clear, and it's happening. If you see the financial system or the idea to have microchips in everyone..." Apostolos referred directly to topics discussed in the *Zeitgeist* trilogy, where an elitist group of bankers and their offspring are described to have been influencing geopolitical events that will eventually lead to a 'new world order' where individual life will be based and dependent on implanted microchips. Having long been pejoratively called 'conspiracy theories', such explanations of geopolitical events attempt to make sense of the world in the midst of complex and uneven processes of modernization, calling attention to contradictions and proposing alternative understandings to those asserted by hegemonic discourses (West & Sanders 2003). Part of their appeal arises from the fact that they make public and personal life seem less subject to random forces, as they constitute "an attempt to explain – and through explaining decode and make less threatening – [what] is beyond one's control" (Theodossopoulos 2013). The anthropology of Greece is aware of such kinds of local sense-making strategies. "[T]aking seriously the discourses that speak from the margins of power" (Sutton 2003:192) anthropologists link conspiracy theories to Greece's historical and contemporary lack of geopolitical influence². Kirtsoglou & Theodossopoulos (2010b: 84-5), for instance, analyse how mistrust of those who are seen as agents of global power is expressed via conspiracy theories that critique the fragmented and contradictory processes of modernization. Based upon a consciousness and imagination well aware of global connections, their informants perceive power as "the ability to fashion a cosmology according to one's own interests and then hegemonically extend it to the rest of the world as the indisputable, politically correct stance" (2010b:96). Apostolos' remark about elitist contingency plans is informed by such a critical worldview, as it implicitly denounces elitist planning to lead to mass control.

Before joining the *Zeitgeist Movement* and co-creating Free&Real, Apostolos grappled with the negative outlook such sense-making provided. "I was very upset and freaked out. That's why I did so many drugs: To get to terms with reality", he told me once. "So, was it kind of a life ring for you to found Free&Real?" I asked. "Yes. Becoming an environmental activist stopped me from destroying myself. It was like a revelation: You can create, instead of destroy." Countering the emotionally heavy outlook of global governmentality with activism enabled Apostolos to escape self-destructive mechanisms. He was not the only one: Another member reported that "when you see the fuckedupness of the world, it drives you crazy. The banks, the corporations, the governments... and you understand you have to do something, but what can you do? Where do you start? This is why I came here, because there are people who try to do something about it". For the members of Free&Real, the global scheming of banks, corporations and governments constituted the basis of crisis. Their eco-project provided a means to respond to this crisis in constructive, non-harmful ways. But as they grappled with this 'humanitarian' crisis, their sense of citizenship shifted.

² Sutton (2003:196) mentions the role of England, France and Russia in influencing the early shape of the Greek state; Kirtsoglou & Theodossopoulos (2010a:117) include US support for the Greek political right against the Communists in the 1950s' civil war, as well as America's (perceived) reluctance to prevent the Turkish annexation of Cyprus in 1974. Herzfeld (2002) categorises Greece as a 'crypto-colony', never formally colonised yet made to succumb to economic and political decisions of the USA. More recent examples may be found in Greece's role during the European sovereign debt crisis (for discussion see Anton 2011).

Citizenship Regained?

Against the backdrop of geopolitical orchestration, national politics held little hope for my informants. Initially celebrated as a ‘true leftist’ alternative, Syriza, the party in government since 2015, soon earned substantial critique for its failure to radically reassess austerity measures with its international creditors. Following a referendum against further structural adjustments³ and a party secession, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras was re-elected in September 2015. One Free&Real member commented: “When Tsipras got re-elected, I realized that it was the last time I voted – because it doesn’t matter. They give you two choices, maybe three, and then they do whatever the fuck they want anyway. By voting for them you just say ‘yes, you can do your shit’, and I don’t buy into this.” Frustrated with the arbitrariness of political decisions, this member decided to turn her back on party politics. This stepping down from the fundamental democratic right to vote evokes considerations of citizenship. Traditionally tied to state membership and categorised as a cluster of civil, social and political rights (Marshall 1964), obligations (Englund 2006), and identity (Shore 2004), citizenship is conditioned by socio-political systems (Mitchell 2004; Ong 2006) and inspires the formulation, implementation and contestation of citizenship agendas which prescribe norms, values and behaviour (de Koning *et al.* 2015). Based on the understanding of citizenship’s complex nature to both order, control and normalise while, at the same time tolerating uncertainty, disagreement and difference, anthropologists describe citizenship to “defin[e] the limits of state power and where a ‘civil society’ or the private sphere of free individuals begin” (Werbner 1998:4). It thereby becomes a space for contestation and negotiation of what it means to be part of a society. My informants’ discontent with state politics led them to contest state power by repudiating electoral rights and obligations.

Indeed, it was common sense at Free&Real that the Western political system was redundant. A firm belief that democracy was unjust as a majority rule would always oppress minorities led Free&Real members to abandon any hope in political parties and affiliations. As their state followed the dictate of international money lenders rather than the will of its own citizens, my informants decided to focus their citizenship on responding to the crisis. ‘Freedom of Resources for Everyone Everywhere and Respect, Equality, Awareness and Learning’, Free&Real’s acronymic goals, aim to counter the hegemony of a scarcity-based economic system and the predominance of its hierarchical discourses. This is why Free&Real continue to dedicate themselves to building up a learning centre of self-sufficiency and sustainability: By enabling themselves and others to become more self-sufficient, they hope to demagnify the impacts of a scarcity-based economic system; and doing so in ecologically sustainable ways they propose alternatives to this system’s destruction and depletion. Anthropologists have explored how the realms of voluntary labour are based on *ethical citizenship* that creates material and relational value by activating moral and affective rather than social and political ties (Muehlebach 2012). Rivalling *social citizenship* that nurtured the rise of welfare states as it proclaimed the state’s obligations to its citizens and society’s liability to individuals, *ethical citizenship* depoliticizes with its appeals to individual humanitarian actions. It thereby creates neoliberal subjects who integrate seamlessly into the politico-economic downsizing of the state.

³ The Greek Bailout Referendum took place on 5 July 2015 and was to decide whether Greece would accept the bailout conditions proposed by the IMF, the ECB and the EU. As a majority of 61% of the population voted ‘no’, the following week the Greek government accepted a bailout package that contained even larger pension cuts and tax increases than the one rejected by the referendum.

So, what did Apostolos mean by a ‘humanitarian crisis’? A global governmentality that orchestrates geopolitical decisions and events to suit the implementation of a scarcity-based economic system lies at its root. And International money lenders who overrule citizen’s decisions and destabilize traditional concepts of citizenry are one of its expressions. In response to this situation, my informants chose voluntary engagement based on ethical considerations over traditional expressions of citizenship, as the latter seemed ineffective in face of international geopolitics. Aiming to counter the crisis they perceived, they also unknowingly fed into it, as they aligned with its depoliticizing effects. Generating new and distinct modes of participation, their *ethical citizenship* hardly challenged orchestrated geopolitics. However, it provided a constructive, non-harmful alternative to crisis for its members.

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Diagnosis and study of disparities in IT-driven changes across multiple levels in the Greek public healthcare sector

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Abstract:

Health Information Systems (HIS) have been recognised in the literature as a challenging domain of IS implementation. In Greece, a late-development country suffering from a persistent financial crisis, the context of HIS implementation becomes even more complex. Despite a greatly fragmented and disorganised setting (characterised by lack of funding, inconsistent strategies, techno-phobic culture etc.), multiple instances of good practice can be detected at local level. This paper studies this context to progressively explore how IT-driven changes emerge, unfold and get “translated” across the macro- (policy at national level), the meso- (guidelines and actions at regional and hospital administration levels), and the micro- (operational use) levels. The preliminary findings suggest an acute lack of alignment among these levels, enhanced by a limited perception of any strategic plan defined and followed at macro level, and emphasise the significant role of particular change agents to enable positive IT-driven change at local level.

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Introduction - context

Healthcare is a highly institutionalised and complex sector (Scott *et al.* 2000) and therefore a challenging domain of Information Systems (IS) implementation. Health IS (HIS) constitute a socio-technical network (Peltu *et al.* 2008; Greenhalgh *et al.* 2010), which operates both as a material-resource setting and a set of beliefs, rules and ideas (Constantinides and Barrett 2006). They are also regarded as a necessary but insufficient ingredient of change implementation in healthcare (Sidorov 2006). In this setting, policy (e.g. health reform and priorities), organisations and human agents (e.g. hospitals, health professionals and consultants, politicians, relevant trade unions, etc.) and technology (e.g. EHR, BI) –acting both as a cause and as an agent of change– need to get aligned.

In Greece, the context of HIS implementation becomes even more complex. While the country is regarded as a developed economy in GDP terms and has been an EU member for 36 years, its public healthcare system faces some cultural problems, ineffective administration and processes (Davaki and Mossialos 2005; Mossialos *et al.* 2005), and a high fragmentation in the implemented HIS. There are only a few initiatives at the national level and some IT projects have been developed at a minor scale at either local or regional level (e.g. Angelidis *et al.* 2010; Bogdanos *et al.* 2008; Fragidis and Chatzoglou 2011; Greek Observatory on Information Society 2007). Most initiatives appear to emerge following a bottom-up approach. Nevertheless, there is a clear lack of continuity as most of them are isolated from government policy, and they usually remain at a pilot phase (Bamidis *et al.* 2006). Besides, such a discontinuity occurs at central level in all aspects of the healthcare delivery both in the long run as even within a single administration (Economou 2010). The situation in healthcare is in line with the broader context of the Greek state's progress with modernisation. In fact, Greece could be considered a late-development country as the socio-political transformations, which Western Europe experienced leading to the development of industrial capitalism and its consequent political and cultural institutions, were rather an imported phenomenon triggering lots of clashes (Mouzelis 1978). At the same time, the persistent financial crisis, accompanied by the followed joint program (Memorandum of Understanding) agreed by the EU, IMF and Greece, adds more difficulties and complexity to the situation by affecting all the (both tangible and dematerialised) aspects of the healthcare system. It also puts further pressure to employ IS in a consistent and integrated manner to facilitate better organisation, quality of care and cost control.

The adoption and implementation of HIS, however, is strongly dependent on the specific context (cf. Avgerou 2001). Both exogenous and endogenous influences are equally important with regards to the way in which institutional environments are sustained and change over time (Zucker 1983). A thorough and analytical approach is required incorporating the different views and inter-dynamics across the healthcare system.

This PhD study focuses on the public hospital setting, and addresses the following research question: How do IT-driven changes emerge, unfold and get “translated” across the macro- (policy at national level), the meso- (guidelines and actions at regional and hospital administration levels), and the micro- (operational use) levels? To address this question, the study also pays particular attention to the specific role of (official or unofficial) change agents in the implementation and use of HIS, on whether and how the financial crisis affects all the aforementioned aspects, as well as on the relevant implications.

Relevant theoretical lenses

In order to approach this context, examine how the healthcare system as a network is formed and works in practice, and achieve a comprehensive and holistic view, a synthesis of relevant theoretical lenses is used to guide the research and help analyse the findings.

Stakeholder theory stands both as a starting point to identify various stakeholder groups in the healthcare system across and outside the aforementioned levels, and as an overall methodology that reinforces the understanding and analysis of the varied roles and perceptions (Pouloudi *et al.* 2016), either at a given time or throughout the evolvement of an IS project. Nevertheless, stakeholder analysis cannot provide adequate information and insights, on its own, on the complexity of the interplay and the interrelations taking place in the healthcare environment. Institutional, sociological and IS implementation theories are introduced for this reason.

In particular, institutional theory is used to provide a richer understanding of the context, corresponding mainly to the macro-level, but also reaching down to the meso- and even the micro-level by considering the institutional forces within and across these levels. As Currie and Guah (2007) analyse, the various stakeholders of HIS, such as EHR systems, represent four different institutional worlds (political, clinical, technical, and commercial) and thus a similar approach seems useful. In parallel, sociological theory is used to facilitate an empirical investigation at multiple levels and bridge micro-actions with macro phenomena (Mouzelis 2008; Prasopoulou 2009), as institutional theory has not been used as the main coherent theoretical framework (Currie 2009) despite some efforts to correlate actions at one level to another (e.g. Madon *et al.* 2007; Noir and Walsham 2007).

Strong emphasis is given to the extensive work done by Mouzelis on sociological theory and social theorizing (1995, 2008) and primarily on the description and analysis of the Greek context (1978), which sheds light on some emerging issues such as the vagueness of roles and processes that was described earlier. At the micro-level, IS adoption and implementation approaches, such as workarounds (e.g. Azad and King 2012) and resistance to change (e.g. Markus 1983), are used to describe the specific goals and day-to-day use of IS, as well as any dynamics and/ or controversies that may be observed.

Research approach and preliminary findings

The study follows a qualitative approach and includes an analysis of documents on public policy and processes, and a series of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders across the three levels and external health and IT professionals.

As expected, the preliminary findings suggest an intense fragmentation in IS implementation and technology use in the Greek healthcare system, ranging from sparse, isolated or immature systems with extremely limited use to complete, fully operational ones. Interestingly, no clear patterns can be detected that justify this fragmentation, giving a sense of randomness.

A possible explanation refers to the lack of structure and the vague rules and roles that prevail in the healthcare system. Against this disorganised context, multiple instances of good practice were also detected at local level, mainly due to some particular “heroic individuals” that enable positive IT-driven change against the odds (lack of funding, inconsistent strategies, techno-phobic culture etc.). These individuals, be they IT professionals, doctors or hospital managers, are perceived (by other stakeholders within or outside their organisation or unit) to

have a high sense of responsibility and/ or an increased genuine interest in IS and go beyond what is required from them in terms of strict work commitments. In fact, they act as change agents or even emerging boundary spanners (Levina and Vaast 2005; Tushman 1977). The setting and extent of their actions depend on the sphere of their influence. They do not necessarily hold an official authority or power to manage a team or unit of practice; in other words, they are not easy to identify as change agents a priori.

The critical role of such individuals in moving a project forward and shaping change in their local context, particularly in adverse contextual situations as in the case of Greece, gets greater importance because of the found acute lack of alignment among the various levels. The latter is strongly enhanced by a limited perception of any strategic plan defined and followed at macro level. Thus, there is an open challenge for managers and policy makers to identify and empower “heroic individuals”. This direction is also in line with Wiedner *et al.* (2016), who argue that the most substantial changes unfold in practices that are not treated as priority and attract interest from few individuals, as opposed to high-profile practices that gain lots of resources and control. As such, in Vasilakis and Pouloudi (2017), we provide a framework to support the identification, categorisation and empowerment of change agents by central administration so that positive change can become sustainable. In particular, we demonstrate that there is no single profile for efficient change agents in practice. Not all change agents behave following the same pattern, nor do they share the same interpretations and self-perception. There may be differences in their perceptions of their own role, their vision of the intended change, or the tactics they follow. We suggest therefore a four-type classification, adapting Bell and Wood-Harper (1998)’s metaphors of analyst in IS development, which in turn follow Burrell and Morgan (1979)’s paradigms for the analysis of social theory.

Regardless of their classification, “heroic individuals” apply leadership skills and tactics so as to overcome their limited resources and power. For instance, individuals can create alliances and mobilise other stakeholders or groups by promoting a consistent and relevant viewpoint that triggers their interest (Pouloudi *et al.* 2016; van Laere and Aggestam 2016), or utilize their network of relations to coordinate with other heroic individuals so as to establish a collective championing (van Laere and Aggestam 2016). The significance of gaining support from top levels of hierarchy (Dong *et al.* 2009) is also backed up by the preliminary findings, but a more active involvement of top management is not always necessary. Such a support can “open doors” to the heroic individuals at first and let them then promote the use of HIS on their own, consistently with Ngwenyama and Nørbjerg (2010) who argue that a weak top management support does not necessarily rule out the success of an IS and the involved parties can gain influence through alliances. Towards setting the foundation of such alliances, and generally as a way to gain support from potential users and stakeholders, the importance of small wins (Kotter 1995; Reay *et al.* 2006; Scott and Vessey 2002) and incremental expansion is highlighted.

Beyond the subject of “heroic individuals” that was mainly analysed in this section, there are contradicting views among the interviewees participating in the study on the best way to promote an IT-related change. Enforcement, though, seems to be the most proper and effective way, according to the majority of them, in conjunction with the preliminary analysis of the successful cases under study. This approach becomes more dominant in the context of the crisis, which makes both the interactions and the contradictions among the three levels even more intense. Nevertheless, most interviewees, supplemented by data on IS initiatives, acknowledge the positive impact of the crisis regarding the adoption, implementation and actual use of IS at a national level. This occurs where the crisis and the Memorandum of Understanding enforce and

legitimise change efforts. These initiatives, however, mainly focus on the financial administration and not the clinical use, while the analysis and exploitation of the available data still remain limited.

Next steps

The preliminary findings that were presented in this paper are going to be supplemented with additional material (e.g. interviews) across the healthcare network in Greece, as well as with more specialised analysis tailored to each level. For example, the preliminary analysis of the “heroic individuals” could be benefited by the study of similar approaches in the leadership literature. Similarly for some possible insights from the policy literature, to such an extent that the designed study goals and field do not get broadened further and remain focused. Accordingly, given the limited policy drafts and strategic planning at a national level, the macro-level could also include the strategic targets and documents provided by the European Commission. This could enhance the understanding and comprehensiveness of the context and the study could then focus on the micro-level so as to narrow down the intended analysis and scope.

As specified in the methodology section, further emphasis is needed on the institutional forces and logics and sociological interpretations, while different narratives on what seems to work in practice in the disorganised public healthcare sector should be explored. Next steps need to get thoroughly investigated and specifically defined, building on the work done on the role of “heroic individuals” at local level in a way to approach the overall (constantly adapted and more focused) research question.

Given the complexity of the research context, there are some open issues about the most appropriate approach, or the theoretical lenses that best enable its study.

In more detail, alternative conceptions of the macro-, meso- and micro-levels are under consideration. In particular, instead of focusing on “what” happens at each level, the levels of the network could be studied through the actors involved (“who”) and/ or the way the actors fulfill their role (“how”) in the context being analysed. By combining the various perspectives, additional insights could emerge, resulting in a more analytical and comprehensive depiction of the context, the interplay and dynamics within it, and the unfolding of IT-driven changes (as a way of fulfilling a policy/ goal or not).

Regarding the theoretical lenses, a different approach refers to the study of theorisation of change with the support of actor network theory (ANT) and institutionalisation as translation. In particular, the theorisation can be distinguished into the specification of a failing in the field (that is, an opportunity for a change in the current study), and the justification of a possible solution (Greenwood et al. 2002). The former is related to the policy level and/ or health reform and can be analysed using an actor-network approach. The latter, instead, refers to different translations of meanings attached to HIS, so the institutionalisation as translation is adopted for the study of diverse HIS uses within the studied settings. In addition, the ANT highlights and provides some useful implications for the network development of various actors. These actors are interrelated and are continuously interacting, while they have their own interests and roles. Materials such as HIS may have a considerable influence in the network, and thus they are also considered actors. The institutional theory and particularly its translation metaphor (Zilber 2006) can complement ANT by emphasising the institutional logics in this network (i.e. the

institutional field of healthcare) and pay particular attention to the understanding of the dynamics of the symbolic within institutional processes. Practices and structures are getting institutionalised, and along with the meanings attached to them are then transformed as they spread throughout the network of healthcare. As a consequence, various meanings emerge over time and at different levels. Several actors, for instance, reflect and reshape a series of meanings about HIS and healthcare values. Such meanings may change following a transition from the NHS to healthcare providers or even over time at the same level.

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Complications and Contradictions – volunteering in Athens

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Abstract

This paper outlines an ethnographic portrait of the work of a solidarity group in Athens. It attempts to explore some of the difficulties and contradictions of the solidarity movement and the moral labour in which volunteers engage.

Introduction

In a drama unfolding over nearly a decade, the Greek debt crisis shows no signs of abating. Repeated meetings, negotiations, elections, referendums and agreements occupy the headlines until these tensions fade only to flare up again months or years later. But what is the reality beyond these headlines, what of the small, everyday dramas equally part of this story? These were the questions I posed to myself two years ago, as an anthropologist viewing events from afar prior to my fieldwork in Athens. At the time, some early studies of the emerging solidarity movement were being published, and with only one full monograph (Knight 2015) to date, more ethnography was needed. Furthermore, as it emerged more than five years ago, what is the reality of the solidarity movement after so much time has passed? Is it possible to approach ‘the crisis’ more critically, to look beyond the immediate reforms of austerity to see how these policies are reshaping life in Greece indirectly, as they engender new organisational forms which try to resist them? Attempting to shed light on these questions, I will sketch a brief ethnographic portrait of the ‘Δίκτυο Αλληλεγγύης Βύρωνα – Byronas Solidarity Network’, based on a year and half of fieldwork conducted there, working as a volunteer.

The Δίκτυο

The δίκτυο was formed in August 2012 by a group of volunteers in response to a perceived need in the community following the onset of the Greek debt crisis. Literally meaning net or network, it is, indeed, part of larger network of other δίκτυα common not only in Athens but across Greece, as well as a broader solidarity movement encompassing a variety of informal and formal groups. The δίκτυο exclusively helps those residing within the municipality of Byronas, principally in the form of food provisions but also by providing clothes and, more rarely, other household items. The food is collected by volunteers outside supermarkets, bought with funds they have raised or received from other solidarity groups and donors. Byronas itself is a suburb in central-east Athens with a population of some 60,000 people. Originally settled by refugees in the Asia Minor crisis it has since transformed into a solidly upper-working class/lower-middle class neighbourhood that resembles many of the other

central suburbs in Athens, but still maintaining a strong sense of character and collective identity according to its residents.

Located in the basement of a residential apartment building not far from Pangrati, the space was leased to the volunteers for free by the owner. The δίκτυο is open weekdays in the morning and the morning only. On a typical day as I arrive, a few older gentlemen are settled on the steps of a neighbouring building, chatting amongst themselves. As I pass they greet me, ‘Καλημέρα – Good morning!’. ‘Καλημέρα’, I reply, stepping down the white marble steps to enter the δίκτυο. Going inside, I greet the other volunteers: ‘Καλημέρα’. They call back with replies of ‘Καλώς τον – Welcome’, ‘Για σου, τι κάνεις – Hi, how are you?’, ‘Καλημέρα’. These greetings are important and will punctuate the day as people are coming and going. Officially, the δίκτυο opens at ten and before this time the volunteers are waiting, gossiping and smoking. They chat about personal matters, make jokes and exchange stories, an inherited Anatolian carpet that will not fit anywhere, but also important happenings in the δίκτυο: things did not go well the day before – it was ‘χάος – chaos’ and the issue needs to be raised at the weekly general meeting. They talk of how much money was raised at the last bazaar or how the bi-weekly collection of food at the local supermarkets went. In this way, through gossip and chit-chat, key information is circulated among the members. Although in a basement, the δίκτυο is fronted by large glass windows and doors so it is always bright inside and some of the walls are painted cheerfully in orange. Looking outside, more people are gathering and they too appear to be gossiping but we cannot hear what they say.

Some time before ten, one of the volunteers will arrive in a car, with the boot and back seat filled with sacks of thick brown paper filled with bread. It is the unsold bread from yesterday collected from bakeries in the neighbourhood. A movement in the people above indicates the car has arrived as some of them rush to help bring the sacks down into the δίκτυο - whether to be helpful or because they hope to take some bread before ten, it is not clear. A couple of the volunteers inside are helping them and there is some scuffling as they lay down the sacks, ‘όχι εκεί, εδώ – not there, here’ someone shouts. By now there is small crowd outside, and they fill the steps leading down to the δίκτυο. One of the volunteers arriving who will work ‘in the back’ preparing food parcels, struggles to push past them. Someone asks, ‘Θα ανοίγουμε την πόρτα; – shall we open the door?’, but another person replies, ‘όχι, όλοι θα μπουν, πρέπει να μαθούν – no, they will all come in, they have to learn’.

Another volunteer and I begin putting the bread on a table, she behind taking the bread from the sacks and me in front trying to sort it broadly into kinds. At ten, a third volunteer opens the door and admits around five or six people at a time, until the crowd has diminished. In each wave, the people come quickly and stand all me around so that I must decide whom to give bread to first. My fellow volunteers tell me to give them one or two loaves depending on how much bread we have. This is the challenge - the amount of bread changes, nor do we know how many people will come or when. Not all the people are happy, ‘είμαστε πέντε άτομα – we are five people’, one of them tells me when I try to give two loaves. Another, ‘είστε κλειστοί αύριο, τι θα κάνουμε – you are closed tomorrow, what will we do?’. ‘Δεν έχει ψωμί – there isn’t (a lot of) bread’, my partner tells them. ‘Έχει ψωμί – there is bread’, they say, and I try to explain that other people will come later in the day and we must try to save

bread all of them. Some accept it, others go away angry. Some even try to take the bread themselves and my partner says to them loudly, ‘μην το πιάνετε εσείς – don’t touch it yourself!’. But if they ask enough, we will often give them more – it is hard to say no. Joking about it with the other volunteers, I tell them it is hard for me to be strict and they tell me that I must be.

On another set of tables, piles of clothes are laid out. Some of the people who took bread wander over and start to look through them. This provokes cries from some of the volunteers, ‘παιδιά, μετά της ένδεκα θα ανοίγουμε τα ρούχα’ – guys, after eleven we will open the clothes’ but the people ignore these remarks. One of the volunteers gets up to shoo them away, asking them, ‘ξέρετε ελληνικά; – do you know Greek?’ - a reprimand that aligns civility with a particular kind of Greekness. As many of them are, in fact, not Greek there is some tension in this statement. The volunteers continue to insist everybody wait until eleven to take clothes and some of the them sit on a couch while others stand and chat. As the time draws close, although it is not eleven yet, the tide turns and the people start looking through the clothes in a flurry of activity. In a little while, the volunteers are commenting on what a mess the clothes are now in, strewn all over the place, it was ‘χαμός – a frenzy’ someone mutters. In response, a few people begin folding them until everything is back in order. As they leave, they call back that they have tidied the clothes and the volunteers thank them enthusiastically.

While people are taking bread and clothes, other people come intermittently to another set of tables piled with large folders labelled alphabetically. They contain the names and records of those in the neighbourhood ‘signed-up’ to the δίκτυο. On a large poster behind the desk it states in bold letters that the δίκτυο helps around 600 families in Byronas. Unlike the bread and clothes which anyone is free to take, in order to sign-up people must first bring tax statements and unemployment cards issued by the Greek state. Then every few weeks, depending on the size of the household, they can come to collect a shopping bag filled with pasta, rice, flour, canned milk, conserved tomatoes, sometimes also lentils or a bag of sugar, and occasionally accompanied by a bottle of oil or other foods like chicken or fruits, when the δίκτυο can acquire them. Mostly this is a smooth process but sometimes there are problems. One person has an out-of-date statement. Another has forgotten the card which helps the volunteers keep track of his collections. One volunteer berates him, it’s the second time in a row, another jokes that he is ‘άτακτος – mischievous’. He apologizes, laughing and smiling and tells them people won’t forget the good they do here but the volunteer who chastised him looks sceptical.

Other people come to sign-up but if they are not from the neighbourhood they are directed to other δούκια, otherwise they are asked to return to go through the sign-up process on a Wednesday evening. A volunteer is explaining this process and is quick to correct an implication about the δίκτυο: ‘δεν δοθλεύουμε εδώ, είμαστε εθελοντές – we don’t work here, we are volunteers’. It echoes things that have been said before, ‘είμαστε εθελοντές, όχι διμόσοι υπάλληλοι – we’re volunteers, not public employees’. Inevitably disputes arise, a man is shouting and banging his hand on the table, ‘δεν είσαστε αλληλέγγυοι – you are not in solidarity’. He is Greek, he says, how can they refuse to help him but can still help

foreigners? The volunteer dealing with him tries to keep her patience but it is difficult. However, this is the exception, most of the people coming to collect their food parcels come and go saying little other than casual greetings. One man wants to exchange the flour in his bag for lentils. He is told no, there are rules but in the end still give him the lentils regardless. Sometimes they are interrupted by people from the neighbourhood who have come to leave donations of clothes. A volunteer springs up to take their bags and put them in the back, ‘ευχαριστούμε πάρα πολύ – we thank you very much!’ he says. A woman who was looking through the clothes on the table follows him to the door leading into the back. Starting to peer in, she is promptly stopped by the returning volunteer – she is only allowed to take clothes from the tables. Afterwards the door is kept closed but later when a mother comes looking for shoes for her child someone goes into the back trying to find some. Meanwhile, one of the volunteer might stop by to collect a food-parcel because some are also signed-up to the δίκτυο, just as they also sometimes take bread and clothes.

As time draws closer to closing there is little to left to do. A volunteer who has come to clean the δίκτυο is usually mopping the floor. Others who were preparing food parcels and sorting clothes in the back have already left and most of the bread is gone. The volunteers sit and chat and, from time to time, someone who is not on their shift might stop by. Sometimes they share a warmed savoury pastry with a few shots of tsipouro, especially if a former volunteer has come or there is a reason to celebrate. Just after one ‘ο’ clock a person comes in to take their food parcel. The volunteers remind her that the δίκτυο closes at one but still serve her anyway.

Reflections

In this ethnographic portrait, I have tried to give a sense of the daily rhythm of work at the δίκτυο. But what kind of work is it if volunteers themselves dispute this term? On their website they describe themselves as finding solutions, ‘εκεί όπου αδυνατεί το κράτος – where the state is unable’. Yet it is a paradox that a left-wing government, which grew in tandem with grassroots movements like the δίκτυο, is implementing austerity policy to actively reduce state welfare. In this context, the volunteers struggle to support the community around them through their considerable offering of time and effort. However, simultaneously, one might say that they also seek to impose discipline as they order the social space around them. While state welfare, development and charitable work¹ have all been critiqued in the anthropological literature, the contradictions of the solidarity movement in Greece are only just being explored². But in truth, power collects in all organisational forms – advantaging some and disadvantaging others. To pose a question, could it be the case that solidarity is, in part, an expression of governmentality, in that austerity policy has provoked an independent, self-organising citizen ready to substitute for state welfare?

¹ For examples see: Bornstein (2012), Dubois (2014), Feguson (1990) and Han (2012).

² See: Cabot (2016), Douzina-Bakalaki (2017), Papataxiarchis (2016), Rozakou (2016) and Theodossopoulos (2016).

Certainly, volunteers must not only order the people and space around them but also learn to reorder themselves. Building character, resistance and firmness, ‘να μιλήσω όμορφα – to speak properly’, are essential elements of good volunteering at the δίκτυο. Concurrently, the kind of power accruing there is rooted in ethical acts, in the kind of moral labour volunteers pursue, as they might say, with their ‘hearts’ or ‘spirits’. I would argue that at this intersection between austerity policy and volunteering, new expressions of authority are emerging founded in the moral ownership of welfare. But I have also tried to show how these ethical acts are mired in, and derive from, morally ambiguous situations – just as Andrea Muehlebach (2007) has suggested that although the ethical may widely be perceived as a counterpoint to neoliberal attitudes, it never entirely escapes them. In sum, the members of the δίκτυο have become custodians for the welfare of others and in this responsibility they actively struggle with the systems of patronage and hierarchy against which they define themselves. Apart from the state but also supporting it, insisting on rules but also bending them, patronising but also striving for equality, to be a volunteer but also a recipient, to harden your heart but also to offer it – these are the contradictions of volunteering at the δίκτυο.

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*Following the sharp rise of scholarly debate and thriving literary output the Civil War between the years 1974 and 2014, this paper is concerned with the distinct ways in which the memory of the civil strife has been renegotiated, reclaimed and contested, in post-1974 fiction. Without aiming to reach definite conclusions nor to engage in a close reading of the texts, I intend to map out the transition from recollections of the war through first-hand experiences (1974-2000) to the reconstruction of the past through mediated memories and archival poetics (2000-2014). To this end, I first explore Aris Alexandrou's and Alexandros Kotzias's subversive insights on the civil conflict and different reception histories. Next I approach Thanassis Valtinos's *Orthokostá* (1994) as a turning point in Civil War fiction inasmuch he introduces narrative strategies of re-writing civil strife, which, as I discuss in the last section, gain ascendancy in the work contemporary authors.*

Lived Experiences and the Archival Turn: (Post)memories of the Greek Civil War and its Aftermath in Modern Greek Fiction (1974-2014)

The end of the Colonels' Dictatorship in 1974, signals a turning point for Greece's political and cultural agendas. The transition to democracy (known as *Metapolitefsi*) gave birth to new commemorative practices of the country's traumatic past and led to the cultural and historical re-evaluation of the Civil War (1944-1949).¹ The state propaganda of the military regime imposed an anti-communist narrative on the civil conflict and made historiographic research virtually impossible; hence, it wasn't until the *Metapolitefsi* that scholarly interest on the topic rose sharply.² The international conferences organised in 1999 and 2000 were hailed as a landmark³ which, followed by a flood of academic publications and (often fierce) debates situated the Civil War at the epicentre of scholarly and public history for the ensuing fifteen

¹ There has been a great controversy over the temporal boundaries of the civil conflict which extends well beyond the scope of this chapter. I adhere to the periodisation of the Greek Civil War as being from 1944 to 1949, following the legal settlement of the issue in 1989. For a succinct overview of the Greek Civil War see Demertzis (2011, 135-145) and Mazower (2000, 3-21).

² The 1978 conference at Washington and the subsequent 1981 publication of *Greece in the 1940s: a nation in crisis* edited by John O. Iatrides marked the start of the historiographic engagement with the Civil War.

³ The first conference entirely dedicated on the Civil War was held in Copenhagen in 1984 to assist the project of reconciliation (Liakos 2003: xx). Accordingly, the 50th anniversary of the end of the Civil War was celebrated with a conference at King 's College London (April 1999), one at Panteion University in Athens (September 1999), and one at Karpenisi (September 1999).

years.⁴ In the literary realm, although the first narratives were ideologically-laden and often reproduced a somewhat polarised (Left or Right-leaning) discourse on civil strife, post-1974 authors went some way to debunk misconceptions on the War and, more recently, took creative liberties to re-assess the troubled past in the light of their increased temporal distance from it. Between the years 1974 and 2014 (especially after the revival of the historical novel and even more so since the publishing boom of the 2000s)⁵ fictional accounts of the Civil War have been thriving and they very much engaged with, upholding or subverting, relevant historiographic and public debates.

Surprisingly limited attention has been paid to a comprehensive approach of post-1974 Civil War fiction and its intricate interplay with historiographic narratives, while the recent literary output remains uncharted terrain.⁶ Without aiming to reach definite conclusions, this paper seeks to outline the permutations in the modes of remembering the civil conflict from a generational perspective. Drawing mainly on memory studies and theories of the archive, I will map out the transition from recollections of the war through first-hand experiences to the reconstruction of the past through mediated memories and archival poetics. In the first section I explore Aris Alexandrou's and Alexandros Kotzias's subversive insights on the civil conflict. Next I approach Thanassis Valtinos novel *Orthokostá* (1994) as a turning point in Civil War fiction inasmuch he is the first author to engage with the archive, which, as I will show in the last section, is what primarily sets memory in motion in contemporary fiction.

i) A very brief genealogy of pre-1974 Civil War fiction and the case studies of *The Mission Box* and *Jaguar*

If official historiography remained silenced until the military rule gave in to democracy, this was not the case with public history and memory.⁷ Alongside commemorative ceremonies, memorials, performances and later on films, literary production from very early on played a major role in shaping the collective memories of the civil conflict and its legacies. The first

⁴ See, in this respect, Antoniou and Marantzidis (2008: 25- 43) and Liakos (2003: 25-36).

⁵ Rea Galanaki's *Ο βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά* [The Life of Ismail Ferik Pasha] (1989) inaugurated the revival of the historical novel in post-1974 fiction (Lemos & Yannakakis 2015: 7).

⁶ Extant studies cover a limited time span—until 1974 (Vasilakakos 2000; Nikolopoulou 2008) or 1994 (Apostolidou 2010).

⁷ Here I use public history to denote the practices of historians or other social agents with relevant training which take place in non-academic/specialised framework (i.e. in the media, museums and archives, and other cultural or governmental institutions). Such activities can empower and (re)define the public's understanding of the historical past (Kean and Martin 2013: 14-19)

and the second post-war generation of writers who published their work before 1974 went to great lengths to give a cohesive meta-narrative of the war and engaged with the conflicting ideological discourses of the two opposing sides, often being susceptible to strident commitment.⁸ It wasn't until the 1960s when fiction radically disposes of heroism and the rhetoric of victimisation of the Left and sets out to re-examine the bitterly contested past.⁹ It is worth stressing that most of these works draw on a reservoir of the authors' autobiographical memories (especially those with warfare exposure). What is more, some of them are prescient of the distinct literary representations of the Civil War after 1974; especially Valtinos in deromanticising the war and Chatzis in destabilising the Right-Left polarisation can be seen as precursors of Aris Alexandrou's emblematic novel, *Το κιβώτιο* [The Mission Box], which, as which I will discuss shortly, demonumentalises the Civil War epic once and for all.

The political liberalisation of the 1960s, the demise of the Right-wing discourse of the Junta, the split of the KKE in 1968 and the concomitant revisionism within the Left together with the literary experimentation at a national and international level, all coalesced to the transformation of the cultural climate in *Metapolitefsi* (Nikolopoulou 2008: 492-3). It is in this climate that Alexandrou's *The Mission Box*, published in 1975, was hailed as a milestone in Greek fiction.¹⁰ The novel tells the story of a top-secret mission assigned by the Democratic Army to transport an iron box from city N to city K during the final stage of the Civil War. The plot unfolds through written testimonies given by the anonymous narrator and sole survivor of what turned out to be a suicidal expedition; for, when he ultimately arrives in city K, the narrator is incarcerated, as the box is found by the authorities to be *empty*. Some thirteen years later, in 1987, Alexandros Kotzias's novella *Ιαγούάρος* [Jaguar] was published under a very different socio-political climate. The election to power of Andreas Papandreou's PanHellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) in 1981 and the conciliatory movements in which he engaged to rehabilitate the status of the Left,¹¹ brought about a new hegemonic discourse of the Civil War.

⁸ On pre-1974 fictional accounts on the civil unrest, see Nikolopoulou (2008) and Raftopoulos (2013).

⁹ Cf. for example Thanassis Valtinos 1963 *Η Κάθοδος των εννιά* [The Descent of Nine] published in *Εποχές*, Dimitris Chatzis 1964 *Ανυπεράσπιστοι* [Defenseless] published in *Επιθεώρηση Τέχνης*, Stratis Tsirkas *Ακυβέρνητες Πολιτείες* [Drifting Cities] (1960-4), Andreas Frangias *Καγκελοπορτα* [The Gateway] (1962) and others. Yet, the very same decade saw the publication of Mitsos Alexandropoulos's *Νύχτες και αυγές* [Nights and Dawns] (1961-4) and Georgios Averof-Tositsas's *Γη της οδύνης* [Land of Sorrow] (1966), which form the final efforts to fictionalise the hegemonic political discourses, thus signalling that passions had not waned off.

¹⁰ Incepted in 1966 and completed by 1972, *The Mission Box* was not published until the end of the seven-year military Junta and the return to 'democratic normalcy'.

¹¹ Such conciliatory gestures encompassed issuing pensions to all Resistance fighters in 1984 and the repatriation of members of the DSE from the Soviet Bloc. Accordingly, in 1989, PASOK abolished and incinerated the security files on citizens which had been kept by the Greek Central Intelligence Service (KYP) (Panourgia 2009: 151).

The PASOK government capitalised on the Resistance by essentially ‘nationalising’ its legacy. This politics of forgetting the internecine struggle itself denote PASOK’s populist agenda and attempt to sweep the thornier Civil War issues under the carpet. *Jaguar* is especially relevant to this historical conjecture in that it shrewdly hints to public discourses of the time. The novella broaches the dispute over inheritance issues, centring on Dimitra’s attempt to deceive her sister-in-law, Philio, in renouncing her dead husband’s house. Yet, through this legalistic argumentation, Kotzias creates a performance on the characters’ conflicting agendas; Dimitra remains a dogmatic communist, whose narrative resonates with the cult of the guerrillas (αντάρτες) in the 1980s, while Philio relays counter-memories of the decade of the 1940s challenging the master-narrative of persecuted Left. I argue that these two political allegories have effectively remarkable similarities in that they employ the poetics of deceit to subvert the hegemonic discourses of civil strife. What I want to emphasise here is that both authors are equally concerned with the ambiguity enmeshed in the process of performing an oral testimony and accepting responsibility for one’s actions in the past. The characters are deceptive, forgetful, and, driven by self-serving interests of the present give conflicting versions of the past events, thus distorting reality and turning utterly untrustworthy. Centring on unreliable and affective modes whereby individuals remember, Kotzias and Alexandrou undermine the human ability of reasoning and render the order of truth irrelevant.

And yet, what is even more interesting is these two works’ different literary status. While *The Mission Box* has spawned a large volume of scholarship, is included in high school textbooks, and enjoys high popularity, *Jaguar* has received limited theoretical attention and is currently out of print. An in depth discussion of the works’ distinct histories of reception and canonicity exceeds the scope of this paper. Yet, one should not fail to notice that Kotzias’s conservative neoliberalist agenda, his early indictment by Left-leaning intellectuals as ‘an apologist of the Right’ (Raftopoulos 1965: 300), and his provocative translation of Nicolas Gage’s anti-communist novel *Eleni* in 1983 inspired at best awkwardness to a vast majority of ‘readers which were, largely, leftist’ (Argyriou 2004, 21). Contrastingly, the rapidly canonised *Mission Box* seems to have gained new momentum in the 1980s and 1990s; Alexandrou was not only celebrated as a leftist writer, but also as an anti-systemic one (critical of the Left from within), tapping into the readers’ revived interest in the 1940s. Therefore, the time of publication as well as the authors’ agendas had important implications for the politics of reception of the respective texts.

ii) *Orthokostá*: passing the torch to a new generation of writers

If pairing *The Mission Box* and *Jaguar* proved the process of their canonisation intriguing, then Thanassis Valtinos's controversial novel *Ορθοκωστά* [*Orthokostá*] (1994) is yet another case which notoriously engaged scholars, historians, and the public in protracted ideological skirmishes.¹² Written in a period when the literary interest in the Civil War had died off,¹³ *Orthokostá* signals a turning point in Civil War fiction whereby Valtinos passes the torch to a new generation of writers documenting the 1940s. Interestingly, however, *Orthokostá* has been associated with and appropriated by post-revisionist historiography (or 'New Wave'). Its publication coincided with a new, not necessarily homogeneous, historiographic trend focusing on minoritarian identities, (bottom-up) oral and local history, often from an anthropological or sociological perspective.¹⁴ *Orthokostá*'s immensely convoluted plot comprises of fragmented oral testimonies recounting the internecine struggle between the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) and the Security Battalions in the district of Kynouria, at Peloponese during the German Occupation (1943-4). The emphasis laid on ELAS violence and the portrayal of the war as a product of local vendettas made it particularly amenable to be used by the most vocal agents of the 'New Wave', Stathis Kalyvas in particular, not as a fictional text but as a historical source lending weight to his arguments; namely, the development of Security Battalions as a grassroots armed movement to challenge EAM and ELAS; the outbreak of the Civil War as early as in 1943; on the predominance of a leftist historiography until the 1990s (Kalyvas 1999: 10-11; Valtinos 2016: ix-xiv). Yet, Kalyvas, expanding on his analysis on the multiplicity and depoliticisation of civil war violence (Mazower 2000: 142-183) seems to engage in a somewhat misleading reading in *Orthokostá*. He deliberately dismisses that the characters' disjointed narratives and conflicting recollections gesture to the futile endeavour to piece them up in a seamless rational narrative.¹⁵ Furthermore, his forward in the 2016 translation of *Orthokostá*

¹² On the *Orthokostá* controversy, see Paivanas (n.d.) and Skoupras (2007).

¹³ By contrast to the 1880s, and especially the 2000s, which saw a surge in the literary narratives on civil strife, in the 1990s only three novels were published touching upon the War and/or its aftermath: *Orthokostá*, Nikos Bakolas's *Καταπάτηση* [Encroachment] (1990), and Mimika Kranaki's *Φιλέλληνες* [Philhellenes] (1992). As Yorgos Chouliaras puts it, in 1994, books broaching an 'outdated subject matter' such as Civil War were deemed low-readability books (Fleischer 2003: 428).

¹⁴ Marc Mazower's 1993 *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* is regarded as the cornerstone of Post-revisionism. Other representative examples of this trend are the studies of Riki Van Boeschoten (1997), Tasoula Vervenioti (1994) and others.

¹⁵ Kalyvas (2003: 44-47) gives equally misguided interpretations of other literary texts, such as Kranaki's *Philhellenes* or Nikos Kazantzakis *Αδερφοφάδες* [The Fratricides] (1963), arguing in favour of the de-ideologisation of violence and a war waged on the basis of personal hostilities. While this was often the case, Kalyvas proves fairly selective and biased in the literary quotations which underpin his historical approach. In his attempt to construct a coherent narrative that discredits EAM/ELAS, he overgeneralizes, disregarding, for

in English proves the very act of translation as a part of an agenda. Is such a labyrinthine novel perfectly suited to relay the divisive legacy of civil strife to an international audience (as Kalyvas professes), or does it rather fit in a cultural politics orchestrated by the ‘post-revisionist’ paradigm to also comply with the homogenising western gaze?¹⁶

Despite its (ab)uses, what is of particular interest in the context of this paper is that *Orthokostá* merges the testimonial with the documentary trope to showcase the perpetrators’ trauma and defy the institutional archives and politics of memory of the Civil War in the 1990s. The controversial first-hand memories of the characters (or informants) seem to stem from the ‘working archive’ of an oral historiographer (Papailias 2005: 142) attempting to reconstruct a lost past, yet to no avail. These discourses on the past seem to foreground the new methodological tools of historiography and the engagement with the ‘historical memory’ of the civil conflict in lieu of its lived experience. Seen through this angle, *Orthokostá* provides a repertoire of novel literary themes and modes of re-writing the vicious strife (archival material, local research, affective detachment, voicing the unrepresented historical subjects). These tropes are passed on to a ‘new generation of writers’, which, as I will discuss in the next session, follows and builds up on Valtinos’s example re-imagining the past through archival poetics and mediated memories.

iii) Postmemory and the archive: a new paradigm in Civil War fiction? (2000-2014)

The rekindled scholarly interest in the decade of the 1940s reached its apogee in newspaper *Ta Néa* and the 2004 historians’ dispute, widely known as the ‘debate on history’.¹⁷ Similar public debates alongside the twentieth-first century memory boom and turn to the cultural memory¹⁸ are especially relevant to the emergence of younger authors whose writing approach

instance, passages in which Kranaki sets forth right-wing violence or Kazantzakis’s criticism mainly targets Stalinist practices rather than broadly communist ones.

¹⁶ Cf. the somewhat orientalist parallel drawn between the havoc pervading *Orthokostá* and the chaotic reality in contemporary Syria in Tom Leclair’s (2016) review. It is unsurprising that the reception of *Orthokostá* by an international readership was icy, although the novel was greeted with enthusiasm by literary journals. Two (out of three) customers’ reviews posted on Amazon website on July 1, 2016 and August 20, 2016 entitled ‘Couldn’t finish reading this book’ and ‘Life’s too short....’ respectively, punctuate not so much the aesthetic merit of the novel but rather the defeat of non-Greek readers by *Orthokostá*’s impenetrable plot.

¹⁷ In this respect, see the relevant *Ta Néa* articles written by Stathis Kalyvas (May 08 2004) and Nikos Marantzidis (May 29 2004), as well as the counter-responses of Yorgos Margaritis (June 06 2004), Antonis Liakos (August 28 2004) and Neni Panourgia (October 02 2004).

¹⁸ The distinction between communicative and cultural memory was introduced by Jan Assman (2008). Whilst the first is transmitted through verbal communication amongst contemporaries, the former is institutional, related to power and tradition, and is mainly conveyed through national archives (i.e. libraries, museums) (114-8).

to the civil unrest differs substantially from the first and second post-war generation of writers. Enormously prolific and with popular resonance, contemporary authors seek to establish a new interpretative scheme to re-think the Civil War whereby they can also comment upon the present or envision alternative futures.

To lend credibility to their narratives and offset the lack of direct experiences of the traumatic event they create characters who recollect the past from a postmemorial position,¹⁹ engaging in an imaginative, affective reinvestment of the civil conflict through mediated recollections and physical objects. A common thread that traverses contemporary Civil War fiction is the literary device of the ‘character as a historian/investigator’ who reconstructs an unmapped past by tracking down its material traces. Take for instance, Nikos Davvetas’s novel *Λευκή πετσέτα στο ρινγκ* [White Towel in the Boxing Ring] (2006), which deals with a male journalist unearthing hidden family secrets while contributing to a special issue on the 55th anniversary of the December Events (Δεκεβριανά). Likewise, in Elena Chouzouri’s *Δυο φορές αθώα* [Twice Innocent] (2013), a female journalist conducts research on the second generation of political refugees who fled the Civil War in the 1940s. Driven by the same investigative zeal and affected by transgenerational transmission of memory, the fictional journalists problematise the elusiveness of the past and incorporate the traumas of previous generations, respectively. Postmemory is activated through the characters’ engrossment in the familial/personal or official/collective archive—the two are often inextricably intertwined. Diaries, memoirs, chronicles, oral interviews, sanctioned records and artifacts but also personal photographs render the remembrance of the Civil War material and raise questions about the nature and purposes of historical knowledge. What is of interest here is that many writers highlight the ambiguity of the archive, whose logics of accumulation and preservation are destabilised by errors and competing contents that unsettle memory. Sophia Nikolaidou’s *Χορεύουν οι ελέφαντες* [The scapegoat] (2012/2015) is a good case in point. Not only because it illuminates the engagement of the protagonist (a malcontent high school student), with intense archival research on the unsolved case of the assassination of American journalist George Polk and the ethics of doing justice to the victims of the past by disclosing their silenced stories. It is also a novel negotiating the unknowability of the past, notably because it subverts the order of truth on the grounds of archival dissonance and disorder. Thus, the trope of characters (and writers themselves) acting as amateur historians draws attention to the interplay

¹⁹ Introduced by Marianne Hirsch’s (2012), postmemory refers to the mediated relationship between the ‘belated memory’ of the ones who did not experience the traumatic event and the representation of this past itself.

between fiction and historiography which becomes even more tangible in the novels' subject matter. The surge in fictional accounts of childhood experiences and internecine struggles on a local level are indicative of this interchange.²⁰

Conclusion

In this paper I sought to give a brief overview of the ways in which post-1974 fiction functioned as a dense grid of narratives, wherein the memory of the Civil War has been reclaimed and contested; initially remembered as a lived experience (1974-2000) and then re-created from a postmemorial and archival perspective (2000-2014). Being a work-in-progress, this paper has raised questions about the intersections of cultural and institutional narratives and the relevance of re-imagining unsettling pasts in the present. In closing, I wish to cite a brief excerpt from Marlena Politopoulou's historical crime novel *Η μνήμη της πολυρόιντ* [Polaroid Memory] (2009). Recounting detective Pavlos attempt to solve a crime dating from the Civil War, which he found in his father's archive of unsolved cases, Politopoulou articulates the narrative in three time-frames (1946, 1976, 2006), thus pointing to the intergenerational trauma which calls for retroactive justice.

[Pericles] The first national reconciliation started with silence. The second took place in 1982. For your father a case which delved into the Civil War made no sense in the decade of the 80s.

[Pavlos] Does it make now? [...]

[Per.] It's like the British police archives. They are opened after sixty years. Now, the time has come for the next generation.

[Pav.] I'm delving into old wounds... I thought that they would not hurt anymore [...]

We all knew about it, yet we had never put the finger on the problem. Now it's time for

²⁰ Cf. the three novels negotiating the controversial topic of the *Queen's camps* (Παιδοπόλεις); Vassilis Boutos's *Τα δάκρυα της βασίλισσας* [The Queen's Tears] (2000), Thanassis Skroumpelos's *Bella Ciao* (2005), and Yannis Atzakas's *Θολός Βυθός* [Murky Depths] (2008). Maro Douka's *Το δίκιο είναι ζόρικο πολύ* [The right is very tough] (2010) and *Έλα να πούμε ψέματα* [Come on to tell lies] (2014) set in Chania, Crete exemplify the focus on the local.

their grandchildren to judge them. They might be able to do them justice [...] to make wounds heal.²¹ [my translation]

Here Politopoulou, as much as other authors of the postgeneration of the Civil War, problematise the ethics and affective engagement of re-evaluating the historical past, aiming to further the process of reconciliation and healing.

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²¹ [Pericles] «Η πρώτη εθνική συμφιλίωση ξεκίνησε με τη σιωπή. Η δεύτερη έγινε το '82. Για τον πατέρα σου μια έρευνα που ανασκάλευε τα του εμφυλίου δεν είχε νόημα στη δεκαετία του '80.» [Paulos] «Τώρα έχει;» [...] «Είναι σαν τα αρχεία της βρετανικής αστυνομίας. Τα ανοίγουν ύστερα από εξήντα χρόνια. Ήρθε το πλήρωμα του χρόνου για την επόμενη γενιά». «Σκαλίζω παλιές πληγές... Νόμιζα πως δεν θα πονούν πια [...] όλοι τα ξέραμε αλλά δεν είχαμε βάλει το μαχαίρι στο κόκαλο. Τώρα ήρθε η ώρα των εγγονιών να τους κρίνουν. Ίσως καταφέρουν να απονεύμουν αυτά δικαιοσύνη [...] Να κλείσουν οι πληγές» (Politopoulou 2006: 232).

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