SHORT STORIES FOR THE SALVATION OF MEMORY

escaping the dominant narrative
and its imprint in the public space

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Ottoman cemetery in Thessaloniki

Escaping the dominant narrative and its mark in the public sphere

We can easily say that the past is omnipresent. The past surrounds us in every aspect of our daily lives, from our intimate relationships and the way we are attached to our personal past, to its public expression in the selected monuments, archaeological sites, museums, etc. The past, with the help of memory, emerges in the present. The narrative of the past is being transformed and unfolded through the current perceptions of the present. The dominant function of memory is not to remember the past, but to adapt it in order to shape and control the present and set the foundations for planning and interpreting the future. This mnemonic process also shapes our identity, both on a personal and a collective level. However, collective memory is not uniform and impenetrable. The dominant narrative is imposed through symbolism and connotations and this way it structures the national imaginary/consciousness. However, our own collective memory also exists, and tries to interpret the past and retrieve persons and moments worthy to remember. However, before exposing our understanding of collective memory, we will try to briefly provide an insight on the changes of the dominant narrative and its reflection in the public space.

Antiquities before the foundation of the Greek state

Until the 18th century, the abundance of the archaeological finds that we know to date had not yet been realized. However, several architectural structures and artefacts, mainly of the classical period, were visible in the public space and shaped, to a certain extent, peoples' perception of the surrounding space. To a large extent, the antiquities were simply the remnants of a past on top of which the destiny of the future had not yet been constructed. A large part of the population, which was attached to the religious cosmological order, following the Orthodox Church, considered the antiquities as remnants of idolatry and even destroyed them. At the same time, there was a general tendency on one hand to reuse the sites themselves converting them into Christian temples and Ottoman mosques, such as the Acropolis and Erechtheion. On the other hand, they tried to build the Christian churches in higher places than the ancient temples, such as in Plaka, in order to show off their superiority. Moreover, many architectural structures of the classical period were reused as building materials in newer structures. A typical example is the Byzantine walls in Thessaloniki, where it is very easy to distinguish Classical and Hellenistic columns incorporated into the walls and used as building materials.

Changing the historical paradigm

With the arrival of christian times, a unified conception of history and past was gradually formed, which evolved around the succession of the great empires. The aim was, on the one hand, to legitimize and naturalize Christianity in historical time and, on the other hand, to function as a means of constituting the subjects of that period providing the way of interpreting the past but also of anticipating the future through schemes such as the Apocalypse.

Therefore, until the 17th century in the Western world, the historical perception was formed through religious texts and the concept of Revelation. Gradually from the 17th century onwards, historical consciousness was reconstructed, due to the significant new

Engraving of Acropolis from 18th century

social and political formations. The transition to modernity and the capitalist mode of production render the previous hermeneutic system of the past, through the apocalyptic anticipation of the future inadequate. The concept of progress - i.e. the notion that the world must constantly move forward - dominates ever since. The previous period was characterised as a dark one that should be left behind. The period of Enlightenment demanded a rupture with the dark ages and a connection with the ancient past. Therefore the scheme of Antiquity – Middle Ages – Modern Times was adopted. This periodization is also used during the creation of the modern nation-states, seeking in the past the historical connections that will allow their territorialization and legitimization in the present.

In this context, antiquities obtain another interest, in the first instance from European travellers, who already before the 19th century were coming to the Ottoman Empire with the purpose of viewing the ancient remains. In other words, they were travelling in the Greek and Italian territory, making the so-called grand tour in order to visit the places mentioned in ancient Greek and Roman literature. Some of them even conducted the first excavations of the period without hesitating to take with them the corresponding souvenirs (as in the case of Elgin marbles). Moreover, during the 1821 war of independence, scholars and merchants recognised in the ancient marbles the connections that would allow the formation of national consciousness. In order for the "Greek Re-birth" ("Palingenesis") to take place, it was essential to forge a strong link with the ancient past, in order to territorially and ideologically justify the formation of the new state. In this context, antiquities had to be transformed from objects of everyday use into monuments that constitute the material expression of national consciousness. However, it is interesting to note that the historical

narrative of that period considered the Greek nation successfully enslaved to the Macedonians, Romans, Byzantines and Ottomans. A lot of time has passed until the integration of the Macedonian kingdom and the Byzantine empire in the dominant Greek narrative.

The social imaginary of nation gains its material manifestation

The disciplines of history, archaeology and anthropology have served the state since its establishment, presenting a narrative basis that would allow the linking of the past to the future. Ancient monuments are a necessity for state-building. Thus, right after the Greek war of independence, the "proper" institutions were created, institutions to construct national identity using the power of the state. The program started by renaming the new state's toponyms to classical era greek names and continued by establishing the first archaeological museum in Aegina in 1829, the National Archaeological Service in 1833, while in 1834 the first archaeological law was passed by the Bavarian "Regency Council" of Otto von Bayern, first "King of Greece". These organizations played a significant role in nation-building, during the first years of the greek state. Their main duty was the transformation of ancient ruins into national monuments[1], as part of a double-ended process, *the assignment of land to the nation and of nation to the land*.

In order to succeed, they had to restore/reconstruct the monuments of the "golden" classical era, and mark their spots as distinct archaeological areas. The ancient columns would now stop serving as a source of construction material and would be transformed into sacred symbols of the nation. At the same time, anything falling out of the linear narrative of the nation had to be removed from the landscape. Many remnants that did not fit in the pattern of the classical Greek or Byzantine era were demolished as they were considered "barbarian relics". Most ottoman buildings, muslim mosques, even venetian and middle-age buildings were demolished in an attempt to clean the public spaces from anything resembling the previous periods. A striking example is the Acropolis of Athens, which was stripped of all the surrounding buildings that were built at any time after the classical era (Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman, the fort, etc)[2]. The goal was to freeze time on the absolute national symbol, while at the same time satisfying the social imaginary of western modernity. The western idealized view of the classical era constructs a monumental representation of modern greek society. This image is embraced by the newly established Greek state in an attempt to legitimize its existence and partake in the era of modernity. Ancient temples now come to prominence, as awe-inspiring monuments, while in the whole of Europe there is a trend of replicating these patterns through the neoclassical architecture and the emergence of buildings mimicking ancient temples.

The nationalization of Thessaloniki

When the Greek state annexed Thessaloniki, it had to deal with a city where the greek-speaking population was a minority. Thessaloniki, the "crossroads" of the Balkans, was highly multi-ethnic in nature and within the urban fabric, Latino-speaking Jewish, Slavic-speaking, Greek-speaking, Dönmeh, Latin-speaking Aromanian, Albanian-speaking,

1   More information on Hamilakis, Y. (2007), The Nation and its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology, and National Imagination in Greece, Oxford Books.

2   The Acropolis of Athens actually functioned as an organized archaeological space since as early as 1835, and visitors could enter upon purchasing their tickets!

Ottoman, Muslim and Christian communities co-existed. The Greek state decided to transform the multicultural Thessaloniki into a city of national uniformity. At first, the nationalization of the population was enforced with violent persecutions, deportations or "voluntary" migration of all Muslim and Slavic-speaking communities. These were concluded for the most part with the mandatory "exchange" of populations after the defeat of the Greek expeditionary force into Anatolia and the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Secondly, the populous Jewish communities of Thessaloniki were almost completely eradicated during the Holocaust[3]. Out of the approximately 45,000 Jews who were sent to concentration camps, only a few managed to return, to face a city that had been emptied of any Jewish element.

After the prosecutions of non-greek-speaking / non-christian populations came the drastic change in urban planning. The neighbourhood communities («Mahallas») and narrow alleyways of the multi-ethnic communities were destroyed and the city gradually transformed into a nationally-uniform capitalist city, following a specific urban planning. The neighbourhoods gradually lost their character and got Greek-language names. The big fire of 1917 that destroyed a great portion of the city (mostly Muslim and Jewish neighbourhoods) leaving 72,000 people homeless (1/3 of which were Jewish), was the starting point for the new urban planning for Thessaloniki. The destruction caused by the fire assisted in the reconstruction and urban reform of the city, which in turn made the process of assimilation into the Greek state even faster.

In addition to the restructuring of Thessaloniki's urban planning, the process of selectively demolishing some monuments and highlighting others, was also enforced by the state. Most of the remains from the Classical/Hellenistic period and byzantine churches would remain untouched and be brought to prominence. On the contrary, ottoman public buildings, muslim mosques and tombs (ie. Bey Hamam, Hamza Bey Mosque, Alaca Imaret Mosque, Yeni Mosque) were either taken down completely, or "buried" between tall apartment buildings. The new design did not facilitate the viewing of ottoman, jewish etc buildings, like it did with buildings belonging to the previous era (ie. Hagia Sophia Church, Arch of Galerius, Rotunda, etc.). The buildings that deviated from the "glorious" Greek past were left unmaintained and forgotten in narrow streets between tall apartment buildings. During the first decades after the Second World War, their use for commercial purposes was deemed legal, wiping out all memories of their previous uses. One such example is Bey Hamam (also known as Alcazar): inside this building a porn cinema was functioning for many years. Within the same framework, in 1925 the "Aristotle University of Thessaloniki" was built on top of a Jewish cemetery, wiping out from the urban fabric one of the last spaces reminiscent of the Jewish community, partially at first, and in the following 20 years, completely. The remains of the people buried there were moved elsewhere and the tombstones were reused by the locals for paving roads, stone staircases, etc. If somebody is taking a stroll at Ano Poli neighborhood (the old town of Thessaloniki), it is possible to notice how many stone plates with Hebrew and Arabic inscriptions have been used at houses' ledges.

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3   Prosecutions of Jewish populations were present even before the Holocaust in Thessaloniki, like for example the anti-Semitic pogrom and arson of the Camp Campbell by greek refugees and the fascist party "National Union of Greece".

Bourmali Mosque, Thessaloniki, early 20th century

From Vergina to Amphipolis and back again

Of course this would not mark the end of the Greek state's efforts to nationalize time and space. It is instead a continuous process which, according to the social circumstances can re-evaluate national history and invent brand-new findings of symbolic capital to re-legitimize the notion of the nation state. A prime example is the surfacing of nationalist movements related to claiming the greater area of Macedonia since before the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) until recently. During the last decades of the 20th century and especially after the fall of the Eastern Bloc, the borders would be disputed once again and a campaign was initiated to find any remnants of the past and the symbols that would provide national legitimization. The previously considered "barbarian" ancient Macedonia had gotten integrated into the "3000 years old Greek history" since the contributions of the greek historian Paparrigopoulos (1815-1891) and king Philip II and Alex the Great were presented as key national figures. Then, in 1977, a tomb was discovered at Vergina village, and Manolis Andronikos – an archaeologist and an emerging national hero – publicly announced to the Greek public that the tomb of Philip II had been discovered. The findings immediately gained the status of national symbols. Soon after, statues of Philip II and horseback Alexander were placed in central locations of the city, constantly reminding the locals and visitors of the city of the true descendants of the Macedonian Empire. A few decades later, history repeats itself as a satire, with the excavation of the tomb in Amphipolis. The findings had promised to become an equally important national symbol[4]. The public was constantly updated about the advance of the excavation in real time, a situation that would stimulate the social imaginary of the nation once again[5].

Thessaloniki – Many Stories, One Heart

However, in recent years, we see that the national narrative coexists with a more alternative approach to the management of public space and monuments. This is a result of the implementation of neoliberal policies in public space. Through the process of gentrification, areas that were underdeveloped are transformed into areas of financial interest, rendering the cultural capital into financial capital. The social composition of these areas is changing and they are becoming centers of culture and alternative culture, youth entrepreneurship and purity. In the name of "creativity" (creative city – creative economy), neoliberal processes are not limited to the reshaping of the urban landscape, but rather give great importance to its "creative" inhabitants, their imagination and their desires, which are sacrificed on the altar of the profit. At the same time, through the policy of "city branding", the image of the city is being launched, incorporating its people and its past, in order to attract more tourists, new businesses and investment.

A typical example of the implementation of these policies is, among others, the case of Thessaloniki. In recent years, we have increasingly observed the city being gentrified and regenerated, its "creativity" being enhanced, and becoming an "exemplary" tourist destination. The city needs to acquire its special identity, which will enable it to become

4   More can be found in the text "Notes on the excavation at Amphipolis", Typhlopontikas Magazine 1 and in the texts published by the autonomous assembly of History and Archaeology school of AUTH: https://autonomohistarch.espivblogs.net/2014/10/05/το-κουφάρι-της-αμφί-

5   However, the case of Amphipolis very soon ended in a fiasco, as from very early stage, even a large part of the scientific – archaeological community exposed the political exploitation of the excavation, even if the criticism was expressed only in terms of scientific validity.

competitive and attractive to investors and tourists of all tastes. It is in this context that the motto "Thessaloniki – Many Stories, One Heart" is attempting to highlight the plurality of stories and identities of the city. We can, therefore, observe the almost complete integration and commercialization of the multiculturalism of the past, for the purpose of profit, of course. Therefore, the projection of pieces of the city's history (which had previously been eradicated by the Greek state in order to achieve Greekness and homogeneity), is now promoted. The assimilation and de-politicization of the past is becoming a commodity or a museum exhibit to be consumed by tourists from Israel, Turkey, and the Balkans. Thus, the Ottoman monuments are preserved and promoted for the first time in 100 years, a Holocaust memorial was created and the Holocaust Memorial Museum and days of remembrance about the Holocaust, the big fire of Thessaloniki, the Chinese New Year, etc. are being established.

State management of memory

The word monument (μνημείο) in the greek language is inextricably linked to the word memory (μνήμη) and constitutes a material and visible symbol through which memory is formed and preserved. Of course, the monument does not only include the archaeological and architectural remains of the past, but also the contemporary construction of a building, statue, memorial column, etc. Or it may even include the incorporation of memory through memorial ceremonies.

The Greek state, from the beginning of its foundation until today, maintains a very specific policy regarding the imprint of memory in the public space. And this policy is directly interwoven with the formation of national consciousness and the finding of the memorial foundations that will provide the ideological and material legal basis of the nation. The past is selectively projected both through monuments that suit the linear and sterile historical narrative, as well as through the placement in public space of monuments, statues, tributes, etc., that are integrated into the same context. It is characteristic that most of the newer monuments also in the city of Thessaloniki depict «glorious» kings from the distant and nearby past who come back to reign again, this time occupying a piece of the public space. On the contrary, it is very rare to depict ordinary people, let alone the depiction of moments of social struggle.

In fact, during the Civil War, the Greek state chose to use the monuments of classical antiquity as a means of torture and pressure on the exiled prisoners at Makronisos island. There was forced labor for the exiled, who were obliged to carry marbles and stones for the construction of replicas of ancient remains. Thus, on the small island of Makronisos, replicas of ancient theatres, replicas of statues and temples of classical Athens, and even a 1:20 replica of the Parthenon can be found. The exiles were forced to build these monuments as well as miniatures of ancient temples as part of the state program to purify themselves from the communist ideology, with the ultimate goal of publicly denouncing communism and re-enroling into the nation, an action to be concluded with a parade of «converted» ex-communists in front of the king.

Moreover, the depiction of victory and triumph, of conquest and the expansion of borders, is very characteristic: from the Roman triumphal monuments to the monuments of the world wars. History is written from the side of the winners, and you can rarely find information about the losers. In the same context, after the end of the civil war, the Greek

Statue of former King Konstantinos, Thessaloniki

state avoided the depiction in the public space of historical moments, such as the civil war itself. Despite the passage of time, it seems that the national division during the civil war period is still fresh, which is why the Greek state avoids to talk about such issues, pushing them into oblivion. As a result, very rarely is any kind of narrative about the civil war reflected in the public sphere. In the rare cases of monuments dedicated to the winners of the civil war, these are mostly found in villages that were clearly on the winners' side of the history[6].

Despite their clear position as far as the local community is concerned, the symbolism of city monuments dedicated to the end of the civil war are usually hidden behind general references to other historical events, such as, for example, the national resistance monument in Kilkis. These memorials, through the symbolism that they produce and the time at which they were placed - immediately after the end of the civil war - are clearly on the side of the winners.

The management of memory is therefore political and serves specific purposes, depending on the situation. Whether it is the reproduction of the nation and the destruction of the «other» from the public space in order to legitimize power in the present, or it is the selective promotion of diversity and multiculturalism for the purpose of profit.

Memory management across borders

It is worth mentioning that the state management of memory is not uniform everywhere and the way it is expressed varies depending on the purpose and the current situation. The choices of the greek state, that is, the selective display of monuments, the deletion of the «other» from the public space, the commemoration only of moments of victory and the avoidance of reference to specific facts, does not necessarily mean that they are adopted by other states, too. Instead, another strategy is often pursued, one that is expressed through accepting and projecting of specific historical moments, even if they stand from the side of the losers or the «barbarians».

For example, the Serbian state has chosen to maintain a significant number of bombed-out buildings in its capital, Belgrade, since the 1999 war. These buildings, scattered in the urban fabric, are imposed by their presence on public space. They stand intact, freezing time into a very specific and painful moment, constantly reminding the residents and visitors of the city of the war in Kosovo and the bombing of Yugoslavia by the NATO. Of course, this choice is entirely intentional, as it aims to be a constant reminder of the wars in the wider region after the fall of the "actually existing socialism," and their consequences which were the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the formation of individual states. Through this mnemonic process the memory of the bombing is kept fresh and constantly reminds who the "others" are, the enemies, Kosovars, Croats, Albanians, etc - or NATO and the Americans. In this way, separation based on national composition, as well as the anti-imperialist ideology, are legitimized.

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6   The example of Amarynthos is typical, where in the central square of the village there is a monument to those "massacred by Slavic communists". This monument was vandalized by anarchists and anti-authoritarians in 2006 (during a march for the collective rape of an immigrant student by her Greek classmates), an action that led to a massive attack against them by the locals.

Inmates in Macronisos exile island performing forced "educational" labour

A second, equally interesting example is the state management of memory in post-war Germany. In contrast to the greek state, which usually deletes from the public space whichever narrative does not suit it, the german state chooses the acceptance and display of the past, even of its most tragic aspects. Monuments of the Holocaust, of the Jews, but also the Roma and the homosexuals who perished in concentration camps during the Second World War can be found in many cities of Germany, while the concentration camps themselves have been preserved almost intact and transformed into museums and places of remembrance. These monuments function as a negative memory, as a means of repelling an unwanted past. The acceptance of tragic events cultivates and constitutes a new national memory through the rejection of the former evil collective self and through the guilt for the suffering that was caused. Through the «atonement» of the past, state legitimacy is pursued today. Something similar happened in the case of the Berlin Wall: part of it has been preserved and converted into a monument, which displays the stories of people who lived in both west and east Germany. Thus the german state presents, kind of objectively, various aspects of the recent past, leaving (up to a point of course) the visitor to reconstruct the historical narrative on their own. Of course, many things could have been written to analyze these two examples, but they do not fall within the purpose of the text. They are mainly displayed to highlight the different aspects of national and political memory management.

From disaster...

The destruction of monuments[7] as we have seen before is often a political choice on the part of the authorities, but sometimes also on a grassroots level. The destruction of monuments by the state is not a thing of the past, aimed at the national homogenization after the establishment of the nation-state. A change of regime also requires the erasure of the symbols of the previous period and this happens throughout history[8]. In the first years after the end of the greek military dictatorship (1968 - 1974), the democratization of public space had to be achieved. The streets with the name 21st April (the date of the military coup) were renamed to heroes of the 1973 Polytechnic School uprising, the symbols of the dictatorship disappeared and monuments depicting the colonels were destroyed. Nevertheless, although it was demanded by the locals, no monuments that had been built by the dictatorship of the colonels were demolished.

Through this example, we see that very often both in cases of change of a regime, as well as during wars, the deliberate destruction of monuments and symbols is chosen. And of course, such examples abound in recent history. For example, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the pompous statues of socialist realism were destroyed in various countries. One of the most symbolic destructions, that millions of people around the world have

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7   Of course the monuments and the archeological remains are also destroyed by natural parameters, such as the passage of time and soil erosion, but also due to environmental changes, exhaust gas, etc. We will not be concerned with such disasters in this text.

8   For example, as soon as Roman emperors came to power, they wiped out representations of their predecessor, destroying all statues and busts or even ending the use of coins with the portraits of previous emperors.

watched live on television, was the fall of the Berlin Wall. Respectively, in an attempt to tablish the boundaries of its nation-state, the Islamic State[9] (ISIS), throughout the war and its expansion into regions of the Middle East, systematically destroyed antiquities and monuments under the pretext of them being pagan. We see, therefore, that the most effective and systematic destruction of material culture is carried out by the states themselves.

However, the practice of destruction can also have radical characteristics. In periods of revolution or uprising, the destruction of symbols of power is a common practice, with the expectation that in the future, the new world will be built on the ruins of the old. In the French Revolution, the Bastille was destroyed as an act of symbolism against the French monarchy. During the revolution, the Bolsheviks destroyed buildings and other objects

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9 For more see: Translations of the state in Syrian territory, Collection of texts on Rojava and the Islamic State, Project Ajanib.

Bombarded building from the 1999 war in Belgrade

Part of the Berlin Wall

John C. Calhoun, ex vice-president of USA and advocate of slavery, South Carolina

as symbols of the tsarist regime. During the Spanish Revolution of 1936, anarchists destroyed churches and other symbols of Catholicism.

Respectively, in the recent uprising in the USA on May 2021, after the murder of George Floyd, statues and monuments were demolished in various cities[10]. These statues depicted historical figures such as Columbus, Confederate generals, Jefferson and others, who are symbols of the oppression of African Americans, and not solely within the USA. Interestingly enough, after the uprising, municipal authorities in various states decided to completely remove or replace these statues in the public space, in an attempt to possibly incorporate a part of the requests of the uprising, mainly on a symbolic level.

Therefore, the destruction of a monument is, in some cases a way of «restoring» historical reality both from an antagonistic and an institutional point of view. In addition, sometimes vandalising monuments can also obtain reactionary characteristics. A typical example: the, quite frequent, vandalism of the Holocaust monument in Thessaloniki or other Jewish memorial sites.

… to détournement

Besides the destruction of monuments, another frequent practice is détournement, that is, their conversion or reclamation. The practice of détournement, which was originally introduced by the Situationist International, is an aesthetic - artistic diversion of the original concept of an object, an image, etc. Détournement usually aims to connotate a political position or critique by changing or diverting an original concept. The practice of détournement is often used when it comes to public monuments. It was also used by the assembly of Yfanet in the squat's first year, by organizing an anti-exhibition of the Authentic Costaki's collection[11].

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10   Of course the attempt to demolish statues or monuments (with institutional or not, terms), related to the period of the Confederacy, slavery or even the American Civil War has been evolving slowly for decades.

11   George Costakis (1913 - 1990) was a greek collector of Russian avant-garde. In in 1977 Costakis left the Soviet Union and moved to Greece, leaving 50% of his collection in the State Tretyakov Gallery of Moscow. In 1997 the Greek State bought the remaining 1,275 works. "Costakis" is a diminituve of the boys' name "Costas", something like "little Constantine". So the "authentic Costakis collection" exhibition at Yfanet squat was a display of beautiful children drawings.

Détournement poster for the anti-exhibition of the Authentic Costaki's collection, 1st year of Fabrica Yfanet squat.

Vandalised statues of Jefferson, Richmond, Virginia

State management in the present day

Which is the recent state management when it comes to monuments? In the last decades, both regarding education and research, as well as museum management, a part of the scientific community and the unions of workers in culture have criticized the national narration, the use of research in the service of state politics, the under-funded sectors that do not support the linear narration of a "glorious past", the one-sided promotion of "major" findings, etc. However, in the recent years, the Ministry of Culture and especially since Lina Mendoni became head of the Ministry, has adopted quite an aggressive policy regarding cultural issues. We will focus briefly on some of those.

In the last decades, we have often seen different state approaches on archaeological findings. When the findings served (or were constructed in order to serve) the national narrative (e.g the Tomb of Amfipoli), they had to be protected, thousands of euros were spent, and we were bombarded with news of their importance. On the contrary, the discovery of archaeological remains in areas that are destined for investments and constructions were regarded as of little (or no) significance and the process of their removal was sped up, often without even studying or recording them[12]. We have seen this happen too many times, from the gold mines in Halkidiki, to the development of Elliniko former airport

12   This is even more frequent in cases of prehistoric findings, when human communities that cannot be introduced to the linear national narrative are not considered worth preserving or exhibiting.

into a "development area" with casinos, hotels, etc, or even in the case of Thessaloniki's underground railway. In all of those cases, the ancient findings were considered an obstacle for the "development plans" and thus, had to be removed. A notable example is the case of the antiquities found during the construction of Thessaloniki's underground railway, specifically in the Venizelou station. In this case, the previous construction plan (completed under Syriza's government) had decided their preservation and integration within the metro station. However, this plan was cancelled after the election of New Democracy. The construction plan had to be prepared from scratch, by people close to the New Democracy party, who came up with a much more expensive plan, that entailed the complete removal of the findings. This has brought up many arguments both from the scientific community and from citizens who are attempting to highlight the importance of those findings, trying to stop their removal and possible destruction in the process. At this point, it is appropriate to mention that the findings in Venizelou terminal are dated from the Byzantine period, capturing a single moment of Thessaloniki's past. Possibly, under these findings, proof of older civilizations can be found. Thus, the non-removal of this particular archaeological layer makes the preservation of information regarding previous eras more or less impossible, since the Byzantine findings are evaluated as more important. The effort to not remove those findings can, in a way, be integrated in the dominant evaluation of what must and must not be preserved. However, the removal of the Byzantine era discoveries in no way implies the preservation of the archaeological residues of the Byzantine or earlier periods, as the management of Thessaloniki's underground is clearly a political decision.

In this way, we can see that the state policy is now mainly interested in financial profit. Similarly, in the last months, the Ministry of Culture is preparing to privatize the 5 largest museums in Greece, despite many disagreements and reactions, while simultaneously paving the way to the commercialization of the officially existing archaeological spaces and monuments. With the excuse of development, almost the entirety of archaeological spaces and buildings that belong to the Ministry of Culture (including Yfanet) have, since 2018, been transferred to the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (TAIPED). These spaces (except some that were excluded from the transfer) can now be utilized and used even commercially from private capital. Spaces, such as Yfanet, that were previously "protected", since they could only be utilized from the Ministry of Culture, are now possible investments. It is characteristic that, immediately after the passing of this bill, the Stavros Niarhos institute begun constructing a gigantic space "for art, culture and environment" in the former factory and current monument of industrial culture of Allatini in Thessaloniki.

On the other hand, buildings that cannot be utilized commercially because they are not in good enough shape and the cost of repairs is too big, are an obstacle for the Ministry of Culture, since they cannot be demolished, as they are protected by the archaeological law. However, in March 2021 a "solution" for this issue was found. Alongside the bill for the development of Elliniko, a parameter was passed that allows the demolition of buildings over 100 years old, as long as they are deemed dangerous. This law includes the immediate formation of a committee that prepares a study in only 3 days and can decide for a buildings' immediate demolition. This law unfortunately affects Yfanet, thus making possible the buildings' demolition for the first time ever, since the old factory was deemed a protected site of industrial culture. The same applies for many old neoclassical

buildings and even for houses in Ano Poli, which either have to be renovated immediately —contributing to rising rent prices— or be demolished —contributing to further gentrification and alteration of the city.

The utilization of unused buildings is a constant tactic from the state's side in order to legitimize evictions and repression. This rhetoric has emerged many times, both in cases of possible evictions and in evictions of squats that took place in the last years. An important example is the case of the Rosa Nera[13], squat in Chania, Crete, where the previous argument of a protected building was suddenly forgotten in favour of financial utilization through the transformation of the building into a luxurious hotel. The building was evicted and naturally, was neither repaired, nor utilized during the time it was in the state's hands.

Simultaneously, during the last months, the Ministry of Culture has adopted an even more aggressive policy, through the persecution of protesters and squatters, with the excuse of the archaeological law regarding the protection of monuments. For example, during the repair and reconstruction of the roof of Libertatia squat, following its arson from fascists, the comrades that were conducting the repairs were arrested many times and charged with "destruction of monument and illegal construction on a preserved building". The same argument and charges were used in the case of the 51 people arrested after an antifascist mobilization around the White Tower of Thessaloniki in September of 2020. The same charges regarding the destruction of a monument were used, only this time the "monument" was a modern colonnade built around the actual monument a few years before.

Fabrika Yfanet – our living monument

At this point, according to Yfanet, we come to the realization that squatted buildings are in a position of juxtapose contradiction. On one hand, Fabrika Yfanet is an official monument of industrial heritage. More specifically, in 2006, the ministry of culture bought from the National Bank the ex-factory, in order to host there the museum of modern art[This project was abandoned in 2018, when MOMUs was hosted in other buildings.], later on there was a proposal to house the various ephorates (departments) of antiquities of the ministry of culture, and every now-and-then various posts appear on the media proposing various plans for the ex-factory of Yfanet. None of the above proposals was realistic because, as we mentioned earlier, in order for them to be realized, the building should be partially or totally demolished, which was impossible to do, as it had been officially declared a monument. The next option was a total reconstruction of the building to restore it in its initial condition, but due to the great amount of fund this would need, and considering the political cost that such a move would cause, this alternative was never taken seriously and the plan was rejected. Nevertheless, there are more and more complaints by local and central authorities for not taking advantage of the place and letting it come to ruins.

On the other hand, Fabrika Yfanet has been an occupied space for 17 years. This place was squatted by hundreds of people after reaching collective decisions on 20th of March 2004

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13   The Rosa Nera squat was evicted on 5th of September 2020, after 17 years of existence. The massive movement and support from a large part of the local community that followed the eviction, eventually led to the re-squatting of the building in the 5th of June 2021 from an expanded assembly.

and resulted to opening an abandoned factory to the city after 36 years of having its doors closed. '…an attempt to take back a small part of our time and space that has been stolen from us' was written on the first poster. The walls were brought to life, and the the need to 'reinvent the revolution' was expressed through our collective actions. Our brochures started getting full of experiences of struggles and stories from people that once worked in the textile industry. Inside the abandoned factory, a wide range of events started taking place: self-organized concerts and theatrical plays, political documentaries' festivals, events, screenings, book presentations, collective cooking and eating, assemblies, etc. Images from another world and the structures that were necessary to house them began to appear gradually. The squatted ex-factory today, after years of repairing and work done there, now has a cinema room, a library for reading and borrowing books, various rooms and spaces for events, a kitchen structure, a basement concert hall, a recording studio (under construction), a coffee place to chill out, room for gymnastics, a small garden, a huge DIY indoor BMX park, while part of the building is used for housing. But more important are the people who use this place daily. All and each one of us that suffocate in this life model and continue to imagine a different life through our actions and struggles. Every one of us, as special and different individuals; we fought with our contradictions, we argued, we imagined, we created.

This creativity cannot be contained in the 1004 walls of Fabrika Yfanet even though the squat is 19 acres big. This creativity started floating in the city roads and was translated into rage for this heartless world.

This rage was transformed into demonstrations against nationalist celebrations, against the anti-Albanian pogroms in 2004, against racist rapes in villages, against bosses' violence and the destruction of nature, and all of the above showed that our solidarity must be articulated against all authorities. This rage was expressed in the movement of society itself, inside and against the student identity in the university struggles (in the past and now), on the side of migrants rioting after the police murder of the nigerian street vendor Tony Onuoha (Kalamaria neighborhood, 2007), in the December 2008 burning streets, when we took revenge for our lost dreams (without raising demands), inside neighborhood assemblies together with people that we didn't know before but met in our everyday lives, in solidarity with hunger strikes of migrants that demanded to exist, in the street fights and the strikes against austerity policies, in everyday struggles in our work places, schools, rented apartments, refugee camps, migrants' detention centers and-so-forth.

Our creativity cannot exist without constantly defending squatted places. From Villa Amalias to Skaramagka squats, from Libertatia to Rosa Nera and Terra Incognita, we will proudly carry and defend the squatters' symbol with our hearts. Always against the concept of national unity (especially when it tries to enter our struggles), against every kind of patriotic rhetoric, always shouting "we never felt Greeks". We act politically even though we want to abolish politics as a divided sphere. How is it possible after all not to fight with our own contradictions, especially in an era where "true is a moment of the false" and human relationships are no more that merchandise relations.

We always want a continuous feedback with the social reality, fighting against our shortcomings, and learning new things, ideas and practices each passing day. We don't seek for eternal theories but for thoughts that interact with reality and its changes. We don't want to highlight a glorious history of some great movement, neither of Yfanet's

struggles, but to seek all those tiles of small stories that have determined (to a bigger or lesser degree) what we can consider in the present as ourselves, always through the eyes of critique and self-critique. We do not forget that the critique of the capitalist world is connected directly to the critique of ourselves.

So, Yfanet is not just the worn-out walls or our common decisions, but mainly our relationships. These are relationships that transgress the building; you can find them on the streets, and turn them into struggles. Within these relationships, hundreds of different people are hosted daily inside an ex-factory, they reclaim their stance in the city, they envision a different tomorrow in each day of todays' miserable reality. These relationships constitute a cognitive surplus that no ministry could ever understand, not even if it is called ministry of culture. And everyone that tries to understand the everyday routes and junctions of these relationships, will find out that Yfanet, is much better used this way than by becoming a big shopping mall, or a fancy museum or an amusement park. And the reason for this, is because Yfanet, as it is now, can fit anyone whose life is neither defined by money nor restricted in the temples of merchandise, anyone whose life is not defined solely by individual choices, because Yfanet exists for everyone who doesn't fit in expensive shops, who suffocates in the family norms, in the alienation of wage labor, in the manufactured symmetry of gender roles.

The repossession of memory

To continue making dreams and host our needs in the factory of Fabrika Yfanet it is important to maintain and support both the building of Yfanet squat and its history as well. We put forth the expropriation of Yfanet, as part of collective memory, by spending countless hours of studying the static problems of the building, trying to find solutions, rebuilding, painting, and repairing, leading this way to our own counter-preservation of the ex-factory. This repossession has a second role, to highlight and share the story of the building and its previous uses. We are interested in every moment and every story that was born between the walls of the factory. From the work conditions and oppression of the workers to their struggles and their taking over of the factory when it was functioning, from the period that the building was left in decay when the factory was closed and abandoned, until people from the neighborhood (including drug users) started hanging around in the building... We want to bring to light moments, snapshots, and meetings that took place in the building, weaving the thread of its own history. That's what we tried to do from the first moment we squatted the building: we tried to learn its story and what the workers had to tell us about their working there. That's why we recently reprinted the brochure of the factory's history 17 years after we first published it.

Going beyond and against the dominant narrative of the nation-state, of capitalism and patriarchy, we try to drag from the past all those big or small stories that complete our counter-memory. We do this in order to continue to defend all those memories that for so many years the state tried to shovel in the garbage, we do it in order to bring to light everyday experiences and lost fights that don't fit neither in the winners' books nor in the tourist guides. We counterpose our own collective memory to the dominant narrative that teaches oblivion. Through a living procedure of counter-research we look for the lost stories of the subjects that the dominant narrative throws in the sewer, hidden stories of repression and exploitation, in Thessaloniki and beyond. We dig in the past of social, labor, gender, student and environmental struggles in order to inspire our struggles in the

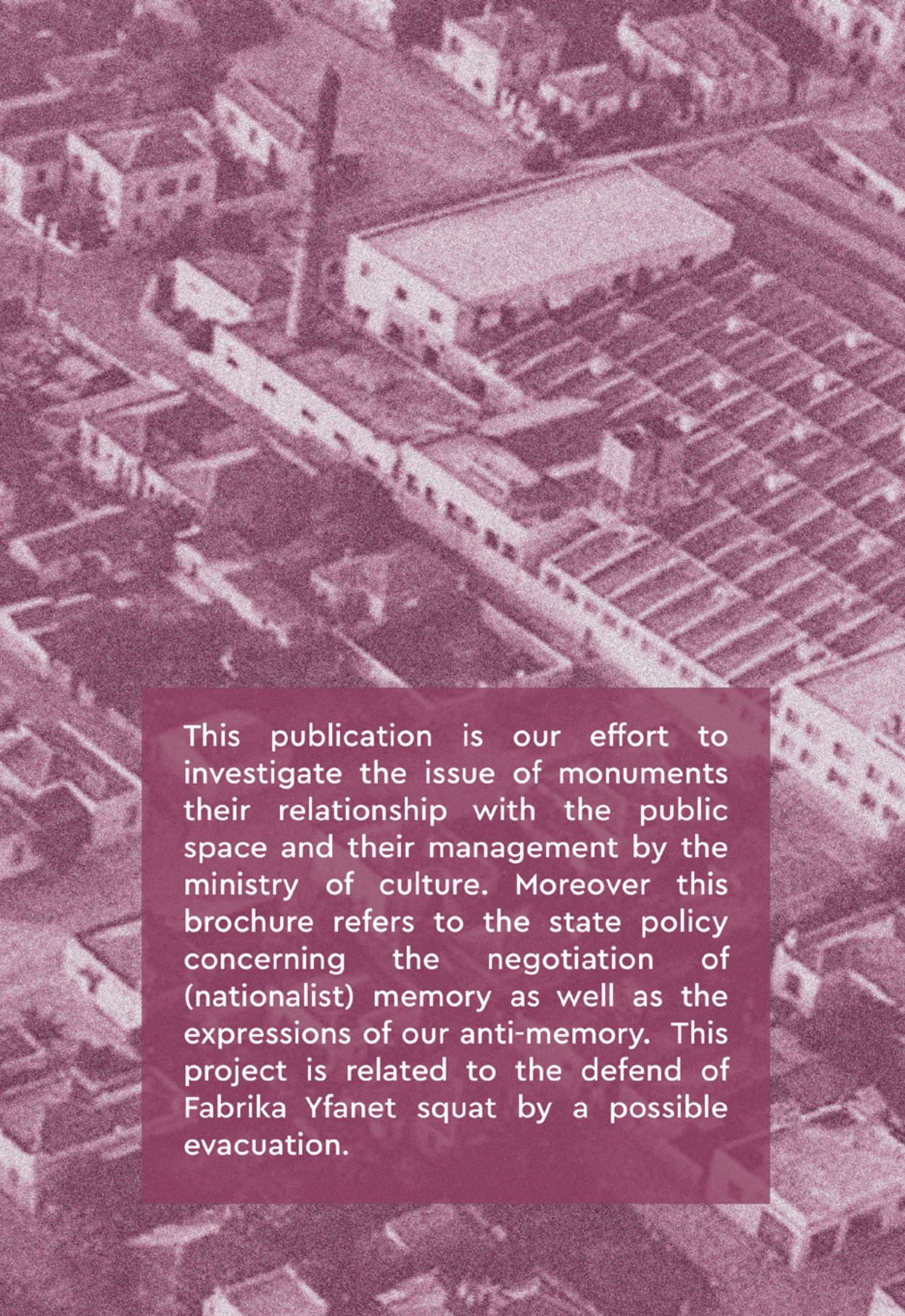*Interior aspect of Fabrika Yfanet.*

future, trying to bring back the vision of utopia. And until then we need the building of Yfanet, not because we want it for ourselves, but because sweat, rage and imagination are dripping from its walls and filling up the town, and no one is going to take this away from us.

Workers of Yfanet textile industry in the 30s.

This publication is our effort to investigate the issue of monuments their relationship with the public space and their management by the ministry of culture. Moreover this brochure refers to the state policy concerning the negotiation of (nationalist) memory as well as the expressions of our anti-memory. This project is related to the defend of Fabrika Yfanet squat by a possible evacuation.